

You and your communication

I specifically work with senior professionals who want to upgrade their communication. They might want to improve their voice, their personal impact, their ability to engage across their organisation or how they come across when interviewed by a journalist. They might feel they're not building a profile that fits with their ambitions and communication and personal impact are the underlying issues.

If you're thinking of working with me as your voice and communication coach, I've designed this blog to answer questions you might have.

The areas I will cover are:

1. Finding the right voice/communication coach.
2. Getting to know me before you begin the coaching.
3. How long you're signing up for.
4. How often the coaching sessions are.
5. Where we meet for the coaching.
6. Practise between coaching sessions.
7. How you measure your progress.
8. My part/your part in the coaching process.
9. What you actually do in a voice/communication coaching session.
10. The advantages of working from a physical and vocal perspective.

1. Finding the right voice/communication coach

When I meet you for the first time, the objective here isn't to convince or prove that I'm the best voice/communication coach for you; the objective is to find out if we can successfully work together. That depends on how we get on and if you're happy working with this kind of coaching. The process we go through, which is described below, allows sufficient time and space for you to make that decision without pressure or obligation.

2. Getting to know me before you begin the coaching

I have a process I like to go through when talking to people who might become clients. After I receive an email from you, we arrange a 30- minute meeting on zoom. We introduce ourselves, I like to find out what motivated you to look for a voice coach. I also ask you what areas of communication you want to work on. I then explain how I work.

After our first meeting I draw up a proposal citing your outcomes, the obstacles that may be currently standing in your way and the process we'll go through to meet your objectives. I then email the proposal to you and you decide if you really think I've understood what you want.

We then arrange another 30-minute zoom call to go over the proposal and I answer any other questions you might have. At the end of this meeting ***you're still under no obligation to continue and this process is free.***

You then have sufficient information to go away and make a decision to work with me or not.

3. How long you're signing up for

I recommend a six-month initial period working together. However, three months is the absolute minimum amount of time to realistically meet your objectives.

4. How often the coaching sessions are

That depends on you. Initially it's good to meet at least once a month or once every three weeks. After that the time between sessions can be a bit longer. You 'see' me either in person or on zoom. If we're meeting in person mostly the sessions are for two hours. If you're travelling or we live in different countries we obviously work on zoom. On zoom we work together for one hour or one and a half hours each time.

However we arrange the sessions it's important that the coaching fits in with your work and your life.

5. Where we meet for the coaching sessions

If we meet in-person it can be at your offices; it can be at a venue I use in Central London, a venue you hire or depending on the circumstances, at your home. I often work with people at work spaces they use regularly in Central London.

6. Practise between coaching sessions

Yes! The mind – body connection is important in voice and communication coaching and to this end practice is vital.

There are two types of practice:

a. Practice at work

This is the practice where you're implementing new behaviours while you're working. It could be using a different communication style at a meeting whether in person or on zoom or it could be slowing down the pace at which you talk and utilising pauses. This kind of practice is easier on one level because you don't have to put aside time to do it.

b. Practice on your own

To embody the physical skills you'll need to set aside some time to practise. New neural pathways have to be created between mind and body that automatically engage on an unconscious level. Some of the exercises we do will require you to practise on your own. Other practice you can do for five minutes or so sitting on a train or sitting at your desk.

How much practice do I do between voice coaching sessions?

I would say this depends on how much time you have. I'd go so far as to say if you don't have *any* time to practise don't have this type of coaching. Little and often is better than one long practice session followed by nothing for two weeks.

7. How you measure your progress

This is a tricky question because often we're not the best judge of our own performances. Have you ever thought you did terribly at a presentation or meeting only to be told how impressed someone was by your performance? The main reason for this is we misinterpret being comfortable and staying in our comfort zone with good communication and vice versa.

Here are some ways you can measure your progress:

1. We can record your communication during our sessions if you're comfortable with that. You then get to watch/listen to yourself in action. I know this is some people's idea of hell but it's incredibly good feedback and it does let you see the positive changes you're making. You'll also have a list of learning objectives that we'll have clarified during our initial zoom calls so you'll be able to see, hear and feel by watching the video clips if these outcomes are actualising.
2. Ask a trusted friend or mentor at work to be present at a webinar or presentation you're giving. Ask them the following questions:
 - Can you tell me how I come across generally?
 - Do you notice any behaviours that are different and better than before? For example, a louder voice, different gestures, improved posture.
 - My outcome was X, do you think I achieved this?
 - Is there anything I could have done that would have improved my communication?

These questions are important because people tend to give generic feedback that doesn't help you.

3. Are you meeting your professional outcomes more often than before you started the coaching? If there's more of a relaxed feel to interactions between yourselves and others you're improving. If you can challenge and be heard and what you're saying is taken on board, you're improving. And finally, if you're striving and struggling less and skills rather than tension is directing communication then you're improving.

8. My part/your part in the coaching process

My part is to help you achieve the objectives we clarified at the beginning of this process. However, after you achieve some of your initial outcomes, you might now find you can identify other outcomes you hadn't originally thought of. My part is to make this continually evolving process as clear and easy as possible.

I also like to create a link between coaching sessions. That might be by providing feedback and support in the practice you're doing. It could also be helping with an imminent and important work event.

Your part is to do some practice and to give me feedback about the coaching as we go along. If there's something you're not happy with, I would love you to tell me!

9. What you actually do in a voice/communication coaching session

'What do we do exactly?' people ask. 'How do you get presence and impact?' 'What exercises do we do?'

Here are some of the things we might do:

- Breathing in a way that releases the diaphragm.
- Vocalising exercises to improve the voice.
- Exercises to release the jaw for articulation and clarity.
- Changing the actual language you use.
- Managing your emotional state.
- Working with techniques to access your optimal states.
- Removing muscular tension that stands in the way of your voice becoming stronger and more expressive.
- Influencing skills.
- Storytelling.
- Learning how to work an audience.
- Practising real scenarios you have to do at work.

- Work on limiting beliefs.

10. The advantages of working from a physical and vocal perspective

This type of voice and communication coaching looks at creating a communication foundation based on the body, breath, voice and language.

Working on the above areas allows you to transform yourself to become a more adept, a more empowered and a more impactful communicator. If you know how to influence, hold a room, embody presence and have a voice that really expresses who you are, you can be more relaxed because you can stop striving. Being more at ease you're authentically yourself, that is, your true, charismatic self.

Next Steps

If you're a senior professional and you'd like to discuss having voice and communication coaching, drop me an email to:

info@louisecollinsvoice.com.

I'll get back to you and if you'd like, we can arrange a 30-minute zoom call free of charge.