

# *Is Your Tone of Voice Promotable?*

*Voice Improvement for Your Success*



**Resource Article**

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# Is Your Tone of Voice Promotable?

## *Voice Improvement for Your Success*

Do you like the sound of your voice? Does your tone of voice benefit or hurt you in your life? Would you like to access your strongest and most attractive sounding voice?

I recently hosted an event at a Fortune 500 company, where three senior vice presidents answered employee questions about professional advancement. Prior to the event, I asked a technician if the three executives, whom I had not yet met, should be hooked-up with microphones. "Oh no," he replied, "you listen to their voices, and you immediately know why they're vice presidents!"

In my 17 years of communication training and coaching, I notice one consistency about voice: a person with a strong, attractive voice has a big advantage over a person with a weak, unattractive voice. A person with a good voice commands attention, gets interrupted less, and is more likely to be perceived as a promotable leader.

When we analyze intonation, we can generally identify four major types of voice: nasal, mouth, chest, and diaphragm.

Most of us have heard someone with a nasal voice. It has that high pitched, almost whiny quality that can turn people off in a hurry. This is not the type of voice that helps one's professional or social life.

Some Asians and Asian Americans use the mouth voice. The mouth voice makes sounds but is not very powerful. I will not go into here the cultural, social, and psychological factors that may contribute to this type of voice. It suffices to say that people who use the mouth voice can sometimes feel invisible: they're overworked, under-appreciated, neglected of their needs, and passed over for due recognition. The person with the mouth voice cries out to be heard, but more often than not no one is really paying attention.

Most men and, to a slightly lesser degree, women use the chest voice. This is the type of voice that sounds pleasant enough, and can generally maintain listener interest. There's

nothing negative about the chest voice, except that it is not the best possible voice.

For all of us, our best, strongest, most attractive and most natural voice comes from the diaphragm. A person who uses the diaphragm voice commands attention, sounds more attractive socially, and is more likely to be perceived as a promotable leader.

So, what can you do to access your best voice? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Breathe right. People who don't speak from the diaphragm also don't breathe from the diaphragm. To breathe correctly, simply inhale and let your stomach rise, and exhale and let your stomach fall. Breathing is the most fundamental activity we engage in to sustain life. Proper breathing can relax us physically, calm us emotionally, solidify us psychologically, and sharpen us mentally. If we breathe right, everything else about us will begin to fall into place.

2. Make sounds based on diaphragmic breathing. Whether you're singing, speaking, chanting, laughing, or even yawning, develop the habit of projecting from your diaphragm.

3. Take a singing or acting class. Many of these classes begin with vocal warm ups from the diaphragm. These classes can be a lot of fun!

4. Work with a private voice coach. In my experience, most people are able to access their best (most powerful and attractive) voice in one to two hours. The rest is simply practicing vocal exercises until the new voice is fully internalized.

Our voice is a beautiful instrument, but many of us forget to take full advantage of this wonderful gift. Access your best voice, and you'll access your best self.

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