

# Speak easy

Your voice is a very useful tool and it is worth knowing how to make full use of it, writes **Yvette Nielsen**.

**Y**ou look fabulous, your handshake is firm and your qualifications are first-class. You're the perfect package – until you open your mouth.

How you speak can say as much about you as what you say but your voice is often a neglected tool.

Michael Kelly, who holds a master of science in speech pathology, helps people understand what their voice says about them and how to use it to gain and retain attention.

He presents one-day courses at the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Sydney on topics such as Developing a Voice that Sells, How to Plan and Deliver Memorable Presentations, and Listen and Speak under Pressure.

Kelly says people's voices should fit their roles but vocal and chronological age don't always match. "Speaking higher and faster can make you sound younger, while a more measured, deeper pitch conveys authority.

"Whether you're a receptionist or a lawyer, if you speak in a little-girl voice you won't be taken seriously," Kelly says.

When people speak, the sound they hear is stereo and affected by air conduction and bone vibration: it is not the sound listeners hear. So it comes as an unpleasant shock to many people when they hear their recorded voices and realise that is how others hear them.

Freeing the breath and voice is the focus of an eight-week course, Voice, at the National Institute of Dramatic Art.

The institute's artistic associate, Mark Gaal, says the program helps people from all professions find their speaking voices without fear.

The drama school draws from actor-training and rehearsal-room practices to encourage participants to release tension in the body and free their real voices. "Vocally, not just for actors but

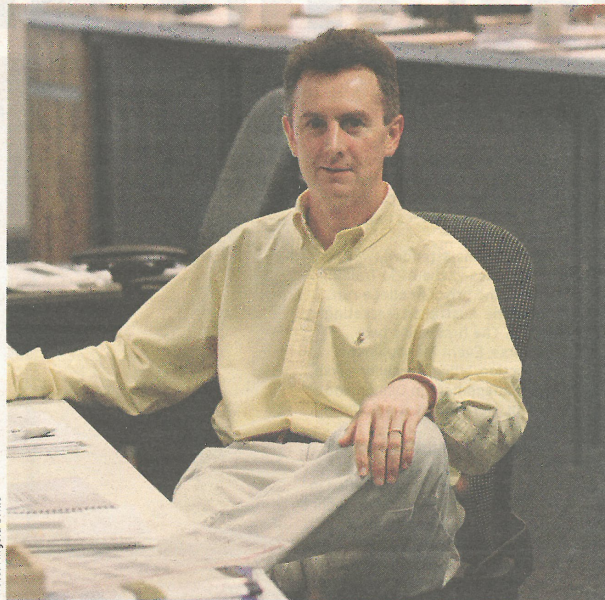


Photo: Angela Brkic

for any profession, it's about being more in tune with the breath and how it makes sound," Gaal says.

Breathing is the key factor in voice work. "People are surprised at how often they restrict their breathing," he says.

Greater awareness of personal presence is one of the goals of a three-day course, The Corporate Communicator – Impact and Influence, through the Australian Graduate School of Management.

A senior lecturer at the school, Dr Anne Lytle, says the course encourages leaders to look within to see the impact they have on others. She says effective communicators consider their emotional objectives, not just informational goals.

"When you walk into a room full of people, what message do they get from you? How do you want people to feel?"

With change a constant in organisations, leaders must be able to motivate and inspire their teams. "When you go into a leadership role, you're in the spotlight. The higher up you are, the brighter the spotlight and the more you're scrutinised," Lytle says.

For more information, contact the Centre for Continuing Education at [www.cce.usyd.edu.au](http://www.cce.usyd.edu.au), the National Institute for Dramatic Art at [www.nida.edu.au](http://www.nida.edu.au) and the Australian Graduate School of Management at [www.agsm.edu.au](http://www.agsm.edu.au).