

# NETWORK

## Have We Lost The Art Of Spoken Communication?



**Lee Bowman**  
**Chief Executive,**  
**The Kingstree Group (UK)**  
**Ltd**  
 +44 (0) 207 836 5575  
 lee.bowman@  
 kingstreegroup.com

 **Kingstree**

**A**sk the question because it seems to me that many people in business might now be questioning the value of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and the like. People are discovering, belatedly, the legal responsibilities of what they say on Twitter and Facebook. Is social media really now all it's trumped up to be? And what about the art of conversation..... especially face-to-face communication with business clients, shareholders, partners, colleagues and public audiences – have we lost the knack?

Today, do we recognise the importance of spoken communication when it comes to presenting company results, selling a business, pitching for new business, conducting internal group meetings and persuading fellow executives? And even if we do, how much time do we actually spend in preparing a good presentation?

As good as electronic communication is today, it doesn't have the quality of face-to-face meetings and presentations – be that to large groups, small meetings or one-to-one briefings. And I don't think it ever will.

But, there is a method which allows presenters to achieve greater impact from their meetings, presentations and interviews, while importantly, spending less time preparing. The theory, which has been developed by my own presentation coaching company (the Kingstree

Group – based in London, New York and Paris) is based on the fact that in spoken communication, the vast majority of what we hear is in everyday conversation with family, friends or business colleagues. Effective conversation comes naturally to most of us and that's what the ear is used to hearing. So, if conversation defines how we usually speak and hear, then why not apply conversational technique to more formal meetings and presentations? Easier said than done.

However, try taking this approach - that any spoken communication must do two things. Firstly, it must relate a set of memorable key messages, which the audience will not forget. And second, it must convey the strength of the presenter's personality, professional competence, and commitment to what he / she is saying .... 'I'm a person you can do business with'. Interestingly, it's the second point that is usually the most important to the listener – despite it being the subjective one.

So, when you prepare for your next presentation, don't think of a list of do's and don'ts or about 'How many PowerPoint slides should I have?'. Think instead of 'How do I apply conversational technique to my more structured face-to-face meetings, presentations or interviews?'. That's an objective today's social media will never achieve.