



What's the Story?

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Have you got stand out?

We've been watching the World Athletics Championship in Doha this week. The crowds may have been small but the athletes made up for it with their charisma.

Athletes seem to have a star quality to them – never slow to parade their individual style and stand out from their competition.

Fraser-Pryce the legendary Jamaican sprinter had multi coloured hair to win her 100 metres heat and yellow for the final which she won with ease beating the UK's Dina Asher-Smith.

Alysha Newman – the Canadian reigning Commonwealth gold medallist in Pole Vaulting with a games record - was fully made up as though she was attending a photo shoot – not a World vaulting competition. She said in interview that “it made her feel strong and in control”.

The BBC showed film of their pundit Michael Jackson in his gold running shoes from the 1996 Olympics. Michael said: “When you're wearing gold shoes you know there's only one medal you must win”.

On our front, Barry always wears Happy Socks when he wants a lift.

What can you do to help you stand out?

“Talking to Strangers” by Malcolm Gladwell

We've enjoyed his new book – he summarises it as: “What we should know about the people we don't know”.

Gladwell tells a number of stories of how because of pre-conceived ideas, our judgements are suspect. He illustrates how we find it so difficult to detect a lie, read a face or judge a stranger's motives. How come senior judges are less able to detect guilt than a computer programme? Why were the Italian public and courts so certain that Amanda Knox was guilty of murder?

Many of you have to deliver presentations to international or stranger audiences. We all know about the need to be sensitive to personal and national characteristics let alone professional bias but do we really understand how biased we are in just about every decision we make.

We recommend this book. It's a good read and will give you a better understanding of how to talk to strangers.

A stick of rock

Britain started the tradition of selling sticks of rock at tourist resorts. Normally about 20 cms in length, brightly coloured on the outside, with a message written through the whole length of it.

We read that David Cameron always asked his speech writers for the 'stick of rock' running through his speech.

We rather like this very visual synonym to check your key message runs through your presentation.

Are you delivering your stick of rock?

Can you be heard?

In a rather noisy London fish and chip restaurant, Barry was enjoying lunch with a few actor friends when one, Robert, told him he had "good projection".

And so their discussion turned to 'voice projection'. They were lamenting that nowadays few young actors were able to project their voices to the back of a larger theatre. Apparently, it is something that isn't treated in drama schools as seriously as it was. Films, TV, smaller theatres are part of the reason.

In Business are we facing similar problems? Not on the same scale but enough to reduce many presenter's impact.

We run one-to-one coaching - <https://www.speakersco.co.uk/coaching> and hear a diversity of speakers, many of whom can't be heard 10 rows back.

So our advice is straightforward:

As a warm up: i. Move your head from side to side. Lift the shoulders to the ears and then let them down with a sigh – repeat 5 times.

ii. Repeat a tongue twister you know eg "Peter Piper picked a piece of pickled Pepper" as fast as you can.

In the room: i. Speak from your diaphragm. That's where the power is.

ii. Consciously project your voice to the back row of the audience - feel as if you are throwing your voice like a basketball to the back.

Finally, you will project more when you feel passionate about your subject. The audience feels your passion and is drawn in.

Find your passion and be heard

Are you worth a second seat?

The Times have received a number of letters about the old days of perks and how ridiculous they were.

The funniest was from an ex- military man who said: "When we moved into new barracks my wife asked the barracks manager if we could have a toilet seat for the downstairs toilet." The manager replied: "Only majors and above can have seats on their second toilets."

Good luck with your presentations, pitches & stories

Barry Graham & Sally Clare

