

FINDING YOUR VOICE IN THE ROOM

Effective routes to have your voice heard and make a difference in the room

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Using the

Finding Your Voice in the Room

Workbook

Creating a successful career requires you to gain and to demonstrate the relevant technical skills for your role.

When many people have the same or similar skillsets,
you can increase your perceived value for the role by being seen to offer something more: more engagement, creativity, ideas, team contributions.

Maybe the best way to add value, is to be known for doing great work.
You need to learn how to communicate the value you create without seeming selfish or arrogant.

Most advice about "having a voice" in meetings quietly assumes one version of confidence: quick, verbal, comfortable with a room's attention.

That's one of several ways to have an impact.
Let me show you options!

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

A recipe for career success?

Professional reputations and career success are built on several foundational pillars:

- Good results
- High impact publications
- A track record of securing project funding...

These you know already.

Many years of research into academic career progression confirms that equally importantly (though less well reported), appointment committees lean as heavily on who they already know and trust as criteria for appointment decisions.

One committee member's comment, recorded by researchers, put it plainly:



"If I do not know them, they are not excellent."

The pattern isn't limited to academia. Research on career advancement more broadly finds that visibility and network position predict progress independently of the quality of the work produced.

Good work earns the right to be seen. It doesn't guarantee you'll be noticed.

The guidance offered here is not about performing - pretending you have confidence you don't feel.

It's about making sure something that is already true, your competence, can actually be seen and remembered by the people who make decisions.

There’s more than one way to be heard: Visibility Channels

Visibility is not the same as self-promotion.
It is not about ego or performance. It is about ensuring that the work you do — work that matters — actually reaches the people who can act on it.

Here is what changes everything: visibility is a skill, not a personality trait. It is not something you either have or don't have. It can be learned, practised and done in a way that feels entirely authentic to who you are.



Recognise this?

- You leave a meeting having said nothing, telling yourself the point wasn't quite important enough to interrupt someone for, or maybe you just missed the spot.
- Someone else asks the question you were still forming in your head, and gets the credit for having great insight.
- You did the work the meeting was actually about, but you weren't the one who got to describe it.

When people picture "finding your voice," they usually picture speaking. Saying something out loud, in the room, while others are listening. That's part of it. It isn't all of it.

Presence runs through at least four visibility channels:

- *Verbal* — what you say, in the room, while it's happening
- *Structural* — what you set up before the room exists: an agenda, an invitation, a framing question
- *Recorded*— what you write, after the room empties: notes, a summary, a follow-up
- *Reported* — what you send, at the end of the week, whether or not anyone asked

Most people default to one channel and call it their personality. Usually it's just habit.

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1. Your Verbal Presence: Saying It Out Loud

You communicate whether or not you speak.
Sitting through a meeting without a word is still a message and colleagues will form an opinion from it, fair or not.
Preparing a short, clear message to share out loud can be a game-changer.

Before you speak, it helps to know what you're actually trying to say.
A useful shorthand: **Clarity = Context + Intent + Key Message.**

- **Context**: what does the room already know? What do they need reminded of before your point makes sense?
- **Intent**: what do you want to do? Inform, ask, challenge, agree?
- **Key Message**: the one sentence you'd want someone to remember, if they remembered nothing else.

Example. You're in a team meeting and want to flag an opportunity:

Context: About the way we currently handle the monthly reporting cycle
Intent: I'd like to share an idea that I think could save the team some time
Key message: I've noticed we're duplicating work across two systems and I think there's a simpler approach — could I show you what I'm thinking?

Said together, that's one clear sentence, not three separate thoughts:
About the way we currently handle the monthly reporting cycle. I'd like to share an idea that I think could save the team some time. I've noticed we're duplicating work across two systems and I think there's a simpler approach — could I show you what I'm thinking?

Working through this structure before you speak takes the guesswork out of how to say something well.
It means your first sentence lands with meaning, not noise.

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Think of your next meeting.

What's one thing you already know you could say?

- Prepare one contribution in advance. Before the meeting, decide: what's one thing I actually want to say today?
- A contribution doesn't need to be fully formed. "I'm not sure this is fully worked out, but..." and "Building on what X just said..." are legitimate ways in to make a contribution.
- Speak earlier rather than later. The longer you leave it the more difficult it feels to start. Maybe give yourself a target of speaking within the first 10 minutes.
- Watch your body language as much as your words. Try sitting upright, leaning forward, making eyer contact with the person you want to receive your message... Voice, posture and words need to be telling the same story, or the room reads the mismatch, not the message.



When you first start thinking and working like this, yes, it does take time and preparation. It feels like work but soon it becomes a habit, just the way you think about things, and the effect on your impact can be significant.

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2. Your Scripted Presence in Meetings

You can make valuable written contributions in and after meetings:

- *structurally*, by shaping the agenda or framing questions for discussion,
- *recording* notes afterwards and framing summaries, key decisions or points for action,
- *reporting* your personal progress and positioning report to your manager, supervisor or PI.

When these are contributed, deliberately consciously, regularly, they become part of the way you do things. They can be lightly branded with your typical style or formatting, an image or logo you choose to use in the header or footer.

Conscious visibility makes decisions to contribute in a timely manner. Without creating an overwhelming burden of work or responsibility, they find ways to shape discussions, share responsibility and be seen as an active presence in the work of the project.

Default visibility speaks only when invited or certain of the answer, so opportunities to contribute frequently pass by unused. That pervasive assumption that good work will be noticed eventually, waits…

If you want to create presence and generate career capital you do more than generate data, you shape the story of the research progress.



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3. Your Move

When it comes to getting your voice heard in the room, you now know have four channels open to you:

- **Verbal**: ask a question or make a contribution in a meeting
- **Structural**: shape an agenda or frame a discussion around a question
- **Recorded**: share a summary, conclusions, decisions or planned actions
- **Reported**: make a proactive update on strategic progress

Most of us know there's one channel we use naturally, maybe even well.

We may conclude that one channel - for most of us that would likely be the verbal route of speaking up in meetings - just isn't our natural strength.

The thing I'd like you to remember is that confident communication is a skill set that can be learned. Raising your profile is a conscious decision.

The Clarity = Context + Intent + Key Message is a simple structure that can make a well-planned verbal contribution feel spontaneous and incisive.

Knowing this will change nothing without putting it into practice.

You don't need develop all four channels simultaneously and you don't need a new personality to use any of them well.

Pick one. Put it to work this week. Note what you tried and what happened.



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Reflections

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WANT MORE?



This workbook helps you recognise that being visible requires more than doing good work. There are several ways to enhance your visibility and raise your professional reputation.

Choosing to consciously develop your professional presence isn't arrogance, it's a wise career strategy to make the value you already create more visible.

You don't need a new personality, just consciously use more visibility channels.

I hope this content has been useful. If you know you need more, do reach out to me. I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

MargaretCollins.com/

Resources

Let me know how you get on!

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