

# TONE-in

Have you ever been told "It's not **what** you said, but **how** you said it"?

**"The way we use our voice gives importance to what we're saying and it represents who we are," says Renee Gallart, Hairco Educational Director. "The larynx is the smallest muscle in our body, but it's amazing how something so small can be so important."**

## RANGE

When we speak, we use a vocal scale, ranging from 1, which would represent meek or timid, to 5, which is normal, comfortable conversation, all the way up to 10, representing aggression. Each level on the scale conveys different messages or emotions.

As a nail tech, you might be very passionate about a particular product or service that would benefit your client. But, even if you say the same words, the meaning can be taken differently depending on where your voice is on the vocal scale. "Stay away from speaking in a loud, inflammatory, argumentative manner, which rarely invokes a positive reaction," advises D. A. Benton, founder of an executive development and career counseling firm and author of *Lions Don't Need to Roar*. "A pleasant, assertive voice with a variety of speech patterns is more likely to give you the result you desire," she concludes.

If you're in the 1-2 range of the voice scale, your client won't feel your excitement and probably won't take your recommendation. If you're in the 9-10 range, you might come across as aggressive and pushy, making your client feel like backing away. However, if you keep your voice within the 7-8 range, you appear confident and energetic, allowing your viewpoint to transfer to your client increasing the probability that your message was heard.

## INFLEXION

Another way we convey our voice messages is through inflexion and emphasis. "Sometimes it is more effective to begin quietly and build, so that the ending of your sentence receives more emphasis," Benton said. "When the most important part of what you have to say is at the end of the sentence, don't let it fade into oblivion." Think about the statement—*This is a great product for you*. What happens when you allow your voice inflexion to rise or trail off at the end of the sentence? Your statement either becomes a question or you're not completing your thought, expressing a lack of confidence.

Now, put an emphasis on the word great: *This is a great product for you*. When we emphasize the word great, we focus on the greatness of the product. If we emphasize the word you, the focus is placed on the client's desire. Generally, the you would receive the emphasis if the client has a specific problem such as thin nails. On the other hand, great would be emphasized if the product is new and you're recommending it.

## TONE

Lastly, add texture or tone to your words. "Listeners hear in words but see in pictures," Gallart said. When we place texture on our words, it helps to create a picture or an emotion, allowing people to be more attached to what we say. Word texture can change by altering your volume, emphasis and pauses or by lingering on certain syllables. For example, Kellogg's Tony the Tiger doesn't just say, "They're great". He says, "They're Gr-rreat!" We can almost see the Gr-rreat—it's bigger and larger than life. And, it works!

Good communication is essential to forming and maintaining good relationships with others, including our clients. When we speak, we need to pay as much attention to how we say things as what we say. It clarifies our meaning, creates a mood and gives importance to what we're saying. And, if we communicate well, people listen.

### Listen to books on tape.

Listen for word texture and emphasis, and determine what works well. Does the speaker draw you into the story by creating visuals, or do they bore you because everything sounds the same? Look for styles that you enjoy and incorporate them.

### Call yourself.

First, leave a message in a way that you would normally speak. When you go back and listen to it, how do you sound? Do you come off as unsure, mean, aggressive or energetic? If you were on the receiving end, how would you feel?

### Call yourself again.

Now, leave another message, this time placing emphasis by adding texture. Is there much emphasis, not enough, or just the right amount? It gives you a chance to hear and determine if the message is the same as you meant.

### Get a second opinion.

Ask friends or family their opinion. Did they say, "I don't like your tone?" Ask them how it made them feel. Determine if they interpreted your communication correctly—if you were angry, did they pick up that? If you were sad, did they notice? If not, ask them how you could have said the same thing to make them understand your meaning.

**"I don't like the  
TONE  
of your voice."**

WRITTEN BY LINDSEY ALPERT