

# **Communication Coaching is Broken**

Introducing a new digital framework for understanding and practicing personal communication

White Paper

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: A New Communication Solution..... 3

Communication Coaching and the Shifting Paradigm ..... 4

Revealing your VOICE..... 6

Algorithms and Inspiration: The Future is Now ..... 8

References ..... 10

# INTRODUCTION: A NEW COMMUNICATION SOLUTION



Imagine for a moment that you have an important presentation at work tomorrow. Or maybe it's a speech in front of your local church group, a farewell toast to a colleague, or a class you have to teach.

***What do you do to get ready?***

If you're one of the lucky few who can afford it, you can call up your personal communication coach for pointers. For everyone else, we either practice in front of a friend/family member or...talk to the mirror. We are living in a time of unparalleled technological innovation, yet it seems our ability to practice and refine our communication style hasn't progressed at all.

Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is one of the most prevalent forms of anxiety, impacting 15% to 30% of the general population<sup>1</sup>. Many of us have a fear of public speaking, and to varying degrees it impacts our ability to communicate as effectively as we otherwise could.

**So why isn't there a way to practice communicating that delivers personalized, objective feedback and is available 24/7 at a price-point that meets each person where they are?**

In this White Paper, we illustrate:

## Case Study: Assisting Afghan refugees with their interview skills

Whether it's Afghanistan, Syria or Central America, we are seeing displaced peoples migrating all across the globe.

They find themselves in unfamiliar cultures, with little to no access to resources that can help them improve their communication skillset.

**Audirie** has partnered with P&G Australia to make its platform available to recently arrived Afghan refugees.

Giving displaced people access to digital tools to help them interview and communicate better – a prime example of using technological innovation to help make the world a better place.

- The rise of online communication and the resulting paradigm shift in communication coaching
- How we leveraged decades of communication research to provide stunning new insights into a person's innate communication style
- The new technologies that have given us the ability to provide objective feedback on a person's ability to effectively communicate
- Why providing low cost, on-demand communication coaching can help unlock the keys to success in business and life



## COMMUNICATION COACHING AND THE SHIFTING PARADIGM

Due in large part to the Covid-19 pandemic, adoption of digital communication tools has exploded and become the new normal<sup>2</sup>:



It's obvious that virtual communication will soon become the dominant way we interact in business, particularly in the corporate arena. The recent worldwide pandemic has accelerated a trend that was already well on its way to changing the game.

**Why is this important?** Virtual communication platforms will require a new skillset, one that people don't tend to practice on a daily basis.

When you can no longer swing by a co-worker's desk for a friendly chat or notice the anxious body language of someone in a stressful meeting, it may feel as if building strong personal connections with others may not be possible.

The good news? We can learn behaviors that allow us to connect as effectively as face-to-face communication, even when using a medium with limited availability of visual cues such as virtual communication<sup>4</sup>.

Here are some of the ways we can begin to adapt to this changing paradigm:

- **Raise your cultural awareness.** When words can no longer be tempered with body language or even facial expressions, they can take on unintended meanings. A heightened sensitivity towards bias will help achieve personal connections with others.
- **Elevate empathy.** When someone isn't face to face with you, it's difficult to understand their current predicament. Are they trying to juggle their job along with a multitude of other stressors: sick kids, elderly parents, or rising expenses? Expressing a greater degree of empathy than even what is expected of you can show others you understand their pain points and help bridge the communication gap<sup>5</sup>.
- **Understand communication styles.** We've all been in meetings when people talk around and over each other while failing to make themselves truly heard. This issue becomes more pronounced in a virtual environment. The best way to mitigate this is to achieve a deeper understanding of the preferred ways others around you communicate. Achieving insights into the natural communication styles of your teammates, family members or friends will allow you to modulate your tone and energy to match theirs.
- **Seek constant feedback.** One of the key skills required to become an effective virtual communicator is seeking out and receiving consistent and objective feedback<sup>4</sup>. Developing the skillset necessary to build relationships in a digital environment requires **practice**. Only objective, focused feedback through repeated practice will allow you to identify areas for improvement.

Building a virtual communication toolbox requires a skillset which in-person communication coaching fails to adequately address. Meeting the demands of a digital-first world requires a new paradigm.

### How does virtual communication differ from face-to-face communication?<sup>3</sup>

Virtual communication:

- Eliminates at least some body language cues. Consequently, there is a heavier reliance on verbal cues (tone, pace, and pitch of speaking).
- Can be synchronous (i.e. real-time). Examples include video chat and live-streaming. Or it can be Asynchronous (messaging, video).
- Makes it more difficult to engage an audience. More work needs to be done to bring people into your discussion.
- Impacts speaking time. You risk losing your audience if your content isn't relatively brief and to the point.
- Requires people to use webcams in a way that may feel unnatural. For example, staring into a camera to give the impression of maintaining eye-contact.

# REVEALING YOUR VOICE

We all intuitively understand that great communication leads to life-long success. A person who masters the art of public speaking has a much better chance of having her ideas heard and acted upon. A team that communicates better can provide different perspectives on problems, mutual support for achieving objectives, and a shared sense of accomplishment.

## Snapshot: How we built the VOICE framework

Our Audirie Behavioral Assessment Protocol leverages a number of clinically validated scales to calculate behavioral measures.

These include peer-reviewed, scientifically robust questionnaires that cover a range of conditions: social avoidance, attention control, communication apprehension, and public speaking anxiety.

This research allowed us to surface the five major speaker paradigms that make up our VOICE framework: Visionary, Organic, Informer, Coach and Entertainer.



So if we all know communication skills are essential, why are they so difficult to master? The answer is that we are essentially **flying blind** – attempting to communicate with others without having an adequate understanding of how they absorb information, and relay it back to you in return.

Individuals need to fully realize how they are coming across to others. Members of a team must learn how to listen to and communicate with one another—to truly understand and appreciate how their teammates see the world and prefer to work.

The very first step is to understand each person’s **innate communication style**. Relying on decades of work in communication theory, personality traits and behavioral science, we created the Audirie Behavioral Assessment Protocol. This robust assessment includes a detailed questionnaire and two speaking samples (one to create a baseline and another for vocal analysis).

We have identified a series of different facets that make up a person’s innate communication style, including:

- **Personality insights.** We use elements of the Big 5 Personality Test and the DISC assessment to collect this data. Both the Big 5 and DISC can trace their research roots to the 1940s and have been tested on millions of people across the world. We focus on traits that impact communication style.
- **Comfort in Social Situations.** How people respond and communicate in groups plays a large role in determining their innate speaking style. We use multiple peer-reviewed scales to analyze this, the most prominent of which is the Social Avoidance and Distress (SAD)<sup>6</sup> scale.
- **Attention Control.** The ability to focus on what you are relaying to others, and shift focus when appropriate, is an essential part of good communication. We leverage a number of validated scales to measure this aspect.
- **Communication and Public Speaking Anxiety.** Communication anxiety

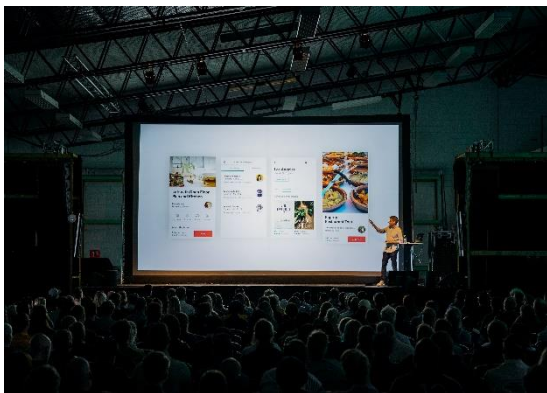

(especially speaking in public) tends to be the biggest inhibitor in successfully getting our message across. We use several scientifically validated assessments to measure this data point, primarily the Public Speaking Anxiety Scale (PSAS)<sup>7</sup>. This scale addresses the three components of anxiety (i.e., cognitive, behavioral, and physiological) that may impact a person’s ability to communicate with others.



- **ESL.** We see a significant opportunity to support ESL (English as a Second Language) clients. We use a curated set of metrics to understand a person's specific difficulties in communicating in a different language than the one they were born speaking. This includes the Personal Report of Intercultural Communication Apprehension (PRCA)<sup>8</sup> assessment protocol, which measures the anxieties that people experience when communicating with others from different cultural groups. We also use the English Anxiety Scale (EAS)<sup>9</sup> which measures anxiety specifically around speaking English as a second language.

Our VOICE algorithm analyzes the results to identify the most relevant of the 25 communication profiles. The profile that best matches a person's responses provides us the most accurate representations of a person's innate speaking style available today!

## The Five VOICE Paradigms

	<p><b>Visionary</b></p> <p>Visionary speakers have a commanding presence on stage. They are centered, focused, powerful, in-charge and comfortable in their ability to influence.</p>
<p><b>Organic</b></p> <p>The Organic speaker is an understated, yet powerful pacifying force when communicating to an audience. They make everyone feel included, help others connect the dots, and promote collaboration.</p>	
	<p><b>Informer</b></p> <p>Informers offer a logical, well-reasoned approach to a subject. They progress the audience's understanding of the topic with frequent references to the data supporting their argument.</p>

## Coach

Coaches act as examples to their audience, urging them to discover, play and create. They ask the big questions, guide others to come to their own conclusions, and develop a feeling of potential and possibility.



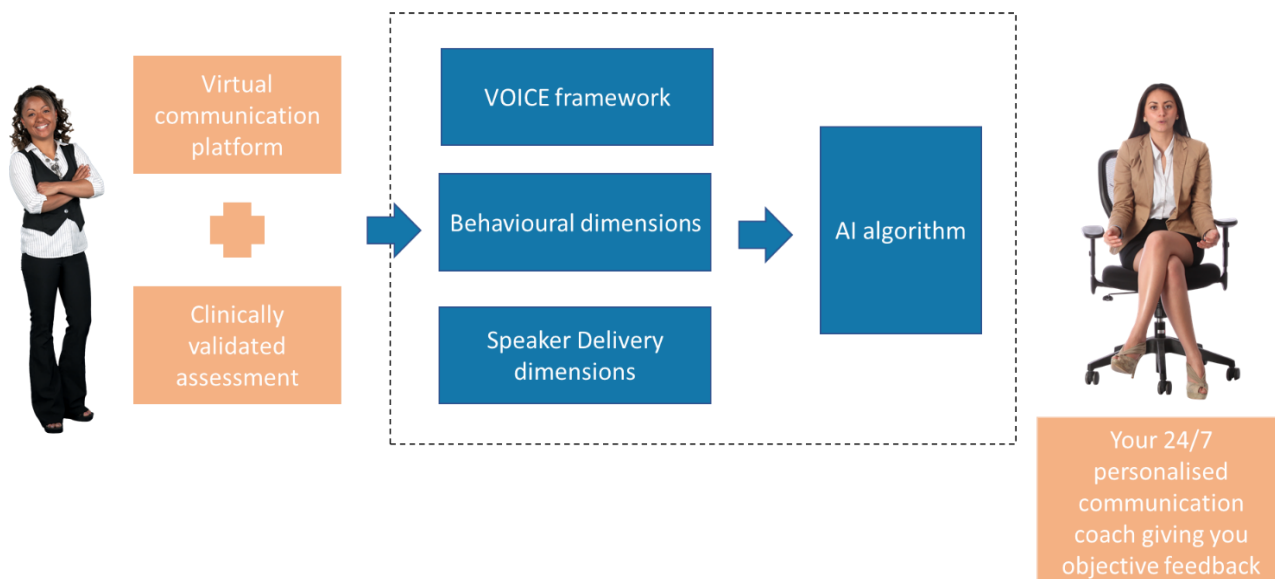
## Entertainer

Entertainers are adept at making their audience smile, laugh and generally feel good. They are natural storytellers, pushing boundaries and inviting new ways of looking at old problems.

# ALGORITHMS & INSPIRATION: THE FUTURE IS NOW

## The Audirie Secret Sauce

### Our proprietary algorithms



Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) driven by Machine Learning (ML) techniques is progressing by leaps and bounds<sup>10</sup>. These technologies give Audirie the ability to provide AI-generated, objective feedback on a person's ability to effectively communicate





**Want to know what the person sitting across from you is really thinking?**

**Audition has the answers**

Audition by Audirie provides objective feedback on a selected number of common interview questions, across a range of Speaker Delivery and Behavioral dimensions.

Combined with our VOICE framework and in-built bias detection, it will give you unmatched insights into how your candidates communicate.

Don't get us wrong – we don't believe that these tools are sophisticated enough to provide sufficient feedback on their own. That's why we complement our tech with a strong sense of purpose, powered by human-centered design.

**Practice any speech.**

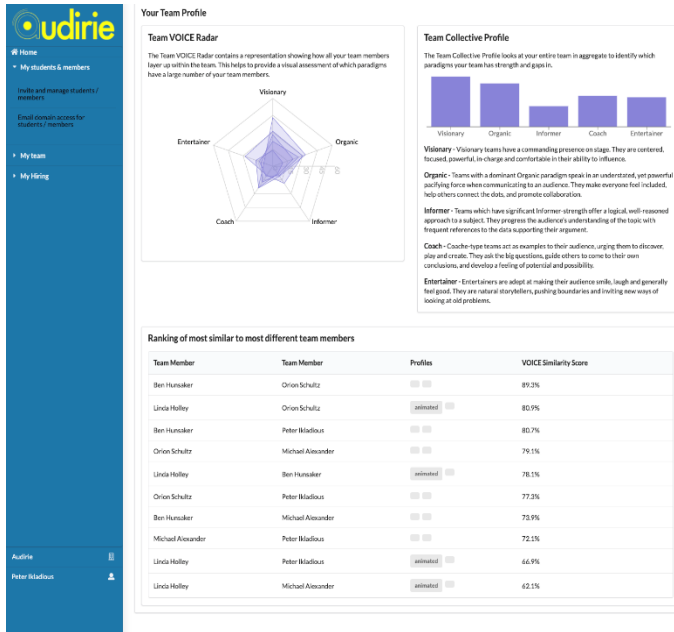
**Anytime, anywhere.**

Need to practice a big presentation at work? A keynote speech? Or maybe your team just wants to work on their elevator pitches.

We combine our unique VOICE framework with cutting edge AI to deliver unparalleled insights into how your speech is being received by the audience.



We all understand that if we want to accomplish more, we need a team. Yet teamwork also presents challenges, because it requires individuals with different viewpoints work closely together to accomplish a goal. Members of a team must learn how to listen to and communicate with one another successfully. In this way, we can begin to truly appreciate how our teammates see the world.



**Understand how your team communicates with Audition Enterprise**

Learning about your team's VOICE will help you understand how the team communicates – and therefore how it ultimately functions.

Successful team communication doesn't often come naturally—it takes commitment, skill, time, and effort. While there is no such thing as a perfect team, you may be able to continuously improve the effectiveness of your team by taking the action steps presented later in this report. Appreciating and understanding your teammates' communication profiles is an important first step

We are passionate about providing on-demand communication coaching at a price point everyone can afford. From new college graduates to seasoned professionals to those who have learned English as a second language - Audirie will support you throughout your communication journey, and help you achieve your speaking goals!

## References

1. Current status of knowledge on public-speaking anxiety. *Curr Opin Psychiatry*. 2012;25(1):32–38. [PubMed]
2. Graphic courtesy of Kernel IT
3. "Self-Representation: Face-to-Face vs Online." Study.com, 1 July 2020, [study.com/academy/lesson/self-representation-face-to-face-vs-online.html](https://study.com/academy/lesson/self-representation-face-to-face-vs-online.html)
4. Sherman, L. E., Michikyan, M., & Greenfield, P. M. (2013). The effects of text, audio, video, and in-person communication on bonding between friends. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 7(2), Article 3. <https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2013-2-3>
5. <https://www.mdadvantageonline.com/feature-articles/effective-leadership-and-communication-in-a-virtual-world/>
6. Watson, D., & Friend, R. Measurement of Social-Evaluative Anxiety. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 1969, Vol. 33, No. 4, 207-215.
7. Bartholomay, E.M. & Houlihan, D.D. Public Speaking Anxiety Scale: Preliminary psychometric data and scale validation. *Personality and Individual Differences* 94 (2016) 211–215.
8. McCroskey, J.C. et al. The Content Validity of the PRCA-24 as a Measure of Communication Apprehension across Communication Contexts. *Communication Quarterly* Vol. 33, No.3, Summer 1985, Pages 165-173.
9. Yaikhong, K. & Usaha, S. A Measure of EFL Public Speaking Class Anxiety: Scale Development and Preliminary Validation and Reliability. *English Language Teaching*; Vol. 5, No. 12; 2012.
10. L. Deng & X. Li, "Machine Learning Paradigms for Speech Recognition: An Overview," *IEEE Transactions on Audio, Speech, and Language Processing*, Vol. 21, no. 5, May 2013