



# The Beacon

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## YOUR GUIDE TO SECURING THE POWER OF PERSUASION

COACHING AND TRAINING SERVICES  
TO DEVELOP POWERFUL AND PERSUASIVE  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Where does true presence come from?  
It's more than polish.

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**Bea-con** (bē/kən), *noun* 1. a guiding light. 2. a lighthouse or signal buoy to warn or guide vessels at sea. 3. a person, act or thing that warns or guides.

## In Pursuit of a Powerful Presence

*The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.*

• Mark Twain

Have you ever listened to someone speak who had that certain, indescribable quality that draws the audience to him? Have you ever been struck with someone's presence, her ability to control the room and command attention? It's happened to me several times.

Presence. We know it when we see it. We know when speakers have it. And we know when they don't. Perhaps most importantly, everyone who speaks publicly wants plenty of it. When we meet a person with a great presence, we tend to remember the experience — his or her name, the topic and how we felt about what was said. A strong presence leaves a clear impression upon us, and it gives the speaker an extra dimension of power and persuasion.

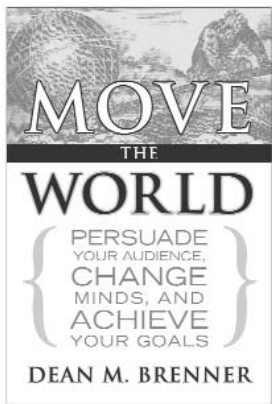
My colleagues and I coach our clients on a number of skills: How to understand the audience and identify the key aspects of their message; how to structure their message so that it is memorable and powerful; and how to deliver their message in a way that is authentic and persuasive. Among the long list of topics on which our clients seek additional advice and counsel is this notion of presence.

Can presence be acquired? Can it be taught? Our answer to that question is a qualified yes. It can be taught, to a degree.

To understand why our answer is equivocal, we need to first consider what actually leads to increased presence. We believe there are three fundamental outward expressions of presence. By examining and improving these elements, you can enhance your ability to leave a greater impression on your audience.

1. **Polish your message** — Choose your words carefully. If you take the time to craft a well-structured message that hits the essence of the issue and clearly speaks to the concerns of the audience, they will notice. You will increase the likelihood that you will gain and hold their attention.

*True presence is a total sensory experience. Getting to this essence of presence requires something from the inside.*



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- 2. Polish your delivery** — Good articulation, a modulated tone, proper pace and volume, no verbal pauses (like “um”), the appropriately-timed non-verbal pauses, suitable eye contact and strong body language all contribute to polished delivery that will impress your audience.
- 3. Polish your look** — Do you look the part? Are you appropriately dressed? Do you have the power handshake? Do you walk into the room with the confidence of someone who should be taken seriously? You can certainly increase your presence to a certain degree by the way you present yourself as a person and a professional.

All of these outward factors are important. Having the right message, a strong delivery and a professional look are critical to your success. Furthermore, all of these things can be acquired through attention to detail, hard work and some good coaching. They can easily be captured on video, analyzed, dissected and improved upon.

But is there more? Is there more to this notion of presence — something that must come from inside you? We believe there is.

Everything in the aforementioned list, while important, is essentially *external*. Collectively, they refer to the words that you speak and your physical being. They concern what your audience hears and sees. These things can be polished and dressed up. But what about how your audience *feels*?

We believe that true presence is a total sensory experience. Getting to this essence of presence requires something from the inside, and it is something that is much harder to coach and much harder to acquire. We believe that true presence requires more than well-chosen words, strong delivery skills, nice clothes or a good handshake. True presence comes from a deeper place.

Where does it come from? To find it you first have to answer some key questions:

1. Are you passionate about your product or your organization?
2. Do you believe your own message?
3. Do you love your job?
4. Do you truly look forward to walking into a room and discussing your issue, making your recommendation or selling your product?
5. Do you have confidence in yourself and your abilities?

If you answer “yes” to these questions, you are well on your way to having what you need to create a presence. However, if you answer “no” to any of these questions, coaching on external factors like delivery skills or professional polish — while helpful — may not deal with the true issues.

When we think about the most powerful speakers we’ve ever heard — those with a true presence that caused us to pay attention — there are many things we can point to. Certainly, we remember all the external factors mentioned previously. All those things do matter. But we also remember that certain *something*, that *je ne sais quoi* that you feel and know is there, but is harder to describe. Those people we remember exude a confidence and a comfort level in the spotlight. They don’t

mind being in front of the room. They don't get flustered with the tough questions. They are not deterred by a skeptic in the audience. They speak with an utter confidence that is undeniable.

What's more, exuding internal strength can help to overcome external shortcomings. When you believe passionately in what you're saying and can hold your audience's attention with your words, they are more likely to remember your message than your suit or your smile or your handshake.

A skeptical reader of this issue may say that this confidence and comfort level simply comes from being a good speaker, and if you practice your speaking skills you'll develop a strong presence. We believe that is only partially true. Being a good speaker is not enough on its own to give you that undeniable and powerful presence. We have seen many technically strong speakers who possessed obvious skills, yet did not possess an overpowering or commanding presence. We say it again... true presence comes from a deeper place.

Think about it this way: Take any good speaker and ask her to sell a product she does not believe in, and watch how quickly her presence disappears. Conversely, take a mediocre speaker and ask him to speak about a topic he enjoys — his hobby, his children or a cause he believes in — and watch how quickly his presence increases.

As with most things, success comes from many variables being in alignment with each other. The external factors of good speaking certainly are important and are critical for success. But when we have coached on those issues, and the speaker is still looking for that extra something, we guide our clients to look deeper. There may be issues at work that no amount of dressing up will solve.

We'll conclude this issue where we began. Have you ever been in the presence of someone whose presence was so strong you felt compelled to listen to him and pay close attention? And have you ever wondered how you can develop that skill for yourself?

Clients ask us all the time how to increase their presence. For a while we have struggled with a complete answer. After much thought, we are absolutely certain that true presence requires an external polish on top of an internal confidence. Together it creates a total sensory experience.

The external can be examined, and a well-informed coach can tell you what you need to do differently to improve. Furthermore, the internal can be discussed, and the good coach will force you to ask yourself the hard questions. Ultimately, however, the only person who can answer the hard questions and create that inner confidence for yourself is you.

The bottom line is this: If you have worked on and polished all of the external factors, and you feel that you still lack the commanding presence you desire, it may be time to start examining the harder questions.

**(Author's note: This is not our last word on this topic. We will continue to discuss the notion of presence in future issues of *The Beacon* and we invite your thoughts and comments.)**

Thank you for sharing this issue of *The Beacon* with colleagues or friends who will benefit from our advice.

We welcome your feedback.

If you have any comments on this topic or suggestions for topics you would like to see addressed in future issues, please email:

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Dean M. Brenner  
*President*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. M. Brenner".



Marni H. Lane  
*Media Specialist*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MLane".



# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*Practical Lessons in Leadership and Communication*

## Patagonia's Yvon Chouinard

*"The Lee Iacoccas, Donald Trumps, and Jack Welch of the business world are heroes to no one except other businessmen with similar values. I wanted to be a fur trapper when I grew up."*

These are the first words in the memoir of Yvon Chouinard, the founder and owner of the outdoor clothing and gear company Patagonia. His visionary business strategy, coupled with his atypical, yet strong, values cause him to stand out from other business leaders.

Chouinard is in big demand on the speaking circuit these days for two reasons: Patagonia's successful history and the unusual way his environmental principles have shaped Patagonia's direction. He offers a classic example of a leader whose convictions provide him with the commanding presence we all seek. He speaks with a confidence that cannot be feigned.

Patagonia is not a mega company. With \$270 million in 2006 revenues, it is a fraction of the size of most of its major competitors. Even so, Chouinard is not obsessed with growth at any cost. In fact, he has repeatedly chosen not to compromise his values for the sake of profit and growth. *"Every time we've elected to do the right thing, even when it costs twice as much to do it that way, it's turned out to be more profitable,"* he wrote in his memoir *Let My People Go Surfing*, an appropriately titled book for an executive who has the daily surf report posted above the reception desk in the company's Ventura, Calif., headquarters.

Guided by a strong moral compass, Chouinard refused to cave in to the sometimes soul-mortgaging pursuit of profit. Starting in the 1970s, he began looking to improve the way Patagonia's clothes were made, often making seemingly counterintuitive decisions. Consider, for example, Patagonia's decision on the use of cotton. In 1994, more than 20 percent of Patagonia's sales were from

cotton products. But conventionally-grown cotton is an environmentalist's worst nightmare due to the use of extremely harmful pesticides.

Chouinard mandated that Patagonia change to organically-grown cotton. He gave his managers less than two years to make a complete change at a time when organic cotton cost approximately twice as much as conventionally-grown cotton. Considering Patagonia's cotton sales, many observers predicted it would be organizational suicide. Despite pushback internally and externally, Chouinard held steadfast, threatening that Patagonia would never use cotton again if the change was not made.

The move paid off. Sales of Patagonia cotton products rose 25 percent. Patagonia's leadership inspired a broader market shift towards organically-grown cotton. Demand grew, production improved and prices dropped, thereby causing even more demand. Other companies soon followed Patagonia's lead — in 2006 Wal-Mart became the world's largest purchaser of organic cotton.

In short, Chouinard's dedication to the environment drives nearly every aspect of the way he runs his business. He does not pursue profit for profit's sake, and he is never afraid to do the right thing, even if it costs a great deal more to do so. He proved that a company can thrive by having a voice and a strong belief system.

Why am I taking you through this discussion? The answer is simple. The main article in this issue of *The Beacon* discusses presence and how to command a room when you stand up to speak. There is no better way to compel your audience to listen to you than to display the confidence that can only come from absolute and unwavering conviction.

• Dean M. Brenner