

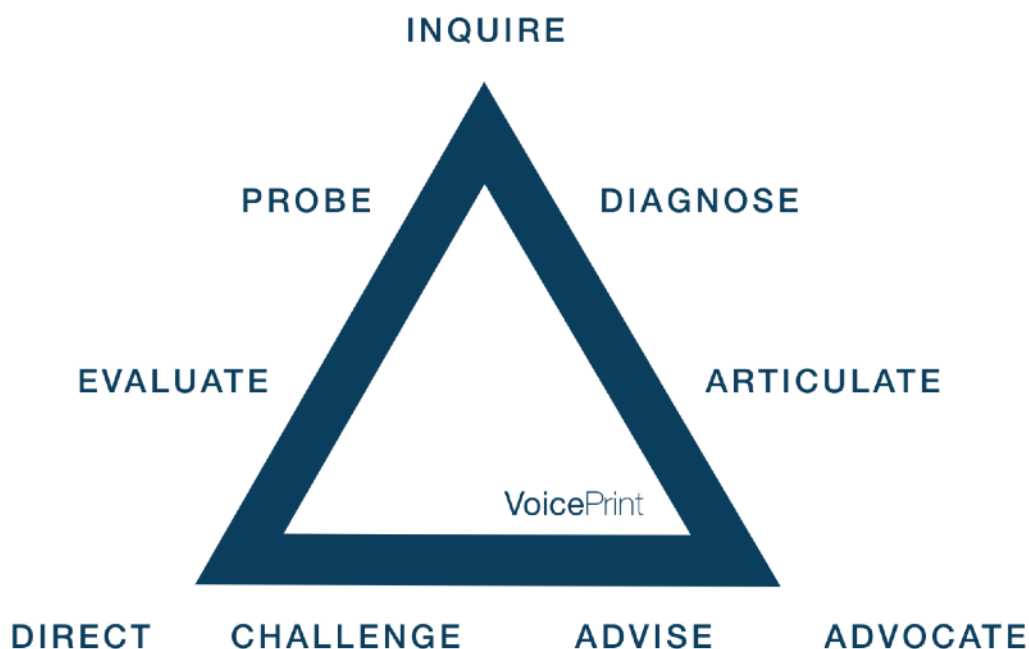
Why the use of talk is so important

Imagine for a moment a world without talk. How would we get anything done?

Talk is the distinctive human capability and central not only to how we converse and deal with each other, but also to how we think and manage ourselves. It is the single most important competence we can have.

At the same time talk is problematic. 'Communication' regularly appears as the number one problem identified by employee engagement surveys. Our talking is filled with misunderstandings and crossed purposes, poorly used time and frustrated energies.

Part of the problem is that talk comes easily to most of us. We do it readily, so we assume we know how to do it well. But individuals have very different approaches, when it comes to drawing on this capability. And much of the time these differences operate unconsciously, producing outcomes that may be unintended, unproductive and uncorrected.



The purpose and form of the VoicePrint model

The VoicePrint model was created to provide a clear, accessible and above all practical framework for understanding and using talk to good effect.

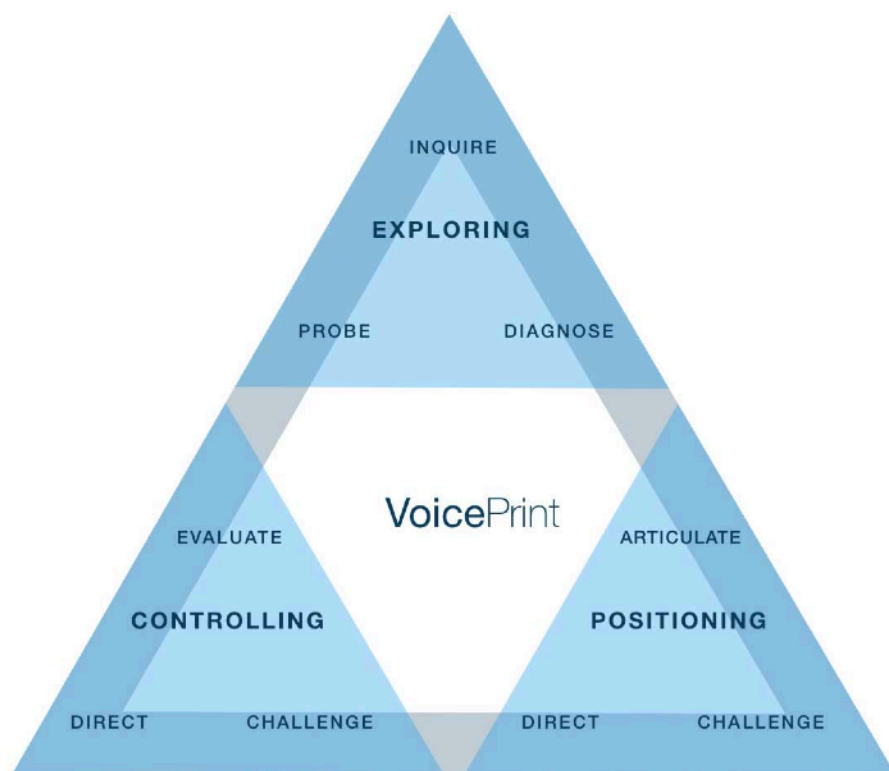
It is a competence model. It clarifies the competence of using talk by distinguishing nine different forms that it can take, each of which serves a distinct and potentially useful function.

The 9 Voices

Advise:	To suggest a course of action or way of thinking
Advocate:	To hold a personal view, either for or against
Articulate:	To describe & clarify in a precise, neutral, matter-of-fact way
Challenge:	To interrupt in order to improve what is happening
Diagnose:	To analyse in order to come to an understanding
Direct:	To call (or recall) attention to a responsibility, required standard or boundary
Evaluate:	To assess thoroughly & objectively, considering both strengths & shortcomings
Inquire:	To ask open-open-mindedly in order to find out more
Probe:	To dig deeper, going beyond or behind what is already apparent

It is designed as a triangular model, because it aims to provide a more complete and 3-dimensional perspective on the use of talk than can be obtained from simpler, either-or, binary comparisons. Importantly, statistical analysis of VoicePrint results supports the proposition that the nine voices are empirically distinct from one another and at the same time arranged around three principal angles.

The three voices in each angle represent different ways of pursuing the broader purposes of either Exploring (Inquire/Probe/Diagnose), Positioning (Advocate/Articulate/Advise) or Controlling (Direct/Challenge/Evaluate).



Understanding the underlying geography of the VoicePrint model helps, when it comes to making sense of the implied approaches and strategies reflected in an individual's VoicePrint profile. The model also recognises that talk can malfunction. Used thoughtlessly, without sufficient skill or attention to timing, even well-intended actions can have negative impacts. Each voice therefore also has a dysfunctional form:

Advise:	Patronise
Advocate:	Preach
Articulate:	Verbose
Challenge:	Attack
Diagnose:	Over-analyse
Direct:	Dictate
Evaluate:	Criticise
Inquire:	Interrogate
Probe:	Intrude

The big ambition behind the creation of VoicePrint is to enable people to become ‘talk-wise’ -improving our ability to use talk and making our interactions more productive, by developing in-the-moment awareness and skill in how we talk and listen.

VoicePrint as a distinctive diagnostic and developmental tool

As well as being a model of competence, VoicePrint is a diagnostic tool designed to raise individuals’ and groups’ awareness about how they currently use talk, the impact that they have when they do, and how they might use it to better effect.

As a diagnostic, VoicePrint has three components:

1. The Self-Perception profile generated by an individual completing the self-report questionnaire
2. The 360 Feedback profile generated by adding input from others on how the individual’s voices are heard
3. The Group or Relationships profile generated by overlaying the profiles of two or more people to illuminate the dynamics of their interactions.

Diagnostics produce clues and indications rather than answers. They are means to an end, not an end in themselves. The VoicePrint philosophy is emphatically that the significance of a profile can only be established through joint exploration and discussion of the reported results with the person concerned, the profile owner. That is the only way to take proper account of context and the specifics of the individual case, finding the insights that matter and the action steps that are appropriate.

What makes VoicePrint exceptionally useful and distinctive in the world of diagnostics is that it is not a conventional personality questionnaire, but an indicator which reveals how competence is being influenced by individuality. As such it provides a vital connection between the world of competence, or effective performance, and the world of psychometrics, or human diversity.



The nine voices in the VoicePrint model can be thought of as a set of resources to which in principle we all have access. Individual VoicePrint profiles show that most people believe they

use, to one degree or another, most if not all of these forms. What self-report profiles also reveal, however, is that individuals have their own highly idiosyncratic tendencies, making significantly more use of some voices and significantly less use of others. These individual tendencies tend to over-ride the competent use of the resource set, which would be to select and apply a particular voice for a specific purpose in a mindful, timely and skilful way. VoicePrint 360 feedback provides hard evidence of these competence shortcomings. It also reveals that in practice others simply do not hear some of the voices that individuals believe themselves to be using.

Benefits of focusing at the point of the action

VoicePrint focuses on how individuals (or groups) use their primary resources for making things happen. It focuses on where competence is required and where development needs to take place. This distinctive focus at the point of action enables VoicePrint to deliver multiple benefits as a diagnostic and developmental tool:

- The notion of the 'voices' resonates strongly for people, because it speaks, not in psychological abstractions, but in terms of everyday tendencies that they recognise and use;
- This immediacy enables them to connect it very quickly with the realities of their own roles, circumstances and experiences;
- Exploration of the profile can move easily where it needs to go, into the specifics of their own context and case;
- This permits a very natural conversation about the what, where, when, how, why and with what impacts of their own behaviours;
- Which can, if it needs to, look back and more deeply into the roots of those behaviours, what might be holding them in place and how readily they might be developed;
- And it also, crucially, looks forward, helping any insights and learnings to be translated into actions, expressed in terms of the actual behaviours required for delivering them in practice;
- Where, because the nine voices model is easy to keep in mind and use, changes in behaviour are swiftly reinforced and sustained;
- And where, because talk is a meta-competence and central to everything we do, improvements have high transfer value; small changes can make big differences.