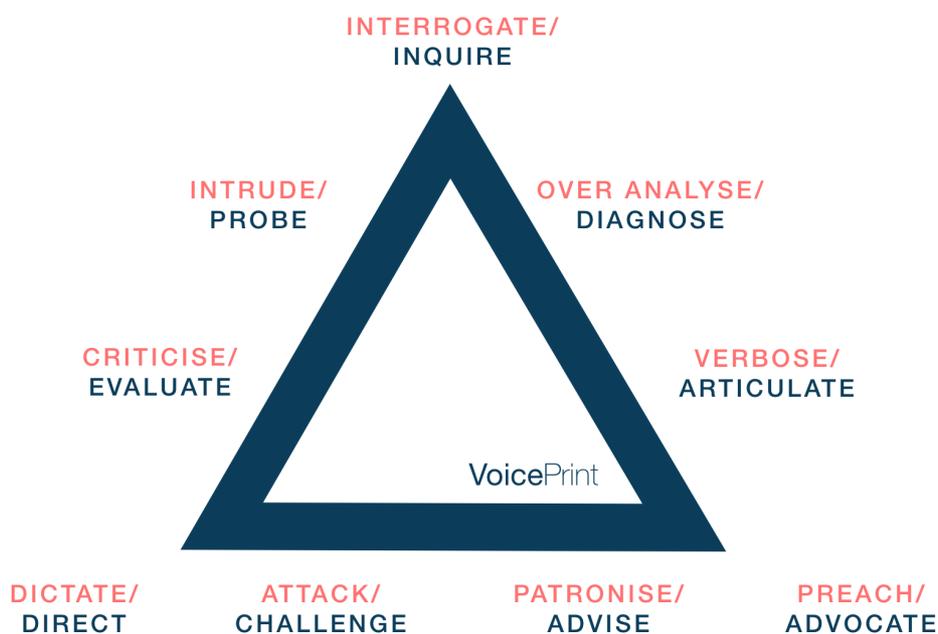


## How to develop your know-when - becoming TalkWise in the moment: TalkWise Worksheet

Knowing when to use a skill is at least as important as knowing how. Having a skill but failing to recognise, or act, in the moment when it is required is, in any practical sense, equal to not having the skill. This worksheet therefore provides three short but powerful exercises, designed to strengthen your know-when, or sensitivity to the voice in the moment.

Essentially these are exercises in Socratic questioning; open-ended questions that encourage self-reflection and critical thinking. Like any other questions they are vulnerable to the sorts of hasty, narrow and superficial answers that busy, action-oriented environments tend to produce. So while the questions are short and largely self-explanatory, the process of exploring them deserves some quality time and thought. The objective here is to encourage your reflection-on-action in order to build your reflection-in-action, the capacity on which know-when depends. Going through these exercises is therefore also an opportunity to practise and, if you are coaching someone else, to role-model, the know-how and know-when of the Probe and Challenge voices in particular.

Take your time over these exercises. They repay deep and careful reflection.



## Exercise 1 – What’s Your Trigger?

This exercise is designed to bring into conscious awareness your sensitivity, or even antipathy, to particular voices and to the nature and consequences of your customary reaction to them. It’s easiest to broach the issue of know-when by focusing on how it feels to have been on the receiving end of someone else’s apparently clumsy, ill-timed or over-powered voice. The starting point is to consider the ‘over-used’ or dysfunctional forms of the nine voices in the ‘red triangle.’

- If you feel that you are being spoken to in any of these ways, which one of these voices particularly irritates or ‘touches a hot button’ for you?
- Thinking about the people you have to deal with, are there any who tend to have that effect on you?
- Thinking more precisely about what that person says and how they say it, what exactly do they say or do that triggers that feeling in you? (Are there particular words, phrases or expressions that prompt the negative feeling?)
- When have you noticed this happening? In what particular circumstances or occasions?
- How would you describe your reaction, when you think you’re being spoken to in that way?
- Do you know what you tend to say or do in response to that voice?
- Which voice do you think you are using, when you respond in that way?
- What effect does that tend to have on the interaction?
- What other voice or voices might you use instead?
- What effect do you think that would have?
- How might you use a ‘momentary pause’ before responding?
- What might be the benefit of drawing a slow, deep breath before responding?
- What effect would you want your voice to make to benefit the interaction?
- When are you expecting to meet that other person next?
- What are you going to do differently next time?

## Exercise 2 – Bystander Benefit

We can learn much from observing others, both doing things well, but often even more memorably when they do things badly. Indeed this is a particularly effective way of developing know-when, partly because we observe the behaviour in context, which is the essence of know-when, and partly because the added detachment of being observer rather than protagonist helps us to see the whole episode more clearly.

This exercise invites you to reflect on occasions when you have observed others 'getting it wrong' and to strengthen your own in-the-moment awareness and know-when through learning from the recollection.

- Can you recall an episode, when you've witnessed any of the voices being over-used on someone else?
- What was the situation?
- What happened?
- What voice was being used?
- What made it come across so negatively?
- What was the impact?
- What do you think might have been more effective?
- Which voice or voices would that have involved?
- How exactly might that have been expressed in words and tone?
- Looking back over the episode, what do you think was the critical point at which it went wrong?
- And again, reflecting back, were there any warning signals beforehand that it was going to go wrong? If so, what clues or signs did you notice?
- Looking forward, can you envisage finding yourself in a similar situation, either as an observer or as a participant?
- If you did, to what would you be paying particular attention?
- What would you do differently?

### Exercise 3 – Self-Scrutiny

Having explored the insensitive use of talk by others, it becomes easier to tackle the more challenging question of the quality of your own know-when. Although the questions in this exercise are again presented sequentially here, their exploration does not need to be linear. In the case of self-reflection, various questions (especially those marked here with an asterisk) might serve equally well as points of departure.

- Which voice or voices might you yourself be perceived as tending to over-use? \*
- Who exactly might feel that you are over-using a voice with them? \*
- When exactly might people feel that you tend to over-use a voice? \*
- What effects might your over-use of that voice have?
- And what further repercussions might flow from that?
- What might be the *internal* warning signals (feelings and thoughts) that you are not using your voice effectively? \*
- What might be the *external* warning signals (behaviours, either verbal or non-verbal) that you are not using your voice effectively? \*
- What habitual phrases or figures of speech do you use, especially when you're feeling under pressure? \*
- If you don't know the answer to that question yourself, who might be in a position, and willing, to tell you? Who might not be willing to tell you?
- Which of the nine voices are you personally least comfortable using? \*
- When did you last speak to someone in that way?
- What were you intending to achieve?
- What effect did it actually have?
- Looking forward, when might you next need to use one of your less preferred voices? \*
- What exactly do you intend to say on that occasion?
- What are you going to do differently?