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Christophe Haag  
*EMLYON Business School*

Elizabeth Fresnel  
*Laboratoire de la Voix*

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# Implementing Voice Strategies in Extreme Negotiations: A Conversation With Christophe Caupenne, Successful Former Commando of the French RAID Unit

Christophe Haag<sup>1</sup> and Elizabeth Fresnel<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*EMLYON Business School, Ecully, France*

<sup>2</sup>*Laboratoire de la Voix, Paris, France*

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This article explores the role voice plays in extreme negotiation through the point of view of a practitioner. In this study, we invite Christophe Caupenne, a former Research, Assistance, Intervention, and Deterrence (RAID) chief—now a private consultant to top managers and professional negotiators—to write in detail about his expertise. It was the first time he had fully reflected upon how his voice and vocal strategies psychologically impacted critical negotiations. Our goal was to determine whether business negotiators could learn from their well-trained police counterparts, many of whom engaged in high-stakes negotiations. We augmented our expert’s essay with a 2-hour interview, and also conducted tests on the tone, timbre, and frequency of his voice. *Organization Management Journal*, 12: 4–12, 2015. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2014.974731

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The delicate art of negotiation requires a keen understanding of psychology as well as the strategic use of emotions (Barry, 1999; Druckman & Olekalns, 2008; Sinaceur, Van Kleef, Neale, Adam, & Haag, 2011; Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006). The human voice is an idiosyncratic emotional channel (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Scherer, Johnstone, & Klasmeyer, 2003), and this study focuses on how negotiators can regulate their voices to enhance the effectiveness of their emotional communication—a parameter rarely investigated in research about negotiations.

Our tone of voice expresses emotions (Planalp, DeFrancisco, & Rutherford, 1996; Scherer & Ceschi, 2000; Scherer et al., 2003), and thus modifies the thoughts, interpretations, and actions of others (Magala, 1997; Naidoo, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Mastering certain voice parameters may help calm (or excite) an interlocutor, many of

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Address correspondence to Christophe Haag, EMLYON Business School, 23, Avenue Guy de Collongue, 69134 Ecully Cedex, France. E-mail: [haag@em-lyon.com](mailto:haag@em-lyon.com)

whom exhibit anger during negotiations (Sinaceur et al., 2011; Van Kleef, Van Dijk, Steinel, Harinck, & Van Beest, 2008). The ultimate aim of negotiations is to obtain concessions from the other party and the voice is an important instrument in this process.

Voices have several different acoustic characters. Tonality can be high, medium, or low; intensity describes loudness in decibels; vocal timbre can be nasal, metallic, or sexy; and rate of speech describes speed. This article specifically investigates the vocal strategies and patterns necessary to be a good negotiator. Additionally, we focus on emotions and voice strategies in extreme negotiations. Weiss and Hughes (2010) describe “extreme negotiations” in a business context as follows:

It’s when the stakes and risks are especially high. Some examples in the corporate world would be resolving a dispute with a joint-venture partner, working with a government that’s decided to nationalize your assets, or negotiating with a Top 10 customer who’s threatening to leave unless you cut prices drastically.

Several related studies from nonbusiness environments have shown some key principles to be decisive, especially when the negotiations involve duress or time, economical, and physical pressures. Well-trained police or military officers involved in life-or-death situations, such as hostage crises and kidnapping incidents, use a variety of techniques (Call, 2008; McMains & Mullins, 2006; Vecchi, Van Hasselt, & Romano, 2005), but rarely report on concrete behaviors that work. Business negotiators and executives can benefit from these proven strategies, many of which focus on general goals and come from non-business milieus (Weiss, Donigian, & Hugues, 2010).

In this study, we invited Christophe Caupenne, a former Research, Assistance, Intervention, and Deterrence (RAID) chief—now a private consultant to top managers and professional negotiators—to write in detail about his expertise. It was the first time he had fully reflected upon how his voice and vocal strategies psychologically impacted critical negotiations. Our goal was to determine whether business negotiators

could learn from their well-trained police counterparts, many of whom engaged in high-stakes negotiations. We augmented our expert's essay with a 2-hour interview, and also conducted tests on the tone, timbre, and frequency of his voice.

Christophe Caupenne was, for more than a decade, the national coordinator and chief of crisis management and negotiation for RAID, an elite, special operations unit of the French police force, comparable to SWAT in the United States. His colleagues called him "the voice," and he held the position of "RAID diplomat" for 12 years. His role was to try to reason with fanatics, terrorists, or hostage takers, many of whom were primed and prepared to kill others or themselves. Through his work at RAID, he successfully negotiated 350 extreme cases, both in France and abroad, all of which ended without bloodshed. Caupenne's report revealed unimaginable aspects of his former profession, as well as the profound role of "voice parameters" as a psychological technique.

### CHRISTOPHE CAUPENNE: THE NEGOTIATOR'S VOICE

I have often thought about the importance of voice in criminal negotiations, and, to be honest, I wanted to explore it in more detail while I was head of the RAID negotiators, but I never had time. I was convinced that this was an area full of surprises and useful insights that I would like to explore. That's why I'm very pleased that we're looking at the subject together.

Thinking about negotiators and their voices began with memories, thousands of memories, with a myriad of details plus a multitude of strong emotions. I closed my eyes and the surroundings took shape, sounds arrived, and smells jolted my memory. When I thought about the voices, it was the voices of hostage takers in kidnappings abroad that immediately flooded back. I think that was because the voices are the very expression of human cruelty, the moment when a man reveals his true light, as a predator.

I remember a job in rural Colombia. The Quai d'Orsay [the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs] sent me there to help the internal security attaché and the French ambassador in Bogotá, following the kidnapping of a French expatriate. This 65-year-old man was married to a Colombian woman, 17 years his junior, and they had a son. The French husband had been kidnapped one evening, during a quiet family weekend at their *finca* 200 km from the capital, Bogotá. It was in 2008, and the FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army] were still very active in the area. A former RAID colleague, "Eric M.," accompanied me, and our job was to support the victim's wife throughout complex negotiations with the FARC. It wasn't my first assignment, but it really made an impression on me because of the totally inhuman and nasal voice of the kidnappers' negotiator. I vividly remember how he chewed his food noisily as he spoke. He referred to the hostage's wife with a nonchalance and detachment that reminded me of a shady horse

dealer fixing a time to show you his mule. I said to myself, "*This character is dealing with the life or death of a hostage, and he doesn't care a damn . . .*" It meant absolutely nothing to him.

It was this monster's voice that provided perspective. A voice that was casual and slightly mocking. I can still hear him today, trying to feed us a steady stream of sordid threats, and being offended by our demands to reduce the ransom. We succeeded in getting our hostage out of that green hell, but what stuck in my mind was the certainty of this man's barbarity, a temporary holder of absolute power, who, with the click of his fingers and tongue, could have an innocent person killed.

You quickly learn how to interpret men's voices when you are around such people. Almost everyone agrees that our voices are influential tools, yet few of us know how to define it. Some lean toward the idea of a "prosody," or musicality in the voice, which is the accent, volume, pitch, and intonation, while allowing the brain to attribute meaning to verbal utterances. Language specialists describe it as a "para-verbal" communication tool, which impacts 35% to 38% of the perception of relevant speech. The other influential criteria are "verbal" communication (the words we use), which has 7% to 15% impact, and "nonverbal" communication (body language), which has 50% to 55% impact.

Others think that the voice is an exclusive tool of influence; a sort of gift from God that some powerful, rhetorical orators are naturally endowed with. It is the prerogative of these privileged few to harangue crowds and stir the captive souls of conquered people.

When we talk about negotiators and their voices, it's important to clarify what kind of negotiations we are talking about. Do we mean people who are desperate to free hostages and must negotiate with criminals and raving madmen? Like police officers who work in special units? Or are we talking about people who negotiate contracts, improvements in market share, restructuring programs, factory closures, increases in capital, mergers and acquisitions, house purchases, and so on? Well, what makes the difference between negotiations is the gravity of the concern. The first examples negotiate the lives of human beings, while the second ones negotiate material goods, or shares of influence, which, at worst, focus on the survival of jobs. The risks are not the same, and neither are the consequences.

We now have a better understanding of why one of the criteria for selecting police force "crisis negotiators" is the effect their voices have on other people. Today, this selection is still carried out empirically, without a scientific evaluation grid. Recruiters intuitively evaluate voice parameters. I had many discussions with my foreign counterparts during exchange sessions at the International Negotiators' Working Group (INWG) annual meetings. No one turned down negotiation candidates because their voices were too irritating. But it was obvious that, despite everything, there was a consensus that deep voices set a certain standard.

Negotiators, like many other professionals whose jobs depend on their ability to influence others, use their voices as

an “instrument.” Dare I say a musical instrument from the wind group? In common with lawyers, politicians, or stage actors, they modify their tone according to the circumstances. Their tone can inspire confidence or impress; a warm tone is reassuring, while an enthusiastic tone can excite. Negotiators play with their voices to produce a tone that will establish the right melody in this theatre of human relations.

I think about how our voices influence the alchemy of a mission’s success or failure. I know that a gun dog picks up the scent of his prey hundreds of meters away; his sense of smell does not fail him because he has learned how to recognize the scent of feathers or fur, and the heady musk of his prey’s scent glands. Similarly, as a negotiator, I was sensitive to other “primitive” subtleties. A part of my “archaic brain” knew how to recognize and interpret voice modulations, minute vibrato variations, stuporous mumbling, atonic tremors, short breaths of emotional tension or overly restrained passion, and imminent violence. I was an “emotion tracer”; an intuitive person; a “sensation sponge.” By looking and listening, I learned how to understand a human being in all its complexity—but, most importantly, I read the voice message. By design, we communicated 80% of our interventions by telephone.

I have often asked myself if it was just a question of instinct. No lie, no hesitation, no doubt could mislead my senses when managing crisis situations, where tensions were stretched to the limit, and it was a question of life or death. In these moments, it was as if my brain went into a state of hypervigilance and absorbed all relevant clues. Voices can be soft or shrill, warm and smooth, sharp and rough, empathic or aggressive; they have a color, a strength, and a tone that one can create for any particular job. We all have a battery of prejudices associated with voices and jobs: the fishmonger, who harangues customers at his stall, drowns out the background noise in the market. His message shatters your eardrums in the middle of the surrounding hubbub. We also know about operatic tenors, whose harmonious and passionate decibels move their audiences with a thousand tremolos and vibratos. Their voices alone—not the words—create a fantasy. Psychiatrists, too, use their voices—soft and calm, relaxing and penetrating—to seek confessions that lie dormant in their clients. In fact, many professions recognize and use the voice.

So, what voice qualities must a negotiator have for him or her to fulfill their mission? Even though I wasn’t in a position to design a “voice profile” that was physiologically suited to criminal negotiation, I realized very quickly that certain tones of voice were unsuitable for this job. Especially unsuitable were nasal sounds, pronounced or disharmonious regional accents, strong foreign accents, voices with too much intensity, and voices that barked more than they spoke. Crisis negotiators need warm voices that generate empathy, that make confessions acceptable, and that strengthen compassion. I’m not sure whether one makes a good negotiator if one doesn’t fundamentally like people and want the best for them.

A few years ago, I rejected an applicant who was applying for a position in the RAID negotiation unit. This young police officer was a very strong applicant: a bachelor’s degree in psychology, an internship in a psychiatric department, completely bilingual. His only handicap was that his voice sounded like a chipmunk, which I thought would irritate the criminal fraternity. Confident in the principle that “prevention is better than cure,” I refrained from hiring this talented young man, but did not tell him why. (My preferred candidate had a soft, neutral voice.) Intuitively, I knew that I would be doing the strong applicant a disservice by opening the door of this profession. He would have tried hard, but his voice was a crippling parameter and would have caused numerous failures.

To really understand what I mean, this principle needs to be seen in the context of recruiting men for the Assault Group. We would not have hired an applicant who was shortsighted, regardless of his expertise in shooting, because the essential requirement for a marksman is to have better-than-average vision. Why, then, would it be otherwise for a negotiator whose most important work tool is their voice?

It’s also essential to understand how negotiators work during telephone negotiations.

They work in teams, in a bubble separated from other negotiators, which enhances optimal communication and concentration:

- One team member supervises the negotiation and communicates with authorities to explain the proposed strategy and to obtain their ratification.
- Another one is a “scribe,” who records all the information gathered, and every detail and sensation felt. This relieves others of this tedious but nonetheless vital task of recording all information.
- The “active” negotiator is put in the position of N1 (negotiator number 1). He is the one who makes contact with the person in crisis (a maniac or hostage taker, for example). His nickname is “the voice.” He focuses on the form of the discourse: He endeavors to say things correctly, to use the right tone, to use the appropriate emotions, and to avoid any words with negative connotations.
- To help him, the N2 (second negotiator) and a psychological expert (either a psychologist or psychiatrist) work on the “content,” such as the meaning of words, ideas to put forward, suggestions for introductory topics, turning words around, and so on. They are the ones who think about “what to say,” while the N1 concentrates on “how to say things in the right way.”

N1 is free to concentrate on his rhythm, voice modulation, intensity of tone, the fluctuating musicality of his discourse, and on his breathing, which segments the prosody. He controls many paraverbal parameters, and can, therefore, improve the effectiveness of what he says by creating a climate of confidence

between him and the interlocutor. It's this teamwork that gives the method its total relevance.

This way of working is impossible when you are face to face with a person in crisis. Then, there's no choice. You face all the constraints of a classic interpersonal relationship, especially nonverbal activities such as wandering gestures, verbal tics, disturbing posture, signs of impatience, annoyance, fear, and so on. It's impossible to cheat in these moments. There are no longer any prompters around, and we show ourselves and our natural talent. This exercise is unforgiving, just like when you go live on television, and requires a great deal of self control.

Face-to-face situations are the most delicate for crisis negotiators. Anxiety and knowing what is at stake often distort your voice; nerves come to the forefront at the negotiation table, rather like actors going on stage. You start to run out of saliva and your mouth suddenly goes dry; your voice quavers and tends to become high-pitched. You start to be short of breath and experience short mechanical phases of holding your breath, which are difficult to control.

To combat these type of phenomena, we make sure that the negotiator is ready and totally prepared. We wait until his mind and body are calm and collected before facing the arena. Marksmen are there to protect him during these high-risk face-to-face sessions. Men from the Assault Group are also ready to pounce at the slightest sign of suspicious activity. However, none of this is enough to prevent danger, nor does it reduce the risks encountered. Face-to-face situations are only conducted after an initial contact with protected communications, such as behind a shelter or via telephone. We have to test an individual's reactions, and assess how dangerous he is. We have to identify and decipher weak signals, which establish how he operates. While all this is ideal, it's never a guarantee. Stress is always present and difficult to bear.

Stress significantly influences the sound of the negotiator's voice in the presentation of empathy. A negotiator strives to portray sincerity and generosity, which show that he feels concerned about the issues of the person facing him. This posture makes things easier and always produces positive results. Discourse is credible when empathy is "heard," and is a powerful source of interpersonal influence.

However, the negotiator's voice is not the only one of importance in this crisis equation. The voice of the maniac, hostage taker, or suicidal person must also be deciphered, because it reveals danger before anything else. The presence of any arms, especially firearms, is certainly a danger criterion, but it is not the most important one. A maniac might be armed, but that doesn't mean that he wants to use his weapon. Indeed, sometimes, he has no intention of harming anyone. Rather, arms show his determination, or back up his threats. Likewise, psychological dysfunctions, such as mental illness and alcohol or drug abuse, are also danger signals. However, just because one is in "another world" doesn't mean one is aggressive.

On the other hand, the voice of a person in crisis is an unmistakable parameter. A voice can undulate between threat and

determination, fanaticism and hate, control and confusion—all of which allow negotiators to measure the real degree of danger in a situation.

I'm often asked if there's a secret to reading these danger parameters correctly. Rather than talk about a miracle recipe, I'll talk about a method:

- First of all, we zero in on the paraverbal communication and don't focus only on the words that are uttered, because words can conceal a lot of emotion.
- We must not be misled by our own visions of the world, because they are subjective and can be interpreted in different ways according to our preoccupations at the time. Many of us are easily misled by a warm voice.
- Our minds need to be calm and free of pressure so we do not lose sight of our objectives. Negotiating requires us to be totally available for the person facing us, and to listen very carefully to everything the other person is telling us.
- We need to put aside all our ethnic, cultural, religious, or sociological beliefs, because they shackle us. We need to forget ourselves and do things case by case, by taking a fresh and different look at each new scenario.
- We also need to defer our hopes, because they make us impatient and hurried. Human crises can only be resolved with time—or "with time and patience," as [the French fabulist] La Fontaine once observed.
- Finally, like the fox and the young prince in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novella [*The Little Prince*], we need to "come out of our shells," and get to know the person to whom we are talking. We have to be attentive to all the clues, to be receptive to all the signals and microsignals from the other person. Then, and only then, will we have the ad hoc interpretation grid on how dangerous the situation is.

I hope that my experiences, briefly summarized here, as former head of the RAID negotiators will prompt practitioners, students, and researchers to delve deeper into the role of the voice in negotiations. For this voice has been the medium for men's words since the dawn of time, the medium for the expression of our wisest or craziest ideas. It is humanity's musical instrument.

It transcends us or disturbs us, it attracts us or disgusts us, it conquers us or angers us—but it never leaves us completely neutral or indifferent to the sounds that it conveys. And, when we like it, the voice of the person speaking to us makes us lower all the barriers of our defensive walls.

## DISCUSSION

We now explore Christophe Caupenne's proposed vocal strategies for improving and regulating emotions during difficult

negotiations. Our discussion is fed by three sources: (a) the preceding testimonial, (b) an interview with Caupenne, and (c) an electrolaryngography analysis of his voice, conducted by a co-author of this article, who is also a health care practitioner specializing in speech and language therapy. We focus on proven voice strategies to adopt at the start of difficult negotiations, as well as discussing vocal techniques to use when pursuing negotiations.

### Step 1: Intuitive Analysis of the Other Party's Voice

At the start of a difficult negotiation, Christophe Caupenne recommends listening carefully to the other party's voice, which provides clues about their intentions and emotional states. As he observed in his testimonial:

A voice can undulate between threat and determination, fanaticism and hate, control and confusion—all of which allow negotiators to measure, quite early in the negotiation, the real degree of danger in a situation.

Indeed, a part of Caupenne's "archaic brain" (his name for his intuition) could rapidly recognize and interpret many voice parameters:

A part of my "archaic" brain knew how to recognize and interpret voice modulations, minute vibrato variations, stuporous mumbling, atonic tremors, short breaths of emotional tension or overly restrained passion, and imminent violence. I was an "emotion tracer"; an intuitive person; a "sensation sponge."

Recent studies affirm that the "intuitive brain" takes only a few milliseconds to construct a first impression about an interlocutor's personality, intentions, or job performance (Bar, Neta, & Linz, 2006; Willis & Todorov, 2006). Activation of the superior temporal sulcus area of the brain (Belin, Zatorre, & Ahad, 2002; Belin, Zatorre, Lafaille, Ahad, & Pike, 2000; Fecteau, Armony, Joannette, & Belin, 2004; Warren, Scott, Price, & Griffiths, 2006) processes information about vocal patterns that is, in most cases, accurate (Ambady, Krabbenhoft, & Hogan, 2006; Hecht & LaFrance, 1995).

### Step 2: Adjusting the Voice to Reflect Empathy

After observing and identifying the acoustical biomarkers of the other's emotions, Christophe Caupenne suggests mirroring them. When people interact, they often try to adjust their gestures, manner of speech, and vocal patterns to accommodate others, in order to minimize any social and emotional differences between them (Giles, 1973; Turner & West, 2010). During difficult negotiations, Caupenne observes that his voice generates empathy "that make confessions acceptable, and that strengthen compassion." As he noted earlier:

Stress significantly influences the sound of the negotiator's voice in the presentation of empathy. A negotiator strives to portray sincerity and generosity, which show that he feels concerned about the issues of the person facing him. This posture makes things easier and always produces positive results. Discourse is credible

when empathy is "heard," and is a powerful source of interpersonal influence.

Empathy is defined as "the heightened responsiveness to another's emotional experience" (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972: 526). It activates certain neurons (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004), which can be measured by observing verbal and non-verbal cues, such as the "facial, gestural, and vocal indices of empathy-related responding" (Zhou, Valiente, & Eisenberg, 2003, p. 275).

A number of studies (e.g., Juslin & Laukka, 2003; Laukka, 2008; Murray & Arnott, 1993) have shown that an interlocutor's emotions are associated with distinct acoustical patterns (e.g., extensive pitch variability is associated with happiness, joy, anger, and fear; see Fairbanks & Pronovost, 1939), which receivers imitate automatically in an empathic process known as "emotional contagion" (Hatfield, Rapson, & Le, 2009). For instance, while talking (and listening) to a depressed or sad person, a negotiator may feel more depressed, and thus speak more slowly (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Mundt, Vogel, Feltner, & Lenderking, 2012), less intensively (Davitz, 1964; Natale, 1975; Mundt et al., 2012), with a diminished pitch variability (Cannizzaro, Harel, Reilly, Chappell, & Snyder, 2004; Fairbanks & Pronovost, 1939), a higher ratio of pausing (Fairbanks & Hoaglin, 1941), a subvocal frequency (Gregory, 1990), an intonation (Goldinger, 1998), and a speech style (Kappes, Baumgaertner, Peschke, & Ziegler, 2009) that are characteristic of depression (e.g., prolonged vowels; see Williams & Stevens, 1972).

During our study's interview, Christophe Caupenne admitted that he sometimes imitated the accent of an interlocutor, which conveys important social information (Edwards, 1999). For example, originally from a town in the south of France, Caupenne managed to revive his accent to create an emotional and sociocultural link with criminals from the same city. In conversation, speakers tend to imitate their partner's pronunciation patterns (Goldinger, 1998; Pardo, 2006; Shockley, Sabadini, & Fowler, 2004), as well as their accents (Delvaux & Soquet, 2007). Some researchers have found that the more you imitate your interlocutors, the more they like you (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Stel & Vonk, 2010; Van Baaren, Holland, Kawakami, & Van Knippenberg, 2004). This facilitates dialogue, calms the distressed party (de Waal, 2009), and increases the probability of reaching a consensus in business negotiation (Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008). However, other research has also suggested that empathy is not always accepted in negotiation (Martinovski, Traum, & Marsella, 2007). If there is a lack of desire and willingness to engage in negotiation, a lack of trust between the parties, or if the needs (of one or all of the parties) are not well recognized, one party may be unreceptive to empathic signals sent by the other, which complicates the negotiation (Martinovski et al., 2007). In such a case, rejection of empathy is displayed linguistically by "refusal to release the turn, overlaps, interruptions, cut-offs, and simultaneous speech as well

as by communicative acts such as explicit rejections, confirmations of rejections, rhetorical questions, imperative orders, irony, swearing, [or] ‘walking out’ moves” (Martinovski, 2006, p. 1787).

### Step 3: Adopting a Low-Pitched Voice When Necessary

If the other party remains agitated, Caupenne suggests stopping mirroring the other’s acoustic characteristics. In the case in point, Caupenne used the natural pitch of his voice, which electrolyngographic analysis<sup>1</sup> revealed is of medium register, well formed, and with a very fluid output. His voice was reassuring, soothing, and relaxing, and conveyed an impression of sturdiness and of someone who could be trusted. Acoustical analysis of Caupenne’s voice revealed good vocal fold closure and a low fundamental frequency; it was regular and very intonative, covering 86% of an octave. (By way of comparison, trained professionals—actors, singers—cover an entire octave or more.) The results of electrolyngography were normal, and indicated a very good regularity in the opening/closing cycles of the vocal folds, good vocal folds closure, and good larynx stability.<sup>2</sup> When reading a calibrated text, his air intake was efficient and thoraco-abdominal, the output reflected the content, his jaw was slightly tense, his intensity was normal, and his shoulders leaned forward a little.

If Caupenne’s natural voice had been higher pitched, it would have changed his negotiation outcomes. Compared to those that are lower pitched, higher pitched voices have a wider range of sound waves (syllabic length, sound intensity, and melodic pitch of the phonemes), which force a listener’s brain to work harder (Sokhi, Hunter, Wilkinson, & Woodruff, 2005). High-pitched voices activate areas in a listener’s brain that usually handle complex noises, such as music. A negotiator with a high-pitched voice may lose the attention of his audience. As Caupenne commented (earlier):

I realized very quickly that certain tones of voice were unsuitable for this job. Especially unsuitable were nasal sounds, pronounced or disharmonious regional accents, strong foreign accents, voices with too much intensity, and voices that barked more than they spoke.

Moreover:

A few years ago, I rejected an applicant who was applying for a position in the RAID negotiation unit . . . His only handicap was his voice sounded like a chipmunk, which I thought would irritate the criminal fraternity.

He also noted, “It was obvious that, despite everything, there was a consensus that deep voices set a certain standard.”

In negotiations, power (Van Kleef et al., 2006), trust, and respect (Cronin & Weingart, 2007; Gunia, Brett, & Nandkeolyar, 2012) are all important. Anthropological studies suggest that a negotiator with a high-pitched voice (compared to one with a medium or deep voice) may be perceived as less effective and less respected on several dimensions—power, charisma, authority, social standing, maturity, domination, courage, trust, and competency (Apicella,

Feinberg, & Marlowe, 2007; Puts, Hodges, Cárdenas, & Gaulin, 2007; Tigue, Borak, O’Connor, Schandl, & Feinberg, 2011; Wolff & Puts, 2010). A negotiator’s voice pitch must not undermine his or her credibility, especially when negotiations are dangerous and difficult.

Some researchers have suggested, during Step 3 of the vocal strategies just proposed, expressing anger and/or threats, two common strategies used in hardball business negotiation to unblock a situation (e.g., Barry, 1999; Sinaceur et al., 2011; Van Kleef et al., 2008). According to Banse and Scherer (1996), anger seems to be characterized by a fast rate or tempo, high fundamental frequency (which reflects the frequency of the vibration of the vocal folds), poor intonation curve or melody, and high pitch. However, for business negotiators tempted to express “hot” anger through these acoustic components, Caupenne counsels in his earlier testimony that their “minds need to be calm [and] free of pressure” and their voices “warm” and not featuring “too much intensity.” In addition, negotiators who dare to express anger are often already in position of power during the negotiation (Sinaceur et al., 2011). Thus, when power is equally distributed or when in a position of inferiority, a business negotiator should think twice about using the voice of anger.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

We have learned from Christophe Caupenne that the voice plays a key role in regulating the emotions of the interlocutor and can influence the outcome of difficult negotiations. The following three basic and practical steps summarize his advice for business negotiators:

1. Close your mouth and listen to the other’s voice to detect their emotions.
2. Open your mouth and create empathy by accommodating acoustically.
3. If necessary, use a deeper voice to assert power.

Furthermore, using insights provided by Caupenne, our speech therapist co-author has developed the following recommendations for business personnel who have responsibility for difficult negotiations.

#### Lower the Pitch of Your Voice

Three-quarters of negotiators with higher voices tend to speak quickly when they are under stress. The more quickly they speak, the higher their voices become. If you have a high-pitched voice, reduce the rate and volume of your speech.

#### Breathe From Your Low Thoraco-Abdomen

1. Place a lighted candle 10 cm from your mouth.
2. Inhale gently through your nose and inflate your stomach, and open your back ribs.

3. Exhale by blowing the air gently from your mouth toward the flame. Try and keep it horizontal without blowing it out, and until your stomach returns to its natural position.
4. Put one hand on your stomach to check that it moves forward when you inhale, and then reverts to its original position when you exhale. At the same time, put your other hand on your sternum to ensure that it does not move.

Doing this exercise regularly will allow you to improve your breathing, which will, in turn, provide energy during a negotiation. The exercise will also help you to unwind: Think about or visualize it for a few minutes before a stressful negotiation.

### Speak Clearly During Negotiations

To avoid mumbling or swallowing your words, do the “pen exercise”:

1. Put a pen between the corners of your mouth and grip it between your teeth for five minutes.
2. Practice saying a few sentences that you are going to have to say later.

This has the effect of completely relaxing your jaw and loosening your tongue. When you take the pen out of your mouth, your diction and articulation will be much better.

### Warm Up Your Voice Before a Difficult Negotiation

Use the following method to warm up your voice:

1. With your mouth closed, say “ohmmmmmmmm,” like a Buddhist monk.
2. With your mouth slightly open, do several short vocalizations on a short vowel, like “a” (as in “apple”), which encourages the soft palate to rise. Then continue using a long “a” (as in “market”).
3. Finally, imagine you are a strict sports teacher. Project your voice and count “And one, and two, and three . . .”

### Reduce Stress Before an Important Negotiation

Yawning has a soothing effect (a cholinergic parasympathetic activity), which is helpful when you start feeling worried. When yawning, your tongue needs to be relaxed, flat, with the tip just behind your lower teeth.

### Project Your Voice

For 10 minutes per day, read a text aloud with all the consonants removed. For example, “the voice is a second face” becomes “e–oi–i–a–e–o–a–e.” This will make you aware of the importance of consonants, and that they make the vowels stand out and vibrate. Then read the same text again, emphasizing the consonants by opening your mouth wide. Your voice will resonate more; it will become more intense without making you tired, and the listener will understand you better.

### Monitor Fluid Intake Before a Negotiation

Minimize your intake of alcohol, coffee, tea, or cola before an important negotiation, as these drinks will dehydrate you. Try, instead, to drink at least six to eight glasses of water every day.

### Avoid Medications that Affect the Central Nervous System

Avoid taking tranquilizers or stimulants before an important negotiation, even if you are stressed, because they will affect your articulation. Alternatively, a little magnesium beforehand may be helpful.

### NOTES

1. We use an international technique called “electrolaryngography” (ELG) to analyze Caupenne’s voice characteristics (Fourcin, 2000). ELG is a noninvasive method that measures variations of the neck tissues’ electrical impedance (translated into the movements of the vocal folds during the phonation). Specifically, our procedure comprised the following steps:

- (a) We asked Caupenne to sit down.
- (b) We placed two electrodes on his neck, one on each side of his thyroid cartilage.
- (c) We asked him to produce a sustained sound, such as a “hum,” to calibrate the instrument.
- (d) We asked him to read (as spontaneously as possible) a 1½-minute long calibrated text—a brief excerpt from *The North Wind and the Sun* (in French, *La Chèvre de monsieur Seguin*; a fable by Alphonse Daudet). During Caupenne’s phonation, the electrodes around his neck measured the opening and closing movements of his vocal folds, while software programs measured and analyzed his voice’s frequency, intonation, regularity, timbre, and much more.  
During the reading, we also observed Caupenne’s breathing, his posture (position of his shoulders, head, and neck), and the tensions of his neck.
- (e) After the reading, we asked Caupenne how he felt (in terms of vocal fatigue), and whether he felt that he had forced his voice.
- (f) Finally, we combined the ELG results with our qualitative observations to evaluate his voice parameters.

2. Refer to the glossary of terms (see the Appendix).

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- **The electrolaryngographic curve.** A graphic process assimilated to the opening and closure movements of the vocal folds during vocal production. On the electrolaryngographic curve, it is important to watch the regularity of the opening and closure cycles and to have a good closure quality which in turn governs the quality of the sound emitted.
  - **Irregularities.** A voice is considered as normal (homogenous) with up to 15% of irregularities. A very good voice has irregularities of around 5%. Over 15%, the voice may well be worn out.
  - **Stability of the larynx.** The larynx is located in the neck, inside the Adam's apple, usually at the same level as the 5th cervical vertebra. During the production of a medium sound, the ideal position of the larynx is the following: the larynx must not be either too high or too low in the neck. It must be almost motionless. If there is a breathing defect, with sudden variations in the air pressure underneath, it will move and be unstable.

## APPENDIX

### Glossary

#### Terms

- **Intonational range.** The ability to make our voice frequency change from deeper to higher pitch when we speak. A professional voice covers a wide octave range, a depressive voice covers less than a third of an octave.
- **Opening/closure of the vocal folds.** When we utter a sound, the vocal folds open and close, more or less quickly according to the pitch of the sound emitted. The higher the sound the quicker the process. If there is a closure defect, it means that there is an air leak (husky or whispery voice), that is going to lead to vocal fatigue, and later on, by compensating, to vocal forcing. The vicious circle « fatigue – forcing » is ultimately going to create a benign pathology of the vocal folds (nodules or polyp or oedema). If a pathology already exists, it will prevent the vocal folds from closing.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Christophe Haag** is an associate professor of organizational behavior at EMLYON Business School. His research focuses on how emotions and intuitions improve the performance of individuals and groups. He has published in leading journals such as the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *Organization Management*, *European Management Journal*, *M@n@gement*. He has also published several books that got a lot of media attention in France. He may be reached at [haag@em-lyon.com](mailto:haag@em-lyon.com).

**Elizabeth Fresnel** is a French laryngologist. She is at the head of “the voice lab” (exploration and care of voice, hearing, singing, and recording) that she created 28 years ago in Paris, France. The voice lab is a unique multiple-service voice clinic composed of speech therapists, psychologists, physical therapists, and vocal technique instructors. She may be reached at [fresnel@laboratoirelavoix.com](mailto:fresnel@laboratoirelavoix.com).