

PAULINE
GRAIVIER

by LAUREN VINER | photo by SEAN MCGINTY

“CONTROL IN SPEAKING
— AND LISTENING —
THE KEYS TO GREAT
COMMUNICATIONS”

When you have an engineer tell you his audience applauded his technical presentation, that's pretty incredible,” says Pauline Graivier, President of Verbal Communications Inc., referring to a client who, after her coaching, gave a presentation his peers found to be informative, dynamic and amazingly enjoyable.

An executive communications coach to many who are already doing well in their field as well as the inexperienced, Pauline pushes her clients to improve their skills, helping them do everything from giving a knockout speech to moving beyond a career plateau or resolving a negative situation. A senior vice president of a large corporation she worked with said, “My mother taught me the difference between right and wrong. Pauline Graivier taught me the difference between management and leadership.”

“Coaching people to use the right words” is a deceptively simple phrase she uses to describe her craft. “Many times we walk away from an encounter and think, ‘why did I say that?’ I want people to be in control, which can mean tailoring messages for each audience, using fewer words and confidently facing the audience.”

While handling difficult assignments involving contentious teams or coaching someone who has made enemies to change other people's perceptions, Pauline's years of experience plus her long list of Fortune 500 corporate clients give her credibility. Trust is a huge factor: her clients know she tells them the truth about what they need and how to achieve desired results.

Pauline describes working with one manager, “Fred”, who expected his team to obey orders just as recruits did during his military career. His corporate CEO called Pauline's company, Verbal Communications Inc., and told her that even though the manager was talented, the firm was going to have to let him go. He said, “morale goes down and valuable people quit when they go to work for him.” So Fred learned to listen to people as he made rounds and talked with them informally on the factory floor. He solicited suggestions plus told each person in his division why they were successful and how they contributed to the com-

pany. Pauline also had him encourage everyone to take on responsibilities; he organized meetings which he would have someone else lead. Soon people were actually pleased to be working with him. The CEO was amazed; Fred had changed his coworkers' perceptions and created a strong working environment simply by communicating well. “You saved us a lot of money, Pauline. Firing Fred would have cost us his severance pay and payment to a search firm for a replacement. Then there would be the loss of Fred's extensive experience plus training his replacement. Thanks!”

Verbal Communications Inc. is the result of Pauline's entrepreneurial partnership with the late Gloria Hoffman. They started out over forty years ago offering public speaking and conversation courses at the YWCA, El Centro Community College and two high profile Dallas firms. They built on every success. *The Dallas Morning News* gave them their first big break by writing a long feature story entitled *Help's on the Way for Terrified Talkers*, drawing an audience of 79 to the first session.

Today Pauline offers individual coaching and seminars in relationship building, leadership skills, memorable speeches, team building, sales, influencing investors. One fascinating thing about her advice is its frequent relevance to both the workplace and day to day life. Pauline says, “Understanding what others need, believing in their ability to succeed, trusting them with responsibility, realizing that others do not think as we do are subjects that translate into techniques. When practiced successfully, they improve interactions between many bosses and employees as well as friends and families.”

Pauline is enthusiastic on the subject of listening, the central foundation to communications. When clients say “I'm having problems with my customer” or “I can't understand why my staff is disgruntled”, conversation morphs into how well they listen. “We are actually terrible listeners,” she says. “The average person listens to 30% of what is said and then retains only 10% of that after 24 hours. People think that all they have to do is put a giant funnel into their heads and that'll

do the trick - but that doesn't work. Why not organize listening just as we organize thinking?”

The result is a list of Concepts of Organized Listening, which has changed the way thousands of people listen across the U.S. and globally, in the many countries in which Verbal Communications Inc.'s seminars have been given. One of the 17 concepts is *Listening for Points of Agreement*. This is perhaps the most challenging technique, especially when working with argumentative personalities or in volatile situations, but Pauline swears by its validity. One woman she worked with left the Verbal Communications office to meet with union negotiators on what was expected to be a two day, contentious discussion. Using Pauline's technique, the teams resolved the problems between them in three hours.

Organized listening and other communications techniques are discussed in Graivier and Hoffman's best selling book, *Speak the Language of Success*, (GP Putnam's Sons, Berkeley Business Press) that has been translated into two Chinese languages. Organized listening is only one subject included in five years of *The Dallas Morning News* business columns, *Words at Work* and *Business Minds*, written by Pauline and attorney Rob Hoffman. To read some of them, go to the Verbal Communications website, www.verbalcommunications.com.

Pauline is justifiably proud of the results she achieves which her clients frequently describe as life changing. It's clear she applies her straightforward communication philosophy to her relationship with them. “I've learned you must not waffle with sincerity. You cannot use these techniques if you're not sincere because relationships are built on trust.” She's applied her techniques in her own situations, whether it is in a business environment or in her personal life. Her husband, retired pediatric surgeon Leonard Graivier and three children all attest to Pauline's successful application of these communications techniques. “I'm a most fortunate person,” Pauline says. “I get to communicate with exciting and interesting people. I learn something new every day. I touch other people's lives. How can one beat that?”