

Finding Your Own Voice

Communicate with purpose



BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA



Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your own heart and intuition."

Steve Jobs



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With all of our daily pressures and demands, delivering on the expectations placed on us can often be overwhelming. That's when it's important to remind ourselves about the unique qualities we bring to the table and how we communicate those to others.

I recall an encounter I had with a wonderfully warm property owner. His voice was filled with reason and he seemed open to collaborate. While he didn't support the expansion project entirely, he kept an open mind. I admired this. He inspired me to want to learn to use my voice in a way that indicated I was collaborative when dealing with issues that I didn't entirely support.

Lessons can also be learned from a difficult property owner. They don't try to hide the fact that they hate your project, resent your employer and find you annoying. All of this is reflected in their voice.

Think about the people that you admire and want to emulate. They have their own purpose and their voices reflect it. If we want to thrive, we need to find our own unique voice. We should not rely on imitation as a shortcut to success. If we do, we're not living our authentic lives, and the success we find will come without a solid foundation. In order to add lasting, meaningful value, we must stay true to our own voice. But how can we do that? Here are a few tips:

ACTIVELY SEARCH FOR IT

It's not likely that we will wake up one morning and suddenly find our voice. Rather, it is an evolving process. Most of us didn't know what we were good at or what we wanted to do when we grew up. Yet, as we became exposed to different experiences, we were able to begin the process of uncovering our true selves. Some experiences have been more beneficial than others, but all in all, they have made us who we are today.

ACTIVELY LISTEN TO OTHERS

What happens when we are alert and in-tune with the other party? We're gathering all kinds of information. And if we want to stay true to our own voice, we need to listen to their entire story. Not part of it, the whole thing. Only when we actively listen are we able to truly understand the other party's point of view. Once it's our turn to respond, we're ready to reveal our voice by offering creative solutions.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE DOING?

Passion is the primary component that leads to confidence, as well as developing and expressing yourself. Whatever it is that gives you meaning and purpose will also help you to find your true voice. If you find that your passion lies outside your work, explore what gives your life meaning. This will help you better define your voice and even give it another dimension.

HELPING OTHERS FIND THEIR VOICE

Right of way professionals are stewards of the public good. We collaborate with owners toward win-win outcomes. We observe and listen so that we can better understand the owner's needs, wants, desires and concerns. We are naturals at helping others find their voice, especially when we listen and try to draw the best from them. We understand who they are by how they speak to us. And by being a respectful listener, we allow them to express their own voice.

Regardless of where we started, we have managed to find a fulfilling career in right of way. This industry has provided a great opportunity for us to develop and express our unique voice. You owe it to yourself to be heard. And you owe it to others who need your voice.