

HOW YOUR SPEECH HELPS YOU or HURTS YOU And What You Can Do About It

I was sitting in the office of the casting director for one of television's most enduring and popular afternoon soap operas. He had just found out that I taught voice and speech, as well as being an actor, and fortunately for me he wanted to talk about it.

"Not enough actors know how important their voice is to their career," he said.

"I bring people in because from their pictures they look just right. They walk in that door and I'm ready to give them the part. But as soon as I hear them speak, I feel like telling them to go get some speech training, because I can't use them sounding like that."

He added, *"I don't tell them, because what they sound like is their business. They should have themselves fully prepared when they come in."*

Sounding like what? He knew and I knew, because we were in different aspects of the same business — the **image business**.

It was his business to cast actors who looked and **sounded** like certain characters. Specifically in this case he was talking about casting leading men and women, actors who **sounded** strong, confident and sexy.

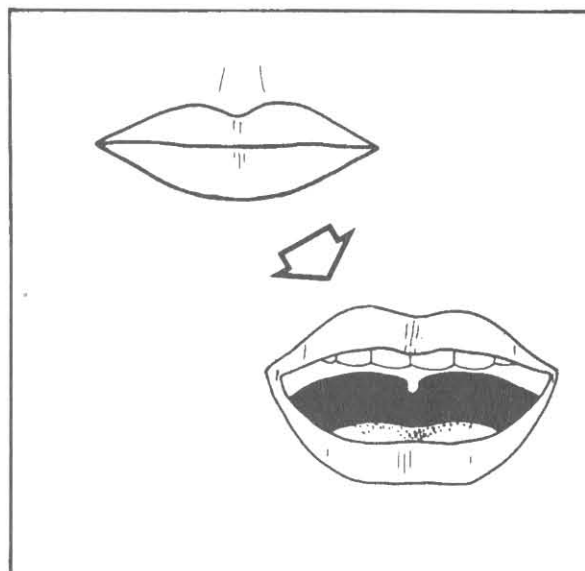
In my voice and speech business, **SPEECHMASTERS**, I train not only actors but people in all professions, to **sound** knowledgeable, confident, competent, trustworthy and — yes, sexy.

How important is your voice to your career? To illustrate, here are some stories you will probably find familiar.

Consonant #10 [b] “ball” (voiced plosive)



[b]



Hearing

Listen carefully to this sound on the *Standard American Diction* CDs.

Jaw

Open your jaw a little more than one finger width. (When you're speaking, your jaw floats open about one finger width. But sometimes you need to open your jaw wider, so it's best to practice with a wide jaw.)

Tongue

Feel your tongue relaxed down on the floor of your mouth. Leave it there as you say the sound.

Lips

Bring your upper and lower lips lightly together. (Do not close your jaw.)

Begin the vocal sound and feel the vibrations on your lips.

Feel a little breath pressure build up behind your lips. (Do not let the breath pressure puff out your cheeks.)

Relax your lips open.

Feel like you're bouncing into a strong vowel sound.

Say the sound out loud — open up to the vowel [ʌ].

[b]... [b]...

[b]... [b]...

Mirror Exercise

Watch yourself in a mirror as you say [b].

For a clear [b], your jaw should stay open, with your teeth about a finger width apart. Touch your jaw to help it stay open.

Say the sound out loud.

[b]... [b]...

[b]... [b]...