



A VERALA FREE TOOL

# The 5-Foundation Voice Audit.

A 12-minute self-assessment for founders, executives, and operators. Pinpoint the single vocal habit costing you authority in high-stakes rooms — without recording yourself.

# You can't fix what you can't name.

Most leaders walk into investor pitches, board meetings, and all-hands moments knowing something feels off about how they're landing — but they can't put a finger on what. The advice they get back is usually about *strategy* (“your story needs to be tighter”) or *confidence* (“just believe in yourself more”). Both miss the mark, because the actual issue is almost always one specific vocal habit, drilled into your delivery so deeply you've stopped hearing it.

This audit gives you the vocabulary to name it. Twenty questions, six minutes, no recording required. You'll come out the other side knowing which of the five vocal foundations is the biggest leak in your delivery — and what to do about it.

**What this audit is.** A diagnostic tool I built for my own use over the last 18 months while preparing for investor calls, board moments, and franchise conversations. It's the same framework I use in paid coaching sessions, simplified into a self-administered version so you can run it on yourself any time.

**What this audit is not.** A replacement for the coaching itself. The audit tells you *what's broken*. The actual rewiring of the habit takes 4–8 weeks of daily drilling. If you want help with that part, the back of this PDF tells you how to start.

## How to use it

Read pages 3-7 (the five foundations) carefully — this is where most of the value lives. Then take the assessment on pages 8-9, scoring yourself honestly. The diagnostic on page 10 tells you which foundation to focus on first. Page 11 gives you the drill to start on this week. Page 12 has the next step if you want help.

# Rate of speech.

## 01 / RATE OF SPEECH

### Controls engagement and gravitas.

*The speed at which you move from one word to the next, and from one idea to the next.*

#### DEFAULT FAILURE

Always fast (reads as anxious, like you don't trust the room to keep up) or always slow (reads as dull, like you don't believe what you're saying). Most leaders default to fast — the unconscious belief is that the moment is precious and they need to fit more in.

#### WHAT IT COSTS YOU

When you rush the key line, you tell the room it's not worth their full attention. Slow down for the important line. Speed up to show passion. Make one sentence land by saying it *slower than feels comfortable*.

#### THE CUE TO FIX IT

Pick the single most important sentence in your next high-stakes moment. Deliver it 25% slower than the rest. The contrast is what makes the room lean in.

**The pattern to watch for.** Rushing happens worst at the end of a thought. Most leaders are fine for the first 80% of a paragraph, then they speed up into the close as if they're trying to escape. The close is the part the room remembers. Slow it down.

# Volume + Pitch.

## 02 / VOLUME

### Conveys authority and conviction.

*How much air is moving through your voice, and where in your body it's being supported from.*

#### DEFAULT FAILURE

Too quiet — reads as unsure. Or the more common failure for leaders who present often: starts strong, then trails off, with the last three words of each sentence dying. This is a tell that you're running out of breath, which is a tell that you're not breathing diaphragmatically.

#### THE CUE TO FIX IT

Project from the soft palate, not the throat. Inhale before each new idea. Don't let the last three words of a sentence die. The end of the sentence is where conviction lives.

## 03 / PITCH / MELODY

### Makes you memorable. Kills monotone.

*The variation in the up-and-down notes of your voice across a sentence and across a passage.*

#### DEFAULT FAILURE

Flat. One note. The room feels heavy without knowing why. Leaders who fall into monotone almost always do it from a fear of sounding theatrical — and they overcorrect into the opposite, which is forgettable.

#### THE CUE TO FIX IT

Add melody on purpose. A monotone backing-track makes the room feel heavy. Vary the high and low notes — not randomly, but where the meaning calls for it. Up at the question. Down at the conviction.

# Tonality + the Pause.

## 04 / TONALITY

### The emotion living under the words.

*The match (or mismatch) between what you're saying and what your sound is communicating underneath.*

DEFAULT  
FAILURE

Your face says one thing and your voice says another. You tell the room you're excited about the next quarter, but your tone is neutral. The room trusts the tone, not the words. They mark you as inauthentic before you finish the sentence.

THE CUE  
TO FIX IT

Your face is the remote control for your tonality. Smile and warmth enters the voice. The emotion underneath has to match the message. Before any high-stakes moment, name the emotion you want to be underneath your words — and let your face hold it.

## 05 / THE PAUSE

### Gives the room time to process. Replaces filler words.

*The deliberate silence between sentences and between ideas.*

DEFAULT  
FAILURE

“Um.” “Uh.” “You know.” “Like.” Rushing the punchline because silence feels uncomfortable. Most leaders are terrified of silence — it feels like dead air. To the audience, it's the opposite: silence is where authority lives.

THE CUE  
TO FIX IT

Pause instead of saying “um.” Two full seconds before the punchline. Silence makes you look in control and lets the point sink in. The pause is the cheapest and highest-leverage drill in this entire framework.

## The four stages of competence.

Before you score yourself on the audit, locate yourself on the four-stage ladder. Every foundation lives at one of these four stages for you right now. Knowing which stage you're in changes how you read your audit results.

### Stage 1 — Unconscious incompetence

You don't know the habit exists. You can't hear it when it happens. Most leaders live their whole career here for at least one foundation.

### Stage 2 — Conscious incompetence

You hear it now. It feels awful. **That feeling is the gateway, not a setback.** Recording yourself is what unlocks this stage.

### Stage 3 — Conscious competence

You can do it well when you're concentrating on it. The drill is paying off. The new behavior shows up in high-stakes rooms.

### Stage 4 — Unconscious competence

It's automatic. You've internalized it. Now we layer the next foundation.

**Where most people are right now.** If you're reading this audit, you're probably at Stage 1 for at least one foundation. The act of taking the audit moves you to Stage 2 on whichever foundation it flags. Stage 2 feels worse than Stage 1 — but it's the only stage from which change is possible.

# How to take the audit.

Twenty questions on the next two pages. For each, score yourself **0–4** based on how often the statement is true of you in *high-stakes* rooms (investor pitch, board meeting, hard team conversation) — NOT in casual conversation. Most leaders are at Stage 3 in casual settings. The high-stakes rooms are where the defaults come out.

## The scale

- **0** — Almost never true of me in high-stakes rooms.
- **1** — Occasionally true. Maybe a quarter of the time.
- **2** — About half the time. I can name it when it happens.
- **3** — Usually true. It's a pattern.
- **4** — Almost always true. This is who I am in the room.

## The brutal honesty rule

If you're not sure whether to score yourself 2 or 3 on a question, score yourself 3. The audit only works if you're ruthlessly honest about the default state of your delivery — not the polished version you wish you were. Stage 2 (“hearing the habit”) is the gateway. You can't get there if you score yourself the way you want to be seen.

**Time check.** 12 minutes total. 5 minutes to read pages 3–6 carefully (which you've done if you're here), 6 minutes to score, 1 minute to add up your totals.

**Optional — record yourself first.** If you have ten minutes, record a 60-second voice memo of yourself explaining one thing you care about — a real upcoming pitch, a recent decision, anything. Listen to it once before scoring. Your numbers will move 1–2 points in places, and the results will be far more accurate. This is what record-and-review unlocks.

# Score yourself — Foundations 1, 2, 3.

## Rate of speech

- 1. I speak faster than I think I do when I'm nervous or under pressure. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 2. I rush through the closing line of important sentences instead of letting it land. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 3. People have told me to “slow down” in feedback at least once in the last year. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 4. I rarely vary my speed deliberately to emphasize a key point. 0 1 2 3 4

Rate of speech subtotal: \_\_\_ / 16

## Volume

- 5. My voice trails off at the end of sentences when I'm presenting. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 6. I've been asked to repeat myself or speak up in meetings within the last quarter. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 7. My throat feels tired after I've been speaking for 30+ minutes. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 8. I get quieter — not louder — when I'm challenged or interrupted. 0 1 2 3 4

Volume subtotal: \_\_\_ / 16

## Pitch / Melody

- 9. If I listen back to a recording of myself, I'd describe my voice as flat or monotone. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 10. I avoid varying my pitch because I worry about sounding theatrical or fake. 0 1 2 3 4

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- 11. People I work with would describe my delivery as “steady” or “even-keeled” — not “dynamic.” 0 1 2 3 4

Pitch / Melody subtotal: \_\_\_ / 12

# Score yourself — Foundations 4, 5.

## Tonality

12. The emotion in my voice doesn't always match the emotion in my words. 0 1 2 3 4

13. I've been told I sound flat, formal, or robotic when I present. 0 1 2 3 4

14. I rarely think about what emotion I want under the words before walking into the room. 0 1 2 3 4

15. People have told me they couldn't tell if I was excited about something I clearly was excited about. 0 1 2 3 4

Tonality subtotal: \_\_\_ / 16

## The Pause

16. I use filler words (“um,” “uh,” “you know,” “like”) more often than I'd like. 0 1 2 3 4

17. Silence in a meeting makes me uncomfortable — I tend to fill it. 0 1 2 3 4

18. I rush the punchline of my most important points rather than letting them sit. 0 1 2 3 4

19. I rarely pause for two full seconds before delivering a key sentence. 0 1 2 3 4

20. When I'm interrupted, I start speaking again before the interrupter has fully stopped. 0 1 2 3 4

The Pause subtotal: \_\_\_ / 20

**Now total your scores.** Add up each foundation's subtotal. The foundation with the *highest* score relative to its max is the one stealing the most authority from you in high-stakes rooms. That's where you start.

# Read your results.

Convert each subtotal to a percentage of its max, then rank the foundations by which one has the highest percentage. That's your primary leak.

FOUNDATION	YOUR SCORE	MAX	%
Rate of speech	___	16	___%
Volume	___	16	___%
Pitch / Melody	___	12	___%
Tonality	___	16	___%
The Pause	___	20	___%

## What the rankings mean

### If your top foundation is 65%+

You're at Stage 1 on this. You've never had it named. Hearing it for the first time will be uncomfortable. That's the gateway, not a setback.

### If your top is 40–65%

You're at Stage 2 — conscious incompetence. You sense it but can't consistently fix it under pressure. This is where most leaders are.

### If your top is 20–40%

Stage 3 — conscious competence. You can do it well when concentrating. Time to layer the NEXT-highest foundation.

### If everything is under 20%

Either you're Stage 4 across the board (extremely rare) or you scored yourself the way you want to be seen, not the way you actually are. Re-take with brutal honesty.

## Find your foundation. Run its drill.

Whichever foundation came in highest on the previous page, that's the one you drill this week. Five minutes a day. No exceptions. Do NOT drill more than one at a time — most people quit because they tried to fix everything at once.

### IF YOUR TOP IS — RATE OF SPEECH

#### The Slow-Down rep

Pick one important sentence from a real upcoming moment. Deliver it once at your normal pace. Record. Listen back. Now deliver it 25% slower than felt comfortable. Record. Listen. Repeat 5 times. Five minutes total. The contrast trains your ear.

### IF YOUR TOP IS — VOLUME

#### The Soft-Palate drill

Slide your thumb back along the roof of your mouth until you feel the soft palate. Practice keeping it open while you read aloud for 5 minutes. The volume should feel like it's resonating in your face, not pushing from your throat.

### IF YOUR TOP IS — PITCH / MELODY

#### The Siren

On the sound “eeee,” glide your voice from your lowest comfortable pitch to your highest and back. Slowly. Five minutes. This is breaking the monotone groove your voice has trained itself into.

### IF YOUR TOP IS — TONALITY

#### The Smile-and-Read drill

Read aloud for 5 minutes with a deliberate smile on your face. Then read the same passage with a neutral face. Then read it with a slight scowl. The contrast trains you to feel — and choose — the emotion under your words.

# If you want help running this loop weekly — that's what Verala is.

You just ran the audit on yourself once. Verala is the system that runs it for you weekly. You send a 60-second clip. The system transcribes it locally on your machine, runs it through the same framework you just learned, and gives you the one thing to drill that week. Track your stage progress across all five foundations over time.

[Start at verala.app](https://verala.app) →

Founding cohort capped at 6 founders. Diagnostic tier is \$149 — one clip, one diagnosis, full refund if it doesn't produce a specific change. Operator monthly tier is \$497/month. Intensive 6-week engagement is \$2,497.