

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Getting to "Yeah": How Conversational Pausing Shapes Consumer Perceptions By



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Date : 30 Nov 2023 (THU)
Time : 10:30 am – 12 noon
Venue : M802

Abstract

Communicators benefit from being seen as helpful. While research has found that offering help impacts how people are perceived, less is known about how more subtle behaviors shape such interpersonal perceptions. Might how employees speak in conversation influence how they are perceived? We examine how often employees pause while speaking to conversation partners (e.g., customers, co-workers). While some suggest frequent pausing should be detrimental, we argue it can encourage conversation partners to react with verbal assents (e.g., "yeah", "uhuh", "okay") that lead them to perceive speakers as more helpful, and more positively in general. A multimethod examination supports this account. Lab experiments and an analysis of hundreds of customer service calls reveal that pausing more frequently can enhance how employees are perceived because it signals the employee's desire for feedback and encourages conversation partners to assent.

Dr Grant Packard is an Associate Professor of Marketing at York University's Schulich School of Business in Toronto, Canada. He mostly studies language in the marketplace. Things like how and why consumers talk about products in online reviews and social media, the impact of words used by service agents and salespeople when speaking to customers, and how language is consumed as part of cultural products (e.g., song lyrics, journal articles, movie scripts). Grant's research appears in consumer behavior, marketing, and psychology journals, and has been covered by outlets including *The Atlantic*, *Harvard Business Review*, *NPR*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. He was an MSI Young Scholar (2019) and currently serves as Associate Editor at the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, and *Journal of Marketing*.

All interested are welcome.



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