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The (interactional) business of doing business: a rhetorical discursive action analysis of an e-commerce business opportunity

Walter John Carl III
University of Iowa

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THE (INTERACTIONAL) BUSINESS OF DOING BUSINESS: A RHETORICAL
DISCURSIVE ACTION ANALYSIS OF AN E-COMMERCE BUSINESS
OPPORTUNITY

by

Walter John Carl III

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Communication Studies
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2001

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Steve Duck

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Walter John Carl III

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Communication Studies at the May 2001 graduation.

Thesis Committee: _____
Steve Duck, Thesis Supervisor

Kristine Fitch

Jonathan Potter

Barbara Biesecker

Randy Hirokawa

To my father, Walter J. Carl, Jr. my grandfather, Walter J. Carl, Sr.
and my great-grandfather, J. S. Hubbs

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focused on presentations of an e-commerce business opportunity to people interested in a multilevel marketing business. Participation in a multilevel marketing organization can be described as a legitimate business activity where individuals can earn a living while enjoying the benefits of independence, autonomy, and being part of a business team. A second, equally plausible way to describe the business is as a get-rich-quick or pyramid scheme in which individuals learn techniques of persuasion and how to exploit personal relationships in order to maximize profit. Given these alternative descriptions, the primary research question for this project concerned the identity problems managed by current business owners as they built up the first kind of description of the business while simultaneously undermining the second.

A series of business plan presentations and training sessions of a multilevel marketing organization were audio and video-tape recorded in the United Kingdom and the United States and transcribed. These meetings were analyzed by means of a rhetorical discursive action approach. This perspective is informed by principles of conversation analysis (i.e., how participants accomplish social actions through talk on a turn-by-turn basis), rhetorical concerns (i.e., how versions of the world are built up and undermined in relation to alternative, rival versions), and fact construction (i.e., how descriptions of events are formulated to be true, objective, and disinterested).

The analysis demonstrated that various conversational practices were used to construct the e-commerce business as legitimate and as a vehicle to fulfill the audience members' dreams and goals, while countering the notion that the business involved processes of selling, persuasion, or convincing. Some of the devices used to accomplish this effect included managing informality of the meetings, positioning the audience as intelligent, reflective people who would not fall prey to a sales pitch, and showing how business techniques grew out of a larger ethic of personal relationships and connections.

The study concluded with a discussion of the importance of analyzing actual interaction; training and pedagogical implications; future avenues of study; and ethical, political, and critical implications raised by this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about "how presenters of an e-commerce business opportunity talk to new people to get them interested in the business, and how the presenters teach those already involved a successful life philosophy that helps them achieve their dreams." The first sentence is placed in quotation marks to highlight that this is just one version or description of what this thesis is about. An alternative, equally plausible version is that this project is about "how people selling a get-rich-quick scheme convince prospects to sign up, and how these salespeople learn techniques of persuasion and how to exploit interpersonal relationships in order to promote the pyramid scheme."

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how current e-commerce business owners construct the first version while simultaneously undermining the second when they talk to new people and when they train other business owners how to be successful in the business.

The study of how people use language has been an ongoing concern for researchers in the field of communication studies (Bochner, 1985; Mumby, 1997; Tracy, in press). While the communication discipline often approaches the study of language use by dividing itself into various domains such as interpersonal or relational communication, group communication, organizational communication, rhetorical studies, etc., there have also been examples of research where these concerns were productively brought together (and in the process demonstrating that these concerns were never that far apart in the first place). For example, relational scholars have studied how personal relationships and cultural dynamics serve as a backdrop and premise for persuasion (Duck, 1994, 1998; Fitch, 1998). Group communication scholars have studied rhetorical, cultural, and social influence practices in naturalistic contexts (e.g., Barge, 1994; Conquergood, 1994; Frey, 1994; Lesch, 1994). Further, organizational scholars have studied persuasive efforts on

the part of organizations to create a sense of identification between the organization and new organizational members (Cheney, 1983; Pratt, 2000).

This project seeks to continue these traditions of demonstrating how relational, organizational, and rhetorical concerns can be productively brought together (and/or were never that separate in the first instance) by paying close attention to participant's actual discourse or talk.¹ Rather than viewing talk as a neutral tool for describing reality, talk can be viewed as an ongoing, unfinished rhetorical and performative activity. By **rhetorical**², I mean that talk presents a particular view of the world, "which others can accept, challenge, reject, or assimilate" (Duck, 1994, p. 12). By **performative**, it is suggested that talk performs certain jobs, such as indicating affection, managing identity, or proposing certain positions and denying counter positions (Hopper & Drummond, 1990; Shotter, 1993).

The emphasis on talk's rhetorical and performative features in this project stems from a particular kind of discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Tracy & Anderson, 2000). Research conducted within this discourse analytic tradition has focused on how versions of self, others, the world, etc., are constructed as factual and real, as well as how people position themselves in relation to

¹ The term "discourse" is used to refer to talk and text as the performance of social actions. In this project, the data is exclusively conversational (or, talk-in-interaction; Schegloff, 1992), so the term "talk" is used interchangeably with "discourse," though it could equally be argued that the data is exclusively "textual" since transcripts of the conversations are used in the analysis (see Derrida, 1988; Potter, 1996, p. 85). Click the "Back" button of your browser to return to the main text.² Boldfaced terms and phrases are hyperlinked to glossary entries that provides background information and original or secondary sources to learn more information about the term/phrase.³ The information contained in this line refers to the following: "BP" stands for business presentation, followed by the date, the line numbers of the transcript, and the initials of the transcriber (in all cases for this project, WJC refers to the author). The information in parentheses refers to the audio/video file size, followed by the time length of the clip in minutes and seconds.

² Boldfaced terms and phrases are hyperlinked to glossary entries that provides background information and original or secondary sources to learn more information about the term/phrase.

other people, groups, ideas, objects, etc to perform various social actions. While many sites have been studied for these concerns, such as news reports (Potter & Reicher, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992), academic discussions (Tracy. 1997), emergency phone calls to the police (Tracy & Anderson, 1999), focus group moderation (Puchta, 2000), and school board discussions (Tracy & Muller, 2001), none have focused on how business and organizational processes are accomplished interactively. **Interactively** is used in two senses here. First, how might a process such as organizational identification interact with promotion as a business process? Second, how might both processes be accomplished simultaneously through actual, situated interaction, such as in a business presentation?

While the theoretical aim of this project is to extend this discourse analytic research tradition into the realm of business presentations, there is also a pragmatic focus on raising the awareness of how speakers manage a range of complex, practical issues when talking about e-commerce. For example, how does a business person sell or promote the importance of e-commerce without having her or his position undermined as selling or just acting as a salesperson?

To carry out this study, actual business plan presentations and training sessions were audio and video-tape recorded, transcribed in detail, and then analyzed. Seven business meetings were recorded in the United States and the United Kingdom over a ten-month period in 1999-2000. These transcripts and recordings were analyzed according to a rhetorical discursive action approach, which, as alluded to above, investigates discourse for its rhetorical and performative features, while maintaining a commitment to understanding how practical communication problems and issues are dealt with by the participants themselves (Potter, 1996; Tracy & Anderson, 2000).

To provide a feel for some of the analytic concerns of a rhetorical discursive action approach, a brief extract of a business presentation will be analyzed. The extract that will be presented (and the majority of the extracts in the thesis) has been transcribed with many conversational details such as pauses, rate of speech, vocal inflection, etc.,

since these interactional features may be consequential to the rhetorical and action-oriented features of talk that are under investigation in this project (Hopper & Drummond, 1990; Buttny, 1993). To see a list of these transcription symbols, click here (link opens into new window). Further, this extract (and nearly all of the extracts used in this project) has an associated audio and or video clip so that readers can hear and/or see the actual talk to be analyzed (Silverman, 1997). In this extract, a current business owner is making a presentation about starting up one's own e-commerce business to a group of new business owners and "prospects" (i.e., potentially new business owners). For purposes of this illustration, some talk that precedes this extract will be glossed (click here for the fuller transcript; link opens into new window). The presenter "Anna" has already suggested that starting up an internet business is an exciting opportunity, but that before anyone starts up their own business, they should know what they want to achieve from it. The presenter then asks if people have a plan for the next five or ten years. The first person to respond to this question is a new business owner (or, "NBO" since she is not identified by name) who states that she has just retired from working and is looking to supplement her income. She goes on to say: [XINTR_1A.mov]

Audio File 1. Introduction 1

Extract 1. Intro 1 BP080499:121-132:WJC (0:31/188K)³

121 NBO: < A::nd u::m > (1.0) so that- (.) and (.)

122 I < thi:nk that the in:ter↓ net (.2)

123 is the thing > to be in to (.2) uh (.) at this ti↓ me (.)

124 and I think that the potential (.4) uh

125 for development (1.0) uh

³ The information contained in this line refers to the following: "BP" stands for business presentation, followed by the date, the line numbers of the transcript, and the initials of the transcriber (in all cases for this project, WJC refers to the author). The information in parentheses refers to the audio/video file size, followed by the time length of the clip in minutes and seconds.

126 you know (.) is astronomical (.)

127 'and I- I just think it's a good opportunity (.5)

128 and so I'm interested to see what it has to offer (.2)

129 uh (.) to see if it would fit in with my plans (.2)

130 I haven't finalized my (.6) uh (.) five to ten year plan

131 they're still in- (.) being formulated

132 A: Mm hmm

In lines 122-123, NBO marks some tentativeness in her answer by the use of 'I think' (versus, for example, "I know") and then describes the internet as 'the thing to be in to,' with such characteristics as having 'potential for development' (lines 124-125), being 'a good opportunity' (line 127), and that it may have something 'to offer' (line 128). Taken together, these characterizations construct the internet as a factual object, that possesses its own agency (i.e., it has something 'to offer'), independent of what the presenter, for example, might say about it.

Next, the 'you know' (in line 126) is used as an appeal to common knowledge, which suggests that it is not just NBO describing the internet this way, but it is how others might describe it too. The 'you know' is followed by an **extreme case formulation** ('is astronomical'). The use of extreme case formulations often mark a high level of intensity and highlight the fact that the need for action is self-evident (Pomerantz, 1986; Tracy & Anderson, 1999). Extreme case formulations about the internet or business opportunity package an **account** for action as part of the very description. That is, when the internet is described in such extreme terms, no further account, or explanation, is necessary to justify why something should be done about it.

At lines 128-129, NBO says she is 'interested to see what it has to offer' and 'to see' if 'it' would 'fit in' with her plans. Whether the 'it' in line 129 refers to the internet or the e-commerce business opportunity is not clear, but NBO seems to construct her 'plans' as separate from an object out there in the world and all its potentially good opportunities.

Taken together, NBO seems to be doing some **accountability** work here. That is, she talks in a way that suggests (i.e., makes inferences available for others in the room) that her plans pre-existed this presentation about the internet business opportunity, even though they might not be 'finalized.' NBO makes herself accountable by providing a version of events where others could infer that she is someone who can recognize and be open to a good opportunity when she sees it (her plans are still 'being formulated'), but who is for now just an interested observer (note repeated use of 'to see'; in lines 128-129).

Further, it is interesting to consider how the NBO's version is constructed in relation to possible, alternative versions. An alternative version that she may be working to undermine is that she is someone who has been unwittingly taken in by the presentation of the business opportunity. Rather, she is someone who is open to, but cautiously considering, the opportunities the internet provides, making sure it 'fits in' with plans she has already thought about independently of this presentation.

Thus, some of the analytic issues at stake with a rhetorical discursive action analysis include how facts and objects are described, how talk **makes relevant** certain **identity** issues, and how talk is used as a tool to accomplish these actions in situated contexts. As alluded to at the beginning of this section, these interrelated analytic issues have important implications for interpersonal, organizational, and rhetorical processes. For example, the description of the internet and the business opportunity offered by the new business owner is not offered free-standing, but in a sequential and rhetorical context where alternative, equally plausible versions are at stake. Additionally, the NBO's talk suggests that she is managing interpersonal concerns, constructing her identity on this occasion as one who thinks independently and can recognize a good opportunity when it comes along. Further, this talk has implications for the organizational process of promoting the business to new organizational members through presentations and how the business may be framed as a legitimate opportunity or as a scheme in which new members can be unwittingly taken.

* * *

Given this brief introduction, the next section, "Navigating the Electronic Thesis," explains the format and organization of this web-based thesis, and provides a summary overview for each of the remaining sections. [Click here to go to "Navigating the Electronic Thesis."](#)

[Link to References section to see full citations for works cited above \(opens into new window\).](#)

NAVIGATING THE ELECTRONIC THESIS

This section explains why this thesis is web-based, provides a summary overview for each of the remaining sections of the thesis, and provides guidelines for navigating through the electronic thesis.

Web-Based Format

The format of the thesis is web-based, rather than the more traditional, paper-bound format, for a number of reasons. First, discourse analysis relies on the use of recorded interactions and transcripts to make scholarly arguments (Tracy, in press). There is also a methodological commitment to provide the readers of an analysis with the same materials to which the analyst has access, to the extent possible (Buttny, 1993; Silverman, 1997). By formatting the thesis electronically, audio and video clips, along with the transcript of the actual business presentation, can be made available to the readers. A related advantage is that certain features not available in a written transcript, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and other audio-visual elements, will be included as part of the recorded materials.

Second, like any specialized analytic approach, this particular style of discourse analysis employs certain technical terms. For some readers, it will be helpful to have access to a glossary that defines the technical terms and that links to a list of references where further information can be found.

Third, interested readers will have easier access to the thesis as a result of it being placed on the internet.

Fourth, portions of the thesis will be cross-indexed and hyper-linked to take advantage of the web-based medium, so that the reader has more flexibility in viewing the thesis in a non-linear format, if they so desire.

Organization of the Thesis

This electronic thesis is divided into the following sections:

Preliminary Material -- Provides the abstract, title page, table of contents, list of files, etc., for the electronic thesis.

Introduction -- Provides a brief overview to the electronic thesis and provides an analysis of business plan presentation extract.

Navigating the Electronic Thesis -- Explains how to navigate through the electronic thesis.

Rhetorical Discursive Action Approach -- Provides an overview of the principles and claims of the rhetorical discursive action framework that will be used in this thesis.

Statement of Research Question -- Provides a rationale for studying the discourse of business meetings, and states the primary research question for this project.

Multilevel Marketing Background -- Offers a brief background on the multilevel marketing industry (MLM) and the Traquix e-commerce business opportunity.

Data Collection -- Explains how the data was collected for this project, as well as a discussion about how access to the business meetings was obtained, potential effects of the researcher's presence while recording, the status of ethnographic background knowledge and the role of the interviews, and the issue of reflexivity.

Transcription -- Explains the transcription procedures for the data.

Analysis of Business Presentations -- Offers an analysis of the business plan presentations to new prospects interested in the Traquix e-commerce business opportunity.

Analysis of Dreams and Goals Discourse -- In this section, the use of discourse about dreams and goals is analyzed for its sequential relevance in the business presentations.

Analysis of Business Development Meetings -- Provides an analysis of the business development meetings and team meetings.

Implications -- This section discusses the implications of the project.

References -- Provides a list of the works cited in this project.

Glossary -- This section lists and explains selected technical terms used in the analysis.

Navigating with Links

There are five types of navigational links in this web-based thesis, including section links, glossary links, endnotes links, transcript links, and audio/video links.

Section links -- At the end of each section (also known as chapters) readers will have the option to link to the next section in sequence (as suggested by the author) or return to this navigation page so that readers can link to other sections of the thesis. In most cases, section links open into the same browser window. A courtesy link is also provided to the References section. Depending on your browser settings, section links will appear as blue and underlined.

Glossary links -- Terms or phrases that are in **bold face and underlined** indicate links to the glossary where interested readers can go for an explanation and definition of how that term or phrase is being used. Further, original and/or secondary sources are provided so that interested readers can find out more detailed information about the term or phrase. All glossary links open into a new window.

Endnote links -- Endnotes are indicated by brackets and numbers, such as: [1]. Depending on your browser settings, endnote links will appear as blue. Endnotes are listed at the end of each chapter. To return to the main text where you clicked on the endnote link, click on your browser's "Back" button.

Transcript links -- Each extract will have a header line that looks something like the following:

Extract 2. BP 1BP080499:121-132:WJC(0:31/188K)

Example 1. Example of Extract Line

The information contained in this line refers to the following: "BP" stands for business plan presentation ("DG" stands for dreams and goals discourse, "BDM" stands for business development meeting, and "TM" stands for team meeting), followed by the meeting date, the line numbers of the transcript, and the initials of the transcriber (in all cases for this project, WJC refers to the author). The information in parentheses refers to the audio/video file size, that includes the time of the audio/video clip in minutes and seconds, as well as the file size (for downloading purposes). By clicking on **Extract 2.**, you will be able to open the transcript in a new browser window. This might be helpful to do if the excerpt is long and you want to refer back to the transcript while reading the analysis or listening to/watching the audio/video clip.

Audio and/or video links -- Nearly all of the extracts have an associated audio and/or video link. You will need to have the Quick Time plug-in installed in your browser to hear/view these clips. *Click here for the free download.* When you press on an audio or video link, the audio or video file will begin playing in a new window. Position the window so you can see it and the transcript in the main text at the same time. Each audio and/or video link will have a control panel that allows you to play, rewind, fast forward, and pause the audio and/or video. Depending on your browser settings, audio and video links will have a blue outline around them (see examples below).



Example 2. Example of Audio Control Panel Link



Example 3. Example of Video Control Panel Link

*NOTE: When playing an audio or video clip,
the audio may become distorted.
If the audio becomes distorted,
simply press pause and then play again.*

* * *

The next section, "Discourse Analysis as Theoretical and Analytic Framework," provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical and analytic framework that will be used in this thesis and explains why a rhetorical discursive action approach was selected.

[Link to References section \(opens into new window\).](#)

Notes

1: This is an example of an endnote. Click the "Back" button on your browser to return to the main text.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS THEORETICAL AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

This section provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical and analytic framework that was used in this thesis.

Discourse analysis is a mode of inquiry into the "study of talk (or text) in context, where research reports use excerpts and their analysis as the central means to make a scholarly argument" (Tracy, in press, p. 4). By focusing on the interactions between dyads, groups, or organizations, rather than at the individual level or on cognitions, discourse analysis represents a social approach to communication as situated activity (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995; Shotter, 1993). While the term discourse analysis is used variously by different disciplines (for example, linguistics, literary theory, sociology, etc.), Tracy (in press) argues that in the field of Communication Studies, discourse analysis is used as a cover or umbrella term to include the following types of interpretive analysis: **conversation analysis** (Hopper, 1992), **social accountability practices** (Buttny, 1993), ethnography of communication (Hymes, 1974, Fitch, 1998), strategic communication practices (Sanders, 1978), and dilemmatic communication in institutional contexts (Tracy, 1997; Tracy, in press).

One particular discourse analytic tradition that has been drawn on by communication researchers (e.g., Buttny, 1993; Tracy, 1995; Tracy, 1997; Tracy & Anderson, 1999; Tracy & Muller, 2001) is called a rhetorical discursive action approach (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter & Edwards, 1992; Potter, 1996; Edwards, 1997).¹ A rhetorical discursive action approach (or, RDA) is informed by principles of **conversation analysis** (i.e., how participants accomplish social actions through talk on a turn-by-turn basis; Heritage, 1984; Nofsinger, 1991; Buttny, 1993), **rhetorical** concerns

¹ Potter and Edward's DA approach has also been called "rhetorical fact construction" (cf. Tracy & Muller, 2001) and "discursive psychology" (cf. Tracy, 1995).

(i.e., how versions of the world are built up and undermined in relation to alternative, rival versions; Billig, 1996), and **fact construction** (i.e., how descriptions of events are formulated to be true, objective, disinterested, etc.; Potter, 1996).

Claims of a Rhetorical Discursive Action Approach

Some of the basic theoretical and analytic principles or claims of RDA include: discourse is a) situated, b) action-oriented, c) constructed, d) pervasively rhetorical, and e) a site to manage issues of accountability and identity (Edwards & Potter, forthcoming). Each of these claims will be discussed below.

Discourse² is Situated, Action-Oriented, and Constructed

First, talk is situated within sequences of interaction. Note the following example:

Extract 1³

1 Rick: Hey are you busy tonight?

2 Jordan: Don't have any plans yet

3 Rick: 'wanna go to a party?

4 Jordan: Sure

Each line in the above transcript represents a **turn** of talk (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1978). One turn of talk is followed by a subsequent turn, and so on. In this excerpt, Rick asks Jordan if she is busy tonight (line 1). Jordan replies that she does not

² The term "discourse" is used to refer to the talk and text as the performance of social actions. In this project, the data is exclusively conversational (or, talk-in-interaction), so the term "talk" is used interchangeably with "discourse," though it could equally be argued that the data is exclusively "textual" since transcripts of the conversations are used in the analysis (see Derrida, 1988; Potter, 1996, p. 85).

³ Extracts 1 and 2 are hypothetical examples with no technical transcription notations. They are used here to introduce some basic points in a reader-friendly fashion and to contrast with subsequent extracts taken from naturally occurring talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1995) with technical notations (except for those without notations in original transcript, such as Extracts 4, 5 and 7). [Click here for transcription conventions \(opens into new window\).](#)

have plans (line 2), suggesting that her schedule is available. At the next turn (line 3), Rick invites Jordan to a party, which Jordan accepts in line 4. Lines 1 and 2 make up what conversation analysts call a question-answer **adjacency pair**, while lines 3 and 4 comprise an invitation-acceptance adjacency pair. While this may be an obvious point, note how the invitation-acceptance pairing comes sequentially after the question-answer pairing. Conversation analysts have identified lines 1-2 as a **pre-sequence** (Hutchby, 1998), or an orderly sequence of turns that precedes and **makes relevant** a subsequent sequence. That is, after it becomes apparent that Jordan's schedule is open, Rick invites her to the party. If Jordan was not available, then perhaps Rick might not have made the invitation.

The use of the phrase **makes relevant** suggests that a turn of talk is **oriented to**, but not determined by, its position in an interactive sequence (Schegloff, 1989). For example, in line 2, by providing an answer, Jordan treats 'Hey are you busy tonight?' as a question. In line 4, however, Jordan treats, or orients to Rick's 'wanna go to a party?' as an invitation, and one that she accepts. However, one turn at talk does not determine another turn, but creates the possibility for a particular response, thus making relevant particular subsequent turns. In this example, then, an invitation makes relevant an acceptance or rejection (often with an **account**⁴ for why one is rejecting the invitation), but does not make either of these inevitable. The acceptance or rejection may be postponed until later or be absent completely (Heritage, 1994). To further demonstrate that one turn does not determine another turn, and to show how an acceptance or rejection is deferred, consider the following excerpt:

Extract 2

1 Rick: Hey are you busy tonight?

⁴ The notions of **accounts and social accountability** will be discussed later in this section.

2 Jordan: Why do you ask?

3 Rick: Well I was wondering if you wanted to go to a party?

4 Jordan: Oh, yeah I'm free.

In this excerpt, Rick asks the same question, but Jordan does not answer it, at least not right away. Instead, she asks, or inserts, a question of her own (the first part of what is called an **insertion sequence**; Hutchby, 1998). In this case, Jordan does not ignore Rick's question, but defers it until more relevant information is obtained. Jordan treats Rick's reply in line 3 as providing sufficient information, and completes the second part of the question-answer **adjacency pair** that started in line 1. The point of using terms like adjacency pairings, relevance, and orientation is because they allow a way in to understanding *how social actions are performed* in an interaction and "oriented to by the participants themselves" (Hutchby, 1998, pp. 14-15).

A second claim of a discursive action approach, then, is that *discourse is action-oriented*. This claim suggests that discourse performs various actions such as blaming, justifying, complimenting, teasing, building up one's own argument and/or undermining another's, and so on. Relatedly, a third feature is that *discourse is constructed, or worked up, to perform these actions* by drawing on words, descriptions, accounts, common topics, and rhetorical devices. In order to see these three issues at work, it is important to use detailed transcripts of actual, sequential interaction (Edwards, 1997).

To illustrate the situated, action-oriented, and constructed features of discourse, consider the following example (from Potter, 1996, pp. 108-109) where students are discussing a noise that they hear outside of their apartment or flat:

Extract 3 (DSS-K:94:1)⁵

Becky: oi (.) sh shh (.) it could have

⁵ Click here for transcription conventions used in this paper, which were developed by Gail Jefferson (see pp. ix-xvi in Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

been that

Neil: NO that's not making a noise

[

Allan: no (.) something outside (0.4) it

was

definitely outside

Diane: → Neil you've got shoes on

Note Diane's **turn** in this sequence (the arrowed line) to make a few points about talk's action-orientation. First, as competent conversationalists and as members of a culture where, to be able to go outside of the house, shoes must be or are often worn, Diane's turn can be heard as a request for Neil to go outside and investigate the noise. Thus, Diane's talk here is not simply making an observation about the world (though more on this below), nor constructing the world in an abstract sense. Instead, she is working up a description of the situation in order to do something, in this case, to request that Neil investigate the noise. Importantly though, it is not just discourse analysts of this talk who can hear this as a request, but the participants orient to it in this way. That is, in the next few lines (not shown here), the students talk about the risks associated with going outside to investigate the noise, specifically about the possibility that there may be a burglar outside who is carrying a weapon.

Second, notice how Diane's request is not direct (such as, "Neil, would you go outside and check out that noise?"), but is accomplished by offering a description. That is, the request is *inferred*, rather than directly stated. One inference, then, is that because Neil has his shoes on, he is in a position to go investigate the noise. Third, the action that is done by Diane's description suggests some *sensitivity* or delicacy to the situation and that this sensitivity is being managed here. That is, the request for Neil to go outside to investigate involves some effort, or perhaps danger. Relatedly, this sensitivity also points to identity issues that may be implicated, or at stake, in this interaction. That is, Diane

could be perceived as lazy (not wanting to make the effort to go outside) or afraid (of confronting the possible danger), for example. Both the sensitive nature of the request and the identity issues are simultaneously constituted and managed by Diane's description.⁶

Fourth, Diane's description 'Neil you've got shoes on' could also be heard as just stating the facts or making an observation. This points to another important analytic focus of a discursive action approach: *fact construction*. **Fact construction** refers to how versions of the world are assembled together and stabilized as factual and independent of the discourse producer. The process of fact construction is "one of attempting to reify descriptions as solid and literal" while the opposite process of fact destruction is to "ironize descriptions as partial, interested, or defective in some other way" (Potter, 1996, pp. 112-113). The processes of fact construction and destruction are related to managing issues of stake (Potter, 1996). The term **stake** does not refer to one's inner, psychological motivations that get expressed through talk, as if these concerns exist extrinsic to discourse and that a function of talk was to serve as a conduit for them (Hopper, 1992). Rather, matters of interest and stake are salient issues that people build up, undermine, and attend to in their talk as part of doing particular interactive business (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Descriptions are especially useful for managing stake because a speaker does not have to say "I want you to go outside and check out those noises." Rather, this same action can be accomplished less directly with Diane's 'Neil you've got shoes on.' Potter (1996) notes how descriptions are employed to carry off an evaluation or other social

⁶ While the emphasis in the extract is on Diane's **turn**, it is also interesting to note how both Neil and Allen disagree with Becky's assessment (the first line) of what the noise could be. Specifically, both Neil and Allen produce a direct disagreement without any attempt to soften it (Sacks, 1987). This seems to constitute the situation as one where it is more important to identify the cause of the noise rather than attend to politeness issues and may contribute to the "urgency" of the situation.

action, especially since they can be defended as uninterested and unmotivated reports about the world. Of course, though, even ostensibly neutral descriptions or reports involve rhetorical choices, which is consistent with the work of Burke (1966) on how every symbolic selection necessarily entails deflections of alternative formulations, and Duck's (1994) argument that "The choice of terms to emphasize is not determined or dictated by the behavior being explained but is chosen by the observer/explainer..." (p. 79). This analytic emphasis on how reports, descriptions and versions are constructed to perform social actions leads to the pervasively rhetorical features of discourse.

Discourse Is Pervasively Rhetorical

Another way that discourse is constructed and action-oriented is that versions of the world, people, events, mental life, etc. are constructed in talk and texts in order to do things. Descriptions and versions of the world are not offered free-standing, but often in a context where they counter alternative versions in such a way as to resist being written off as partial, interested, or just plain false (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Further, communicators may build up their own versions while simultaneously taking down a rival version, thus displaying a defensive and an offensive **rhetoric** (Potter, 1996a).

To illustrate this analytic interest in rhetoric and antagonistic versions, consider the following excerpts from Drew's (1990) research on courtroom interaction (as discussed in Edwards & Potter, 1992, pp. 50-51). Below, C refers to the defense counsel who is cross-examining a witness (W) for the prosecution, who is the victim of an alleged rape:

Extract 4

C: [referring to a club where the defendant and the victim met]

it's where girls and fellas meet isn't it?

W: People go there.

C: And during the evening, didn't Mr O [the defendant] come over to sit with you?

W: Sat at our table.

In both of these examples, the defense counsel and the witness offer alternative versions or descriptions of events. Each version **makes relevant** certain inferences and does different business in the interaction. For example, when the defense counsel characterizes the club as a place where 'girls and fellas meet', his version makes two issues salient - gender and certain types of relationship activity (in this case, 'meet[ing]') - that could be consequential to the offense under dispute (i.e., rape). Notice how the witness's version succinctly neutralizes a) the gender issue by substituting the generic reference term 'people' and b) the relational activity implications by characterizing the club as just a place where people go. The second example follows a similar pattern. The defense counsel's version makes the inference available (to the overhearing jury) that the defendant came over to sit with the witness (again, a relevant issue for this trial), while the witness's version counters this implication by removing the specific person reference and substituting it with 'our table.'

As these examples illustrate, communicators deploy versions of events to do things in interaction (in this case, make inferences available for the jury) and these versions are countered or undermined in the service of other actions. Thus, in this context, the study of rhetoric as the building up and undermining of alternative, often rival, versions of events is important to understanding some of the business that gets done by participants through communication.

Discourse As a Site to Manage Issues of Accountability and Identity

Another related point about the action-oriented nature of communication is the issue of **accountability**. As Buttny (1993) argues, communication and accountability

mutually implicate one another because humans are treated as responsible to others when they make accounts about their own and others' actions. That is, communication accounts are offered to hold someone or oneself responsible for actions or to absolve someone or oneself of this responsibility. The issue of accountability is dealt with in terms of participants' ways of talking and their own orientation (Antaki, 1994). That is, agency is not dealt with in terms of a philosophical argument about the extent to which people are really agentic or can be held responsible for their actions. Rather, communicators in an interaction treat, or orient to, each other as agentic and responsible (but not everyone, for example, children, animals, people who are judged to be mentally unstable, etc.), thus making accountability practices available for analysis. Further, a focus in this thesis is to analyze how accounts are constructed to manage and attend to issues of agency and responsibility.

Related to the notion of accountability is a concern for **normativity**. Following from Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodological view that rather than analyzing how norms become internalized and then reproduced or deviated from, the focus should shift to study the methods people use (thus ethno-method-ology) to invoke, challenge, and transform norms in the process of accounting for their own and others' actions. **Conversation analysis** picks up this ethnomethodological tradition in order to look at how norms are *performed* (rather than simply *pre-formed* phenomena) as part of accountability practices on a **turn-by-turn** basis. Consider the following example from Sacks (1987):

Extract 5

1 A: You coming down early?

2 B: Well, I got a lot of things to do before getting cleared

3 up tomorrow. I w- probably won't be too early.

Sacks noted that the phrasing of A's question in the positive sense ('You coming down early?' rather than the negative form, "You're not coming down early are you?") **makes relevant**, or sets up the normative conditions for, a "Yes" answer. B however,

marks that a non-normative response will be provided by the 'Well'⁷ and then provides an account about how he has a lot of things he has to do (not that he does not want to come; note how issues of **stake** and interest are being managed here), and then, after the account, B states that he 'won't be too early' (but in a weak version; note the use of 'probably' and 'won't be too early'; see Sacks, 1987 for more details). By talking in this way, both A and B *perform* what is considered normative and routine for their joint interaction (Shotter, 1993).

A second issue managed discursively is **identity** (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). Tracy & Naughton (1994), among others, have highlighted the importance of identity to communicative interaction in their analysis of intellectual discussions. Specifically, they claim that identity is implicated in communication through various practices of asking questions during discussion, meaning that identity is an issue at stake for participants, and that a concern for identity is displayed and oriented to in participants' talk (see Extract 3 and Diane's 'Neil you've got shoes on'). In addition to analyzing how communication displays a concern for participant identities, identity is also a categorical resource that is drawn upon and made relevant by participants to do various actions (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). That is, identity can be seen as a social category that people use in their talk, on particular occasions, to do some interactional business. In particular, Sacks (1974) discussed how a person can construct a sufficient, reasonable account for an action by linking up certain activities that are conventionally associated with a certain

⁷ The claim that 'Well' marks a non-normative response is based on the tendency for 'Well' to precede accounts, or explanations, for why a person is unable, or does not want, to accept an invitation. First, it is important to understand that the provision of an account tends to mark something as going against the norm; that is, an account or explanation is not provided, in general, when things go as expected. In terms of acceptances and rejections of invitations, acceptances of invitations tend to be the structural norm (that is, in general, when a person accepts an invitation, an account is not provided for why they can or will accept the invitation). Conversely, rejections of invitations go against the norm (that is, people tend to provide accounts when they cannot or will not accept). Thus, since 'Well' tends to precede rejection accounts, this is evidence for the claim that 'Well' marks or signals that a non-normative response is coming.

identity category. For example, consider the defense counsel and witness in Extract 4 (above); the paired categories 'girls and fellas' make issues of gender and sexual activity relevant while the category 'people' provides an account of activity where these implications are neutralized.

Reading Strategy of Analytic Approach

These five claims that characterize a rhetorical discursive action approach suggest a particular type of reading strategy, or way that an analyst approaches data (that is, actual, sequential interaction). In terms of a particular reading strategy, a key analytic resource is variability (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). That is, an analyst approaches data in search of, for example, different descriptions of events, people, places, etc. Variability in terms of accounts or descriptions is seen as a product of different functions to which the discourse is put. For example, in the rape trial data (Extract 4 above; a portion is reproduced below), the prosecution described events in one way to make certain inferences available, while the defendant described the "same" event in an alternative way in order to undermine those inferences. Thus, variability can be investigated within a particular text (for example, a legal proceeding, a news report, a conversation, a presentation, etc.) and also across texts (see, for example, Potter & Reicher, 1987, where they analyzed various news reports of a public riot).

C: [referring to a club where the defendant and the victim met]

it's where girls and fellas meet isn't it?

W: People go there.

Related to the issue of variability, texts are also analyzed according to absence and presence. In terms of presence, an analyst asks him or herself, "why that here, now?" That is, what is a particular turn of talk, or version of events, doing at this particular location in this particular sequence of talk (Schegloff, 1998)? In terms of absence, or what is not present in the text, an analyst can ask what is silent and what is being

accomplished by a particular turn of talk or version not being present. Absence, however, presents an especially complex issue because there are a potentially infinite number of possibilities that are absent. Thus, for example, in the rape trial discourse, neither the prosecution nor the defense counsel mentions rubber duckies. While this is a silly example, it suggests that analysts need some standard to discipline (in the sense of simultaneously enabling and constraining) the analysis of absence. One such standard is to suggest that absences need to be relevant to the data under investigation. How does an analyst decide what is a generic absence (for lack of a better term) versus what is a relevant absence?

The issue of variability is again helpful here. An analyst can compare different versions of events or turns of talk in relation to one another. So, in the rape trial interaction, gendered identities are present in the prosecution's version ('girls and fellas') but absent in the witness's version ('people'). Because gendered identities are present in one version and absent in another version within the same interaction, then there are grounds to argue that the absence of gendered identities in the witness's version is a relevant absence. Further, an analyst can look across various texts within a corpus to determine what is a relevant absence or presence. By collecting a corpus of interactions between counsels and witnesses, the analyst can compare the various versions and turns of talk across these different interactions.

This question about relevance also raises the issue of what is considered text versus context, a topic of considerable debate (Hopper, 1989; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Schegloff, 1997; Potter, 1998). The RDA approach offers what has been called a message-intrinsic view of context (e.g., Hopper, 1989), suggesting that participants in an interaction orient to and make relevant features of the context, rather than having the discourse shaped or determined by contextual factors. Thus, rather than investigating how such factors as psychological, sociological, cultural, and environmental features shape discourse (i.e., what has been called a message-extrinsic approach; Hopper, 1989), a

message-intrinsic approach (which is associated with ethnomethodology and conversation analysis) investigates how such contextual features are invoked, or used as a resource, to perform such interactional business as assigning blame, justifying or legitimating a position, and managing identity concerns (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998).

The decision to adopt a message-intrinsic view of context is not made arbitrarily or naively. Rather, it stems from a commitment to what members or participants orient to in their interaction and what they understand themselves to be doing (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). The analyst's task, then, is to answer the question of "why that here, now?" in terms of what the participants orient to. An alternative approach is to understand interaction in terms of how an analyst invokes features of context to explain the interaction. In the rape trial, for example, an analyst might argue that because the witness is female and the prosecuting counsel is male, that this aspect of their identity is in some way consequential to how the interaction plays out. Alternatively, the analyst might describe the social and historical context of rape trials over the past few years as a way to explain features of the interaction. In these cases that adopt a message-extrinsic view of context, it is the analyst who makes relevant the gendered identities of the participants to explain features of the interaction. This message-extrinsic view of context is a defensible way to proceed, though it is a different enterprise than the analysis that will be carried out in this dissertation.⁸

⁸ This question between participant and analyst orientations is the subject of much debate (for example, see the exchange between Schegloff, 1998 and Wetherell, 1998, as well as Billig, 1999 and Schegloff, 1999). In some instances, the debate has been constructed in terms of conversation or discourse analyses that offer a detailed explication of the action-orientation of talk (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1992) and critical discourse analyses that are concerned with the "imbrication of discourse, power, and subjectification" emerging from post-structuralist or Foucauldian perspectives (e.g., Hollway, 1984; Marks, 1993; Wetherell, 1988, p. 388). However, this division between critical and non-critical discourse analyses has been challenged on the grounds that more synthetic approaches are available, which is itself a contested claim (see Wetherell, 1998 for this argument and Schegloff, 1998 for a counter-argument). The analytic approach used in this dissertation investigates the rhetorical and action-oriented features of discourse in terms of participant orientations. One claim of this dissertation is that this manner of

* * *

Given this theoretical and analytic background, the next section ("Statement of Research Question") provides a rationale for studying the discourse of e-commerce business meetings, and states the primary research question for this project.

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analysis is worthwhile in its own right and can be deployed for critical ends (see Hepburn, 2000 to pursue this argument).

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTION

As discussed in the previous section, the rhetorical discursive action approach is committed to investigating how participants deal with practical communication issues (for example, managing identity concerns, dealing with dilemmas of stake, etc.) and analyzing discourse for its constructive, action-orientated, and rhetorical features. Tracy and Anderson (1999), for example, have usefully brought these concerns together in analyzing a dilemma faced by citizen callers to the police when they report problems about another person with whom they have a close relational connection (e.g., former spouses, partners, friends, etc.). Based on a discursive action approach to **fact construction** (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wooffitt, 1992; Potter, 1996), Tracy and Anderson (1999) discussed conversational practices "that people employ to solidify their version of an event and undermine the explicated (or understood) alternatives" (p. 204). Two of these conversational practices, for example, include 1) the use of **extreme case formulations** (e.g., "astronomical opportunity" and "incredible potential"; Pomerantz, 1986) which function to mark intensity and highlight the need for action as self-evident, and 2) ostensibly "simple situation descriptions" which imply accusations and deflection of blame (as in the rape trial cross-examination discussed earlier; Drew, 1992).

Tracy and Anderson went on to identify a range of "relational positioning" strategies or practices that people used in their descriptions to minimize the relational distance between themselves and the complained-about other (e.g., by using generic reference terms, the adaptable descriptor "friend," "ex"-prefaces such as "ex-wife," and describing the problem in an agent-less manner). They specifically noted that callers' descriptions of the problem and the complained about other varied during the course of the call (e.g., callers started to identify the complained-about other in a generic way as "a person" and later, after probing by the call-taker, more specific descriptions emerged that implied a closer relational connection).

Tracy (1997) identified another kind of **positioning strategy** in her analysis of identity issues at stake for academic colloquium presenters. Colloquium presenters could align themselves closer to, or further from, the research that they were presenting, which **managed** various issues of **identity** and **accountability** for the presenters. By presenters not aligning themselves closely with their work (e.g., by stating that the work is "in process" rather than discussing how much time and energy they have worked on the project and that it will soon be coming out as a book, etc.), they implicitly grant themselves license to change their ideas and do not have to defend their work as extensively as if it were a "finished product" (see pp. 40-41).

The use of descriptions and positioning practices is pervasive in many kinds of interaction, especially in sites where there is explicit controversy (such as the courtroom, political talk shows, relational conflict counseling sessions, academic colloquia, school board meetings, etc.; Potter, 1996; Edwards, 1997; Tracy, 1997; Tracy & Anderson, 1999; Tracy & Muller, 2001). Another promising realm for these conversational activities is business discourse, especially at meetings where multilevel marketing business opportunities are presented to an audience.

Multilevel marketing (MLM; also called network marketing or direct selling) organizations rely on networks of individual distributors and sales representatives to promote and sell products through face-to-face interactions (Biggart, 1989), and increasingly over the internet (Berman, 1999). Sales presentations, or presentations of the business opportunity (these themselves being alternative descriptions), are one way to recruit new people into the business so that current business owners can increase the size of their network, and thus increase their potential income. Current business owners also attend other presentations, such as training seminars to learn how to build a successful business, as well as large rallies designed to inspire and motivate.

Literature Review

Before I address why MLM business meetings are a rich site for discourse analysis, I will briefly review how MLM organizations and the general process of selling have been the topic of previous academic study. In her ethnographic study, Biggart (1989) documented the economic history of American direct selling organizations (DSOs, another term for multilevel marketing organizations), and analyzed their social and economic structure. She concluded that, among other things, DSOs succeed because they offer the opportunity for people to perceive themselves as entrepreneurs, despite her observations that many people involved in MLM organizations actually perform highly routinized behaviors in terms of selling and recruiting. Biggart argued that offering entrepreneurial status (i.e., a socially valued, independent identity linked with "ambition, self-direction, and autonomy"; p. 163) is an effective strategy, especially for DSOs in the United States, because entrepreneurship is a cultural ideal rooted in capitalism and the Protestant work ethic. Further, she noted that DSOs tap into this cultural resource to pursue their own business ends by emphasizing "less what distributors [or people involved in DSOs] do than *who they are* as being entrepreneurial" (p. 163). Significantly, though, by teaching people to value self-control and autonomy (i.e., being an entrepreneur), DSOs are often perceived as being organizations that help people achieve their own goals, rather than as organizations who manipulate people into pursuing the ends of management.

In addition to Biggart's study, other researchers have also employed participant-observation and interviewing methods to study the interpersonal, rhetorical, and organizational aspects of MLM organizations (Höpfl and Maddrell, 1996; Benoit, 1997; Pratt, 2000). For example, Höpfl and Maddrell (1996) studied rallies sponsored by the MLM organization (in this case, Parfum Hypnotique) for their rhetorical use of evangelical metaphors and the appropriation of emotion as a way to create a sense of belonging and personal identity for new distributors. These authors documented how new

recruits are exposed to a series of personal testimonies that take the form of "Six months ago I was only a ____ but now ____" (p. 205) and argue that these and other stories of dreams and visions "seek to transport individuals from the quotidian world, with all its pressures and stress, whilst, at the same time, establishing a complex network of emotional dependencies" (p. 211). The authors concluded that the rhetorical imagery is a form of corporate evangelism that has been imported into the United Kingdom (presumably from the United States) which ultimately plays on techniques of seduction and incremental commitment to the organization's values.

In another study, Benoit (1997) investigated the telling of success stories by distributors affiliated with Mary Kay, another MLM organization. In her study, she adopted the view that success stories are an interpersonal accomplishment that involve balancing competing goals, such as securing recognition (or, acclaiming discourse) while still appearing modest (or, disclaiming discourse). Based on interviews with distributors, observations of "Success Meetings," and analyzing published organizational materials, Benoit developed a typology of discursive strategies used by the distributors to manage their identities when telling their success stories. In terms of acclaiming discourse, the typology included both entitlement strategies (e.g., how tellers recounted that they worked hard to earn their success) and enhancement strategies (e.g., how their success fulfilled a dream and allowed them to realize a higher purpose). In terms of disclaiming discourse, the typology included dissociation strategies (e.g., how tellers attributed their success to external causes or shared responsibility for their success) and detraction strategies (e.g., how tellers minimized the importance of their accomplishment in relation to other accomplishments and how they suggested their accomplishment is incomplete).

In a third study, Pratt (2000) investigated the process of organizational identification with Amway, yet another MLM organization. Pratt viewed organizational identification in terms of organizational attempts to manage member's self-concepts and argued that the identification process succeeds when "an individual's beliefs about his or

her organization become self-referential or self-defining" (p. 460). In a MLM organization, Pratt contended, the identification process works through, among other things, seekership (when an individual is searching for a satisfactory system of meaning to resolve one's discontent), sense-breaking (the breaking down of meaning), and sense-making (the construction of meaning). According to Pratt, an important aspect of sense-breaking is the process of "dream building." Dream building creates a void of meaning by linking an individual's sense of self to possessions, creating motivation through identifying a gap between where a person is now, with where they want to be, and then perpetuating these motivating factors. Pratt concluded this study with ways to extend theoretical formulations of organizational identification as well as practical contributions to MLM organizations and individual members. Interestingly, he also noted the range of distributor's emotions and feelings regarding their involvement with Amway, from strong negative reactions, to ambiguous and equivocal, to strong positive feelings. For those who had strong, positive feelings towards the organization, Pratt suggested that the MLM organization "provided a strong sense of purpose and community by uniting parts of their lives that had been segmented by modern society (e.g., work, family, and religion). Thus, what to an outsider may seem like shameful manipulation seemed only logical to an insider" (p. 491).

In addition to these studies of MLM organizations, research has also been conducted on the process of selling. In another ethnographic study, inspired by a symbolic interactionist framework that views selling as a joint activity involving a process of constructing meaning and managing impressions, Prus (1989) documented a range of topics relevant to sales interactions, such as how trust was generated between salesperson and customer, how resistance was neutralized, and how commitments were obtained. Other sociologists have conducted conversation analytic studies about the selling process (e.g., Clark & Pinch, 1988). These researchers see selling as a locally

managed interactional achievement whose success or failure depends on exploiting the normative features which ground and regulate interaction.

Rationale for Research Site

In the existing research, MLM business presentations have not been extensively studied for descriptions, fact construction, and positioning practices (though connections to existing research will be discussed below). The presentations, however, are worth investigating for a number of reasons.

First, a **dilemma of stake** or interest may be especially relevant in this type of interaction. As discussed earlier, people treat each other as having motivations, interests, agendas, etc. and these are displayed in the content and organization of various reports and **accounts**. The dilemma of stake highlights the ongoing tension between producing an account that **displays** interests, while simultaneously not having that account undermined as interested (Edwards & Potter, 1992, p. 158). For example, how do presenters manage possible underminings of their positions, such as "you're just saying these things because you want to sell us something"? Thus, the activity the presenter is engaged in could be described in alternative, rival ways (e.g., presenting information about a business opportunity versus making a sales pitch).

Second, the business itself could be described in alternative ways. For example, a particular "e-commerce business opportunity" (which is itself one of many possible descriptions) could also be described as a "network marketing business," "a pyramid structure," or a "vehicle to fulfill one's dreams," all of which may be used to accomplish diverse social actions.

Third, presenting a business opportunity also involves the use of positioning practices. For example, when people who are involved in a business present the opportunity to prospects, or people interested in the business (again, another description), they position themselves in relation to the business in terms of their experience with the

business, how they became involved, what they did before they were involved, etc. While not identifying it as such, Höpfl and Maddrell argued that personal testimonials involve positioning strategies such as "Six months ago I was only a ____ but now ____" (p. 205).

Fourth, people interested in the business also formulate descriptions of why they are interested (e.g., I wanted to supplement my income, I've always wanted to go on 'x' vacation, etc.), what their background is (e.g., I just retired, I'm a schoolteacher and the pay isn't great, etc.) and how they came to be interested (e.g., a friend brought me here, I heard some people talking about this, etc.).

Statement of Research Question

As Tracy (1997) and Tracy and Anderson (1999) have argued in terms of academic colloquium talk and emergency calls to the police (discussed above), participants deal with problematic situations by, among other things, using positioning practices and employing various descriptions of events. This emphasis on positioning practices and descriptions can also be pursued in other communicative contexts where problematic situations arise, such as the business realm, and specifically in the discourse of multilevel marketing business meetings. Participation in such organizations can be described as a legitimate business activity where individuals can earn a living while enjoying the benefits of independence, autonomy, and being part of a team. A second, equally plausible way the business could be described is as a get-rich-quick or pyramid scheme in which individuals learn techniques of persuasion and how to exploit personal relationships in order to maximize profit (Fitzpatrick & Reynolds, 1997). Given these alternative descriptions, a primary research question for this project concerns how business owners construct the business as legitimate and beneficial to its members, while simultaneously undermining alternative versions. Further, what other interpersonal and organizational issues, problems, and dilemmas are dealt with by employing alternative descriptions of events and using various positioning practices?

Summary

In summary, existing research cited above has not always focused on the *sequential relevance* of particular discourse strategies (Benoit, 1997), for example, or the implications of the sequential organization of talk to the process of organizational identification (Pratt, 2000), to cite another example. Further, existing research seems to take-for-granted the rhetorical work that constructs a business presentation as indeed a business presentation and not, for example, a sales presentation or a get-rich-quick scheme (which, again, are equally plausible descriptions). Thus, this study seeks to fill a gap in the existing literature by looking at the rhetorical and action-oriented features of actual sequential interaction for the implications to interpersonal and organizational communication processes.

* * *

The next section ("MLM Background") provides a brief background of the multilevel marketing industry and the Traquix e-commerce business opportunity.

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MULTILEVEL MARKETING INDUSTRY AND E-COMMERCE

To help understand the business presentations and training sessions that will be analyzed in this project, it will be useful to briefly discuss the multilevel marketing industry and the specific business to which the presenters are affiliated.

Multilevel marketing (MLM; also called network marketing or direct selling) organizations comprise an industry that generates billions of dollars in revenues each year (for a history of this industry, see Biggart, 1989). Most of the larger MLM companies rely on networks of individual distributors and sales representatives who promote and sell products through face-to-face interactions. The distributors or salespeople are not actually employees of the larger company, but are independent contractors (in the case of salespeople) or engage in a legal franchising relationship with the MLM company (in the case of distributors). Both salespeople and distributors earn their income by buying products wholesale from the company and then selling them at retail prices to the customer (income can also be earned through certain performance bonuses offered by the MLM company). In certain organizations, distributors and sales people can also sponsor other people to become involved in the business. In sponsoring others, individual distributors or sales representatives earn credit for not only their own sales revenue, or business volume, but also receive credit on sales generated by those in their network (Biggart, 1989). Additionally, the distributors involved in the business often attend training seminars to learn how to build a successful business, as well as large rallies designed to inspire and motivate.

The emergence of the internet, however, has transformed the way MLM companies and individual distributors operate (Berman, 1999; Byrnes, 2000). For example, MLM companies have set up "virtual malls" that link their company's products with other companies' products, thus allowing the distributors to "surf and earn," or buy products over the internet while generating business volume (a process similar to

accumulating frequent flyer miles; Buechner, 1999). Further, the individual distributor is no longer responsible for placing the order for the customer and spending hours dealing with the paperwork, since this can all be handled electronically. Thus, "bricks and mortar" businesses are replaced, or transformed, into "bricks and clicks" businesses.

The MLM e-business being promoted by the presenters in this project is called Traquix (which is a pseudonym). At the time of data collection, Traquix was an independent business that was affiliated with Apex (pseudonym), a traditional MLM business that relies on purchasing directly through distributors and/or catalogs (at the time of this writing, both companies have been folded under a larger corporate umbrella). In short, Traquix combines business ownership, member benefits, as well as personalized shopping at a "virtual mall" (also called a "web portal" since it allows access to other stores while still generating credit). "Independent business owners," a new term for "distributors," still earn income based on their own purchasing and those of the people in their network, and still seek to grow this network in order to generate the potential for more income. The Traquix web site can only be accessed with a special username and password, which are obtained by a referral from a business owner who is currently involved in the business. By requiring a username and password, purchases can be monitored on the site and assigned to the referring business owner's account and to his or her network.

Distinct from the MLM company that produces the products and maintains the web site, there are large, international associations that the business owners (sometimes over a million in number) belong to as a result of being sponsored by a particular person. The business owner who sponsors a prospect is considered the "up-line," while the prospect is considered "down-line" in relation to the person who sponsored him or her. If the business owner is part of the larger association, then the new business owner is as well. All of the presenters/business owners in this study belong to the same large association, called Tripp Worldwide (also a pseudonym). As a large association, Tripp

Worldwide, and not Traquix, is responsible for conducting the business plan presentations used to recruit new people into the business, as well as training sessions for the people already involved in the business. Additionally, Tripp Worldwide produces books and audio-tapes as part of the training process (though these were not analyzed in this project). While there is relative consistency in terms of the business plan presentations and the training sessions (for example, nearly all presenters tended to talk about the benefits of owning one's own business and how to make money in the business through networking, they may vary in terms of how much background they provide about the internet and its effects in contemporary society), there is no formula that each presenter necessarily has to follow in their presentations.

* * *

The next section ("Data Collection") explains how data was collected for this project, how access to the business meetings was obtained, potential effects of the researcher's presence while recording, the status of ethnographic background knowledge and the role of interviewing, as well as issues of reflexivity.

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COLLECTION AND DESCRIPTION OF EMPIRICAL MATERIALS

The purpose of this section is to explain how data was collected for this study and to discuss issues surrounding these procedures.

In order to analyze variable descriptions and conversational **positioning practices**, it is important to use actual, rather than hypothetical or laboratory-generated, interaction (Potter, 1995; Tracy, 1995). While there were existing high quality audio and video tape recordings made by an audio/visual crew at some of the more formal business presentations (i.e., in hotels and at larger seminars and rallies), many of these tapes were professionally edited, with no way to determine what was included or excluded in the tapes. Additionally, there were existing tapes made by audience members at the business presentations and training sessions (a common practice encouraged by presenters so that audience members can listen to the tapes later), but these tapes were of variable quality, which would make transcribing the tapes difficult. Thus, I decided to make original audio and video (when the latter was feasible) recordings for the purposes of this study. Seven meetings in total were recorded, including:

- two meetings where the business plan was shown in a home environment (both in the northeastern United States; audio; the first meeting lasted about two hours, and the second meeting lasted a little over an hour);
- one business meeting where the business plan was shown to a public audience in a hotel conference room (England; audio/video; about one hour);
- two "business development" training meetings (England; one audio and one audio/video; about 30-45 minutes each);
- one "team meeting" that met in a hotel conference room (northeastern United States; audio; about four hours);
- one "seminar and rally" meeting (England; audio; about six hours).

The choice to make recordings in England and the northeastern United States was not made as part of a cross-cultural, comparative study. Rather, the author happened to be in both countries during data collection. While there are numerous references in the English meetings about what the "Americans are doing" (especially since the company started in the United States and launched a U.S. and Canadian web-site before the pan-European web-site), there is no agenda to make cross-cultural comparisons (see Moerman, 1988, for an explicit attempt to make comparisons between Thai and U.S. cultural conversation practices). **Formulations** such as what the "Americans are doing," however, are analyzed as examples of positioning practices.

Rather than recording multiple meetings of the same kind (e.g., showing the business plan in a home), I collected a range of different kinds of business meetings in hopes of allowing for greater variability in descriptions. While the focus is not on analyzing similarities and differences across the meeting types per se, one assumption of this decision is that different meetings may have different audiences and purposes which may lead to the presence or absence of variable formulations and positioning practices.

Two of the seven meetings were audio and video recorded (rather than just audio) so that facial expressions, various body movements, and the presenters' use of white boards and other visual aids could also be considered in the analysis.

I was present at all these meetings which makes relevant a number of issues including how access was obtained, the effect of the researcher's presence, the status of any ethnographic background knowledge gained from this presence and interviews in terms of analyzing the data, and reflexivity.

Access to Materials

While on leave of absence from the University of Iowa, and a few weeks before I was to leave for England to study conversation and discourse analysis at Loughborough University, I was invited to attend a presentation about how to start up an e-commerce

business. The meeting took place in a private home, and since I needed to collect some naturalistic interaction for my studies in England, I asked everyone present if it was acceptable to audio tape record the meeting. The presenter and other audience members agreed to have the meeting recorded (this is my first audio tape recorded meeting in a private home). My initial interest surrounding this business concerned talk about being an "entrepreneur" and starting one's own business as a way to fulfill one's dreams (see, for example, Bellah et al, 1985; du Gay, 1992). In order to learn more about the business, I signed up to become a "business owner" as part of the presenter's "team."

In case I decided to pursue my initial interest in entrepreneurial and self-help or therapy talk (e.g., goals, dreams, fulfillment, etc.) while in England, I asked the U.S. team leaders if they had any connections in England. They gave me contact information for a business owner in the U.K. Once there, I contacted a couple who lived nearby and they came to my house to tell me about their business in England. I told them about my interest in studying how presenters talked about the business opportunity during presentations to new people and during training sessions and they invited me to attend these meetings. I also signed up to become a part of their team during my time in England so that I could learn more about the business and attend meetings more easily.

The collection of data in England occurred consistent with the ethical review procedures at Loughborough University. During my nine months in England, I was able to audio and/or video record a number of business meetings (see list above for details).

After returning from England, I contacted the U.S. team leaders and made arrangements to audio record a second presentation of the business plan in a private home, and also audio recorded a "team meeting" in a hotel conference room. Further, I obtained clearance from the ethical review board at the University of Iowa to analyze this existing data for the purposes of my thesis project.

Effects of Researcher's Presence

The fact that I was present at each of these meetings raises the issue of whether or not the presence of a researcher or recording equipment influenced the interaction in some way. There are at least two ways to address this issue. First, most concerns about whether or not the researcher's presence has an effect on the phenomenon being studied carry the assumption that the researcher should remain neutral, detached, and not become involved in the processes being studied (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). While the decision to attend the meetings was primarily to obtain useful recordings of interaction (i.e., if existing recordings were available, there would have been no need to attend the meetings for the purposes of this thesis), I made no attempt to avoid interactions with other audience members or presenters. Further, it is common practice for the meetings to be audio recorded by audience members with their own tape recorders so making recordings of the interaction was not out of the norm (video tapes were commonly made of larger events, such as the "seminar and rally," by a designated person).

A second way to address the issue of researcher presence in an interaction is to make it a topic of analysis (Edwards, 1997). The rhetorical discursive action approach adopted in this thesis takes a "message-intrinsic" view of context (Hopper, 1992) which suggests that communicators orient to and make relevant in their talk the context (i.e., environmental factors, identities of participants, etc.) of an interaction. Thus, if the presence of a researcher or recording equipment is consequential to an interaction there will most likely be evidence of this in the interaction, and this evidence can be a topic for analysis (see, for example, Extract DG 6, lines 1036-1037, where the speaker talks about certain principles that are required for completing a Ph.D.).

Status of Ethnographic Background Knowledge and the
Role of Interviews

As a result of attending the meetings and talking with presenters and audience members, I was able to gain certain knowledge that otherwise might have been unavailable to me (e.g., if I had just listened to existing recordings of the meetings made by someone else). However, since the goal of being in the field was less about generating ethnographic background knowledge, and more about making quality recordings of the business meetings, I did not conduct interviews or compose field notes in a systematic manner. This is not to say that interview data, for example, would be irrelevant for descriptions and positioning practices, but rather the focus of this study concerned how presenters and audience members were engaging in these practices as part of their everyday activities, and not constrained by an interview structure (Potter & Wetherell, 1995).

Tracy (1995) and colleagues argue that by conducting interviews and participant-observation fieldwork researchers gain ethnographic background knowledge which can then be used to provide a richer analysis than not conducting interviews or fieldwork. By richer, Tracy argues that since not everything may be directly available in a particular transcript of an interaction or always oriented to by participants, then it is acceptable to supplement the analysis with background knowledge (see Duranti & Goodwin, 1992 for a debate about the status of institutional and cultural background knowledge). One concern with this view is that it *may* lead an analyst to use background knowledge (which is most likely not available to other scholars and readers of the analysis) to privilege a particular interpretation over others (i.e., 'x' is going on and not 'y' and I know this because 'I was there'). Thus, people who were not present "in the field" are at a disadvantage when contesting scholarly claims. One of the advantages of using transcripts and recordings of interaction is that readers have the same access to materials as the analyst (though this is

a matter of degree since it not often practical to make every recording and transcript available).

With this said, however, ethnographic background knowledge can *sensitize* analysts to certain issues that *may* be relevant in the interactions, but this may be a positive and a negative. This can be positive because the background knowledge may make it easier to spot particular interactional patterns or recurring issues, but it could be negative in that it may hinder analyzing what participants **orient to and make relevant** in their talk. Of course, this ethnographic background knowledge does not just exist somewhere in the head of the analyst but is constituted discursively, for example, in terms of how an analyst formulates descriptions of the processes and context being investigated, which raises the issue of reflexivity.

Reflexivity

It is not just participants who engage in making descriptions and positioning practices, but analysts do this as well (see Ashmore, 1989 for work that explores the complications, paradoxes, and opportunities of how analysts construct their research reports). First, the choice of terms to characterize the data as "presenting" a "business opportunity" raises a whole host of issues. For example, what is going on in an interaction could be variably described as "selling" rather than presenting, and the "business opportunity" could be described as "network marketing" or, perhaps more negatively, a "pyramid scheme." As much as possible, terms that participants use to characterize the social scene were used, and such distinctions as selling versus presenting were made a topic for analysis and left as resources for participants to use in their descriptions (Widdicombe, 1998). Following the lead of analysts writing in the sociology of scientific knowledge tradition (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984), analysts do not have to take sides about which descriptions (e.g., presenting or selling) are right or wrong, or is the more accurate version of what is really going on, since these issues are in many ways

what is at stake and up for grabs in the interactions (see discussion of the ethical, political, and critical implications raised by such a position; link opens into new window). Again, much of the analysis will be to make explicit how alternative descriptions are used to accomplish various actions.

* * *

The next section ("Transcription") explains the transcription procedures used for the data in this thesis.

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TRANSCRIPTION

Before leaving the discussion about how the materials were collected, and before providing a sample of how they will be analyzed, it is important to discuss a crucial step in between: transcription practices. The level of detail at which interaction is transcribed affects the level at which analysis can take place (Tracy, 1995). Further, the choice concerning the level of transcription detail relates to the types of scholarly questions posed and arguments being made. Since the primary research question for this thesis concerns how various actions are accomplished by descriptions and **positioning practices**, it is appropriate to use the Jefferson-style transcript system (see below) which was specifically created for how social actions are accomplished on a sequential basis (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998 for a helpful discussion of this conversation analytic transcription system).

Since the Jefferson-style system can be extremely detailed and time-consuming (for example, one hour of talk could take between ten and twenty hours to transcribe depending on the skill level of the transcriber and the quality of the tape), not every minute was transcribed at this level of detail (especially for the "team meeting" and the "seminar and rally" meeting which were four and six hours long respectively). Rather, an initial pass at transcribing recordings took place at the level of language choices, false starts, nonfluencies, repetitions, etc. (Tracy, 1995, p. 202) to identify descriptions of the business and for times when positioning practices were employed. After this first pass, portions of these extracts and the surrounding turns at talk were then transcribed in greater detail with the Jefferson system.

Complete, unedited transcripts of the business meetings will not be provided in this thesis. Ideally, the complete transcripts would be provided so readers have access to the same corpus of data that the analyst does. The reason the full transcripts are not provided relates to legal and copyright concerns. That is, while the business presentations

are not copyrighted material in their oral presentation format, copyright laws apply as soon as they are recorded and/or transcribed into a more permanent medium. To avoid legal complications, the primary researcher was advised by University of Iowa legal counsel to not include the full transcripts.

For anonymity and confidentiality issues, names of specific business owners and other identifying material have been changed. Not all business owners, however, desired anonymity, which is why certain video material has been used without masking the participants' faces. In the audio clips, names and identifying material have been "bleeped" out with audio editing software. Pseudonyms were used for the corporate entities (Traquix and Apex), as well as the large association of business owners (Tripp Worldwide).

Transcription Conventions

The following transcription conventions were used in this project (adapted from Atkinson & Heritage, 1984):

(.)	The shortest hearable pause, less than about (.2) of a second
(0.3) (1.0)	Exactly timed pauses, in this case 3/10 of a second and 1 second
.hhh, hhh	Speaker's in-breath, and out-breath respectively
huh huh	Laughter syllables
A(h)re	(h) denotes 'laughter' within words
cu-	A dash designates a sharp cut-off of a prior word or sound
So:::	Colons show that the speaker is extending a word or sound, with more colons representing longer sounds
(syll syll)	Material in parentheses represents unclear speech rendered in the approximate number of syllables
()	Unclear speech or noise where no approximation is made
run= =on	'Equals' signs link material that runs on

↑ my ↓ door	Arrows indicate rising or falling intonational shifts
?	Indicates a rising tone
.	Indicates a 'natural' ending
<u>Without</u>	Underlining indicates emphasis
THAT	Capital letters indicate speech noticeable louder than that surrounding it
° soft °	Degree signs indicate speech spoken noticeably more quietly than the surrounding talk
> faster <	'Greater than' and 'less than' signs indicate the talk they encompass
< slower >	was produced noticeably quicker or slower than surrounding talk
over[lap	Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech denote the
[over	start and ending points of overlapping talk
→	Side arrow indicates a point of special interest addressed in the text
*	Asterisks indicate a high-pitched "squeaky voice"
[...]	Indicates that material has been left out of the extract
[[material]]	Material in double square brackets indicates transcriber's commentary

* * *

The next section ("Analysis of Business Presentations") is the first analytic section and offers a detailed analysis of one business plan presentation.

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ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS

Introduction to Analytic Sections

The analytic portion of this project is divided into three sections. The first section analyzes recurring issues and dilemmas **managed** by presenters during presentations of the Traquix business plan to people interested in the business, or "prospects." The second section analyzes discourse about dreams and goals made in a presentation to both prospects and new business owners. The third section investigates issues and dilemmas managed by presenters during business development and team meetings. While there was no systematic effort to analyze similarities and differences among different types of meetings, or meetings for different types of audiences, I analyzed one meeting per section to maintain a sense of the sequential interaction for each meeting. The choice to maintain the sequential organization of the presentations stems from the theoretical and analytic commitment to analyze the rhetorical and action-oriented features of discourse in its sequential context (in contrast to, for example, a thematic organization or according to a typology of discursive strategies across meetings). In all three sections, the analytic focus is on how the e-commerce business is described, and **positioning practices** employed by presenters and audience members.

Analysis of Business Plan Presentations

This first section analyzes a presentation of the Traquix business plan to "prospects." Before the actual presentation discourse is analyzed, it is important to make a distinction between the "business plan" and a "presentation of the business plan." The business plan is a printed, legal document, produced by the Traquix corporation. The formal business plan is handed out to prospects and explains the structure of the business (i.e., how one business owner sponsors another, forming a group or network of business owners), how business owners generate income (i.e., through sales revenue, a percentage of the total volume of products sold to others and/or purchased by oneself and one's

business network, along with a number of performance bonuses and incentives), and the average income amount earned by business owners. By law, it is required that the formal business plan be distributed by current business owners to new prospects.

In contrast, the presentations of the business plan that will be analyzed in this thesis are prepared by individual business owners themselves. Many individual business owners are part of larger international associations of business owners who are affiliated with, though not employees of, the supplier corporation, Traquix, and who share business support and training materials. The presenters in the extracts below are affiliated with the same international association of business owners (called "Tripp Worldwide";¹).

According to one business owner (personal communication, October 2000), the purpose of the presentations is to explain or interpret the legal business plan to a lay audience towards the end of "prospecting," or promoting the business to new people. While it is legal to promote the business by making presentations of the business plan, the presentations are only a "teaching tool" (itself a description that highlights an educational purpose, rather than selling or persuading per se) and do not constitute the business plan itself. One speaker stated during the presentation of a business plan that its purpose is to give prospects 'an impression of what's possible' (Transcript BP040600, line 997).

When making a presentation of the business plan to new prospects, speakers are faced with a number of complex issues that need to be managed. One of these recurring issues concerns what the business and the business presentation is, and importantly, is not, about. For example, after being introduced by another business owner, one presenter emphasized how this presentation is not about making a sales pitch to the audience.

[XBP_01A.mov]

Video File 1. Business Plan Presentation 1

¹ "Tripp Worldwide" is a pseudonym. Tripp is the last name of the person who founded this international organization of business owners.

Click on control bar (above) and the audio/video clip will begin playing in a new window.

You may need to wait a moment for the audio/video file to load.

Position the new window so you can see it and the transcript (below).

Extract 2. BP 1 BP040600:84-88:WJC (0:11/408K)

084 M: a:nd:: um (1.8) all I >really want you to do is< relax (0.8)

085 I'm not trying to sell you an idea-r (0.6)

086 I'm not trying to rope people in to anything (.)

087 or anything like that (0.8) you know (.)

088 at the end of the day (0.6) I'm just gonna give you an overview (.6)

The issue of selling, or not selling, is frequently oriented to, both implicitly and explicitly, by the speakers. The purpose of this section is to show the various ways that one speaker counters the notion that the e-commerce business and the business presentation is about making sales or giving a sales pitch, and then to discuss how this speaker constructs alternate versions of what the business is about and positions the audience as people who would not fall prey to a sales pitch. The point of this analysis is not to prove that selling is, or is not, taking place in the presentations. Rather, the goal is to analyze how **accounts** for "what is (not) going on" are constructed and to see what social actions are being accomplished through these accounts.

The rest of this section will be organized according to the chronological sequence of a business plan presentation to about 50 people, made in hotel conference room in the UK. Due to the length of the entire presentation (about 45 minutes), and the extracts selected for analysis, the analysis will be organized as follows: the emcee's introduction; the speaker's opening **turns**; invoking an institutional **identity** as a positioning practice and descriptions of Tripp Worldwide; jointly constructing a problem or need; Traquix is the answer; the speaker's closing. This section will conclude with a discussion of the analysis.

The Emcee's Introduction

The brief extract above (BP 1) is part of a larger opening sequence of a business presentation, in the U.K., made to an audience in a hotel conference room. The audience is made up of other business owners who invited new prospects to attend the meeting in order to learn more about the Traquix business opportunity. This presentation occurred during a "pre-launch" or "transition" phase, which refers to a time before the pan-European e-commerce web site was launched, though the U.S. site had already been launched by this time. In contrast to presentations made in a private home, business presentations made in a more public environment often included an emcee who introduced the main speaker for the evening. In Extract BP 2 (below), Aaron is the emcee for the evening who: 1) asks the audience members to turn off their mobile phones; 2) establishes rapport with the audience; 3) introduces the audience to the main speaker and, in turn, establishes the main speaker's credibility; and 4) asks the audience to hold their questions to the end.

In the transcript, 'A' refers to Aaron the emcee, 'BO' refers to a business owner in the audience who was not identified by name, 'M' refers to Michael, the main speaker for the evening, 'Aud' refers to more than two or three people in the audience speaking simultaneously, and [?] means that it was not clear who said a particular turn.

[XBP_02A.mov]

Video File 2. Business Plan Presentation 2

Extract 3. BP 2 BP040600:1-55:WJC (1:58/4MB)

1 Aaron: There's a lot more people standing in the back (0.8)

2 Would you like to take a seat (.)

3 or are you gonna run up and down

4 (7.5) [[People take their seats]]

5 A: That's killed the conversation?

6 (14.5) [[Some people still being seated]]

- 7 A: Yes (0.8) I have a question (0.8)
- 8 () who has mobile phones (0.4)
- 9 who here's got mobile phones ()
- 10 (1.5)
- 11 A: Would you mind now please switching them off [[raises hand]] (2.5)
- 12 I know (.) it's like (.) withdraw symptoms (.) but uh: (1.4)
- 13 we'd appreciate if you could- (.) just for about an hour (.)
- 14 Would that be okay if you switch it off (1.2) [[looks to prospect]]
- 15 pardon (.) [[Prospect shakes head]] yeah (.)
- 16 Good man (.) thank you >very much<
- 17 (1.5)
- 18 Thuh:: (.) we want you- you to concentrate totally
- 19 on what's being said tonight (1.8)
- 20 OKAY (2.0)
- 21 In the words- the immortal words of uh (.) 'Listen with Mother'²
- 22 are you sitting comfortably[↑] ? (0.8)
- 23 BO: Yes thank you (0.6)
- 24 A: Then I'll begin (1.2) ok- ehuh huh ha .hhh (2.0) [[raises hand]]
- 25 A: Now my job is: to: uh (.) >introduce you to the main speaker ton[↑] ight<
- (0.6)
- 26 you'll be thankful it's not me (2.0)
- 27 Aud: ((some laughter))
- 28 A: but uh (0.8) no we do have a moment (2.2)

² 'Listen with Mother' is a BBC radio show, from the 1950s or 1960s, that had stories so that children would sit down with their mother. The program would start with "Are you sitting comfortably? ... Good, then I'll begin." This later became a TV show called 'Watch with Mother.' Thanks to Rob Patchings for this background information.

29 my job is to introduce to you a (.) >very successful businessman< (0.6)

30 < he:: is uh:: > (1.0) >building a tremendous business↑< (0.8)

31 he has:: (1.6) a phenomenal lifestyle (0.2) already (0.6)

32 and he's gonna get it even more phenomenal (0.8)

33 he and his wife uh: >very very< successful (1.6)

34 and the:y're: developing a hu:ge business

35 in what they're gonna share with you tonight (0.6)

36 He's uh very < au fait > with computers? (0.8)

37 and uh: (.) can teach you all about those (1.8)

38 and uh he's a good mate (1.0) a good friend (1.4)

39 and a very successful individual (1.0)

40 >so I want you to< listen very ca:refully (0.4)

41 I want you to hold all your questions to the end (1.0)

42 and we'll answer those questions for you (0.8) afterwards (0.4)

43 is that okay↑ ?

44 (1.8)

45 great stuff (0.8)

46 all mobile phones switched off? ((smiles and smiley voice; raises hand))

47 (1.8)

48 Aud: uh huh huh

49 Aud: yes

50 A: Well done (0.4) that's great uh huh ha (0.8)

51 So >would you-< without further ado (0.4)

52 to (0.6) share this incredible business idea (0.4)

53 and I hope you get very excited about it (0.8)

54 we're fired up about this thing our- it's unbelievable (1.2)

55 and (.) would you please welcome (0.6) >M::ICHAEL SEARLE<

As mentioned above, the emcee, rather than the primary speaker, is the first to address the audience as a group. The use of the emcee allows certain mundane, but interactionally important, tasks to be accomplished. For example, by asking the audience to turn off their mobile phones and to hold their questions to the end, he constructs the communicative event³ as one where normal conversational patterns of turn-taking will be suspended, thus allowing the speaker to "hold the floor," while also limiting interruptions from ringing cell phones (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1978). Additionally, the emcee is able to provide a positive assessment of the speaker in the introduction. Such a complimentary evaluation of the speaker might be harder to manage if it was just the speaker himself (for example, it might come off as "conceited" if the speaker made such a positive evaluation of himself). As part of this positive evaluation of the speaker, the emcee introduces him as a very 'successful businessman' and competent with computers (both issues salient for an e-commerce business presentation), and also positions himself in relation to the speaker as a 'good mate, a good friend.' By invoking their relationship at this point, the emcee also suggests that, among other things, close personal relationships are valued and that people who work together in this business can combine being successful in a business with having good relationships (the issue of relationships will be returned to later in the analysis).

First Description of the Business: Sharing "This Incredible Business Idea"

The emcee also provides the first description of the business for the evening. In lines 52-54, Aaron states that the main speaker will "share this incredible business idea/and I hope you get excited about it/ we're fired up about this thing our- it's

³ The phrase "communicative event" is used (rather than, for example, a "sales pitch" or "business presentation") since how the discourse is framed is up for grabs and part of the analysis. Later on, I use "presentation" as a generic term.

unbelievable." The first point to notice about this version of events is the use of "share," which was already mentioned once before in line 35. The use of "share" here sets up a context for the speaker and the audience to experience or participate in an activity jointly, rather than one doing something to another or independently of one another. Second, Aaron uses the phrase 'business idea,' which suggests that an idea is something that can be discussed, thought about, and is not particularly threatening (ideas can be tossed around, considered, and rejected, because after all, they are just ideas, and in contrast to concrete, firm proposals that have already been decided on). Third, the emcee uses the term 'incredible' to describe the business idea, which marks the business idea with a level of intensity and highlights that it something to which attention should be directed (Pomerantz, 1986). Fourth, the use of both 'I' and 'we' in 'I hope you get excited about it' and 'we're fired up about this thing' further suggest that both Aaron and the main speaker want to share the excitement with the audience. Finally, note the use of the word 'business' which occurs four times, each time accompanied by a superlative: 'a very successful businessman,' 'building a tremendous business,' 'developing a huge business,' 'this incredible business idea.' This last point is significant, and will become clearer when presentations made to business owners (rather than prospects) are analyzed, because of the frequent presence of the term 'business' and the relative absence of talk about selling or sales. That is, the main speaker is not described as a 'a very successful salesman' who has generated 'huge sales' and who is 'selling' the audience an idea.

The Speaker's Opening Turns

After applause that lasts for five seconds, the main speaker walks up to the front of the room, shakes hands with the emcee, and is handed the microphone.

[XBP_03A.mov]

Video File 3. Business Plan Presentation 3

Extract 4. BP 3 BP040600:56-83:WJC (0:40/1.3MB)

056 Applause [[lasts for 5.0 seconds]]

057 [[M walks up to front of room, A shakes hands with M,

058 A hands M microphone]]

059 M: Thank you

060

061 [[there is a slight fumble with the microphone wire as A steps over it]]

062

063 M: that's it (.) th- [[seems to orient to the difficulty with the microphone wire]]

064

065 [[A sits down in audience]]

066

067 M: no we did have um: (0.6) we did have one of these uh:: lapel ones (0.4)

068 but we got a little feedback from it so we had to go back

069 to the ol' handheld for the moment (1.2)

070 but anyway (1.2)

071 uhm:: I'm just going ta (0.8) >very quickly<

072 try and run over (.) t-onight (.)

073 an overview of a business idea (0.4)

074 .hh which is transitioning on to the internet (1.6)

075 .hh a:nd >I don't know if it will suit you or it w↓ on't< (1.0)

076 um:: it's an interesting ide:a (1.4)

077 with the existing idea >my wife and I have been very successful (.)

078 and very many other people like Aaron

079 have been very successful as we↓ ll< (1.0)

080 but the internet has just introduced

081 a whole new dimension to it (1.0)

082 .hh and that's what- I'm going to be talking about how all that works tonight
 083 and I- what's happening in the transition period

The Microphone Account and Managing Informality

The main speaker provides an artful account to cover the fumble with the microphone wire (lines 61-69). This account is worth briefly mentioning here because of how it relates to how versions of events are used to account for an activity (Antaki, 1994; Potter, 1996) and how informality is managed (Atkinson, 1982; Puchta, 1999). First, the speaker suggests that they (probably referring to Tripp Worldwide and thus invoking an institutional identity) had a lapel microphone, which is presumably a more sophisticated piece of technology considering that the current microphone is described as 'the ol' handheld.' By doing this, the speaker constructs the event as 1) a break from the norm ("we did have one...") and 2) inherent to the microphone, thus deflecting responsibility from the self and shifting responsibility to an external situation and object (Edwards, 1997). Further, the use of 'ol' handheld for the moment' may also manage some issues about the speakers being up-to-date with technology, considering the emcee has introduced the speaker as 'au fait' (line 36;⁴) with computers and that this presentation will be about an e-commerce business.

Also, the microphone "fumble" is a **display** of informality. That is, the speaker constructs the event as one that was not planned or scripted in a formal way (whether it was intentional or unintentional is not the concern here for the analysis, though it may be for the participants; Tracy, 1995; Potter, 1996; Edwards, 1997). The issue of informality here is a delicate balance between coming across to the audience as prepared and competent, but not too scripted or polished such that the communicative event comes off as a standard "pitch."

⁴ French for 'can do,' skilled, savvy.

Second Description of the Business: "Overview of a Business Idea"

After the microphone account, a second description is provided for what the presentation is about. In lines 71-74, the speaker states that he 'is just going to' 'very quickly' 'try and run over' an 'overview of a business idea which is transitioning on to the internet.' These phrases suggest a sensitivity to issues of time, and that the presentation will not be an in-depth rendering of the issues, but rather a broad brush stroke to get a sense of what the 'business idea' is about. This 'idea,' however, is one that is 'transitioning on to the internet' and, since times of change can be exciting (though they could also be stressful), provides an account for why there might be excitement for the idea (which was suggested by 'A' earlier in line lines 53-54). Thus, the speaker takes up both the phrase 'business idea' and the sense of excitement that the emcee has already previewed for the audience.

In lines 75-76, the speaker offers that he does not know if the idea will suit the audience or if it will not, but that it is an interesting idea nonetheless. By offering this version, the speaker provides a resource that could be used to subsequently account for what is going on in the presentation. That is, if a prospect does not like the business idea, then the prospect and/or the speaker can account for this by attributing this outcome to individual preferences (whether it 'suits' a particular individual or not; Edwards, 1997). Additionally, the 'I don't know if it will suit you or if it won't' also constructs the speaker's identity as non-threatening to the prospects and as not one to impose or push his views. Again, it can just be an 'interesting idea' (line 76). The speaker then marks another contrast between the existing business idea (line 77) that he and others have been successful with, and the new business idea, suggesting that there is even more potential for success and providing another justification for the excitement of this 'transition period.'

Making a Request and Orienting To Potential Audience

Concerns

After identifying that the internet is what he will be talking about tonight, he makes a request of the audience (Craig, Tracy, and Spisak, 1986).

[XBP_04A.mov]

Video File 4. Business Plan Presentation 4

Extract 5. BP 4 BP040600:84-109:WJC (0:56/1.9MB)

084 M: a:nd:: um (1.8) all I >really want you to do is< relax (0.8)

085 I'm not trying to sell you an idea-r (0.6)

086 I'm not trying to rope people in to anything (.)

087 or anything like that (0.8) you know (.)

088 at the end of the day (0.6) I'm just gonna give you an overview (.)

089 .hh then you can go away (0.6) think about it if you want to (0.6)

090 get back together with the person whose a:sked you:: (0.6)

091 then they can answer your questions or (0.2) find out anything (0.2)

092 th- that's missing from the thing (0.8) and talk about what

093 to do at the next stage if you're interested in taking it any further (1.0)

094 .hh so that's all there is to it (1.0)

095 some people are very worried about uh (.) you know (.)

096 am I trying to sell you something get some money off you

097 or anything like that (0.8)

098 I don't make any money out of trying to get (.)

099 registration fees or < anything like that > (0.8)

100 .hh you would need to register on a computer system

101 at some point (0.2) which will end up costing you about eighty quid↓ (0.6)

102 and I'll explain a bit more about that la:ter↓ (0.8)

103 but that is (0.4) you know (0.2) your basic investment

104 so you can now relax (1.2)

105 I'm not talking about capital investment (1.0)

106 and that's basically it (0.2) so you just relax and- (0.6)

107 >take a look at the business idea< (0.8)

108 and then we can see what's interesting (1.0)

109 .hhh N:OW (0.2) um: (.) internet

Requesting for the audience to relax

In lines 84-94, the speaker presents a version of what will take place tonight as calm and low pressure ('all I really want you to do is relax'), non-threatening ('just gonna give you an overview'), rational ('you can go away and think about it if you want to'), that the matter is not yet settled ('find out anything that's missing'), and that decisions are under the prospects' control ('talk about what to do at the next stage if you're interested in taking it any further'). This version is explicitly set in contrast to a unilateral, controlling, and high pressure version depicted in lines 85-86 ('sell you an idea' and 'rope people in'). Thus, the talk about 'selling' and 'roping' occurs sequentially after the request for the audience to relax, thereby providing an account for why the audience should relax.

There is a risk, however, in making the request to 'relax' (and its repetition in lines 104 and 106) in that the speaker assumes that the story he **voices** for the audience is 1) what the audience is oriented to at the moment, and 2) that he has successfully allayed their fears relevant to the audience by telling the story. One of the ways the speaker seems to manage the sensitivity of the request is by the use of 'some people are very worried.' This **formulation** is a softer alternative to 'you may be thinking,' and which is less presumptuous than another alternative, such as, 'I know what you are thinking.'

Managing stake

After providing a recognizable **transition** marker (so that's all there is to it,' line 94), the speaker supplements the first version of what is not going to happen with another

version that ranges from lines 95-108. By employing the phrase 'some people are very concerned about,' the speaker is able to **voice** a concern that the audience members may have. By making this concern about selling a topic of the talk (line 96) and by displaying that he has limited **stake** in the matter ('I don't make any money out of trying to get registration fees...'), the speaker is able to counter the notion that he is engaging in selling, while suggesting that he is less motivated by personal, subjective interests. Further, he states what the audience's 'investment' would be up front (in this case, £80), which works against a notion that he may be attempting to conceal information from the audience until he has "hooked them in" as if this were a sales pitch.

Interestingly, selling is constructed on this occasion as something that is negative. There are other versions of selling equally available, one of which suggests that selling is simply a way for the supplier to get products and services to customers or clients who then use these products for various ends. To bring up selling at this point constitutes the issue of selling versus not selling as a salient issue for the presentation. By making selling the topic, especially without any explicit indication from the audience that selling was going on, it may suggest that the speaker is orienting to a topic that came up in other presentations, or it displays an assumption that the speaker makes about the audience. Relatedly, the speaker raises the issue about 'capital investment' in line 105. By raising this issue, the speaker **orients to** this being another possible concern for audience members.

Positioning the Audience as Reflective, Intelligent and Discerning

However, the talk about selling also seems to perform other interactional business. The inferences associated with 'selling' and 'roping' (lines 85-86) suggest, as mentioned above, a unilateral process wherein one person does something to another, and where the speaker is 'other' and not **aligned** with the audience. By offering 'selling' and

'roping' as an example of what is not going on, he is able to provide an account for an alternative version of events in which there is a shared, participatory process of looking at something together with the audience, in a spirit of mutual exploration and curiosity. In lines 107-108, for example, the speaker has dispelled any negative connotations of the presentation, in order to 'take a look at the business idea' and then positions himself with the audience so that 'we can see what is interesting.' By using the phrase 'and then we can see what is interesting,' the speaker constructs a process of discovery where the business idea has qualities intrinsic to it, rather than any crafty manipulation or subjective intention on the part of the speaker that may be associated with 'selling' or 'roping.'

The use of 'looking at a business idea' and not 'selling' or 'roping' positions the audience members not as unreflective dupes who will be the on the gullible end of a sales pitch. Rather, the audience is positioned as intelligent, reflective thinkers who can come to their own conclusions after thoughtfully listening to an idea. In this way, the speaker grants a certain respect to the audience, an issue that will be managed throughout the rest of this communicative event.

In this excerpt, then, 'I'm not trying to sell you an idea-r, I'm not trying to rope people in to anything' are used as contrast versions to what may happen in other contexts or what others might do to someone. Importantly, the speakers constructs a version of events where selling is not what he is doing in this presentation or what this business is about. Further, the speaker's talk casts the audience as reflective, intelligent people who autonomously makes their own decisions about the presentation that is being placed before them.

* * *

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Invoking an Institutional Identity as a Positioning Practice
and Descriptions of Tripp Worldwide

The short in-breath and 'NOW...internet' (line 109) mark another **transition point**, suggesting that certain business has been sufficiently addressed, and that he can move on to the next item of business. Before the speaker gets to the internet, however, he positions himself in relation to a larger association that is responsible for this business presentation. Note especially lines 114-119 where the speaker describes the association as a marketing group and then repairs this description and offers an alternative description.

[XBP_05A.mov]

Video File 5. Business Plan Presentation 5

Extract 6. BP 5 BP040600:109-124:WJC (0:37/1.2MB)

109 M: .hh N:OW (.2) um: (.) internet (1.0)

110 um: (0.8) we are part (0.2) probabl- to start off very >quickly<

111 we're part of Tripp Worldwide (1.4)

112 you saw the name as you came in (4.2)

113 ((writes Tripp Worldwide on the whiteboard))

114 → < Tripp Worldwide (.) ar::e (.) a large > (1.2) ahem ((cough))

115 → marketing group (1.0) I mean we're a large group of loosely-

116 → a loose group of entrepreneur:s (1.0)

117 → who are experts in marketing and training (0.8)

118 → and we are very good at getting people getting their own businesses going
(1.0)

119 → .hh and been around for thirty ↓ years (1.0)

120 and we have um:: (.) representation in

121 many many countries around the world (0.6)

122 I'll be talking a bit more about that later (0.4)

123 but that's where we come from (0.2)

124 that's the background (1.0)

In line 110, the speaker begins to invoke a collective, institutional identity ('we are part'). Since the speaker, however, has already suggested in line 109 that he will move on to the internet, he offers an account ('to start off very quickly') that will permit him to discuss the organization of which he is a part. After providing himself with an **interactional slot**, he re-starts his first identification with 'Tripp Worldwide,' reminding the audience that he is not providing new information ('you saw the name as you came in') and emphasizing the significance of the name (by writing the name of the organization on the whiteboard). At line 114-115, the speaker offers the first version of what Tripp Worldwide is: 'a large marketing group.' The speaker, however, treats this version as not accurate or sufficient, and begins a **repair** (line 115): 'I mean we're a large group of loosely-.' This second version, however, is also treated as inadequate, and thus a third version is offered: 'a loose group of entrepreneurs who are experts in marketing and training and we are very good at getting people getting their own businesses going.'

This **positioning practice** and **formulation** of who the organization is and what they are about deserves commentary. First, the speaker has positioned himself to speak on behalf of a group of business owners, rather than just himself as an individual, by invoking 'we' two times before this formulation (lines 110-111). By being in the position to speak on behalf of a large, international organization, and not just as an individual, it is more consequential to provide an appropriate and adequate characterization of the organization. Second, the speaker provides three different characterizations, each of which makes available different inferences for the audience. The inferences or connotations at stake in each version can be analyzed based on the variability among the different versions.

Version 1: 'Tripp Worldwide are a large marketing group'

Version 2: 'I mean we're a large group of loosely-'

Version 3: 'a loose group of entrepreneurs who are experts in marketing and training and we are very good at getting people getting their own businesses going.'

Version 1 contains three key words: 'large,' 'marketing,' and 'group.' Version 2 keeps 'large' and 'group,' deletes 'marketing,' and adds 'loosely.' Based on the differences between these two versions, the speaker treats the characterization 'marketing group' as problematic in some way, suggesting that 'marketing' should not be the primary characterization what the group is about. Additionally, 'large...group' in Version 1 may suggest rigidity, formality, or high control, which is then modified in Version 2 by adding 'loosely.' In Version 3, however, the emphasis is removed from the organization being 'large,' and the emphasis is placed upon 'a loose group of entrepreneurs' which suggests flexibility and relative autonomy. The speaker treats the issue of first using the phrase 'marketing group' (in Version 1) as something to orient to and account for, since he returns to the issue in Version 3. This time, however, the 'loose group' is made up first and foremost as 'entrepreneurs' who are 'experts in marketing' and also 'training.' Further, the speaker adds that what this group is 'very good at' is 'getting people getting their own businesses going,' which emphasizes that the organization is about training issues ('getting people getting their own...') and entrepreneurial activities of starting independent businesses ('getting their own businesses going'). This last added characterization (lines 117-118) has the effect of downplaying the marketing aspects, though still acknowledging them, and accentuating the independent business aspects.

The various repairs are also interesting for two other reasons concerning how informality is managed (Puchta, 1999). First, the repairs show that the interaction is not scripted, but is being actively worked up by the speaker in the moment. Of course, the speaker might have intentionally planned these repairs, though participants nor analysts have access to the speaker's intentions. A more defensible claim is that the speaker **displays** informality through the repeated repairs. Second, by displaying that he is working up this version of Tripp Worldwide as he goes along, the speaker communicates

to the audience that he is orienting to concerns that may be relevant to them, as recipients. By constructing the talk to orient to their concerns, he treats their concerns as important and unique to this interaction, rather than being pre-planned in advance.

Throughout his presentation, the speaker alternately describes Tripp Worldwide to manage a range of issues (click here to view these extracts; link opens into new window)*. This extract is sufficient, however, to show how the speaker positions or situates himself within a larger association of other business owners. By invoking this institutional identity, he is able to establish his credibility as a legitimate member of a loosely structured group that trains people to start their own independent businesses, rather than being a part of a rigidly structured group of marketers.

Positioning Practice: Invoking Former Occupational Identity

After stating that Tripp Worldwide is an international organization, and that he will talk more about this aspect later (lines 120-122), the speaker closes this topic by saying 'but that's where we come from, that's the background' (lines 123-124). In the next extract, the speaker states that he learned how to do 'business presentations' through Tripp Worldwide and then invokes his former occupational identity as a 'computer nerd.'

[XBP_06A.mov]

Video File 6. Business Plan Presentation 6

Extract 7. BP 6 BP040600:125-135:WJC (0:24/868K)

125 M: and it's through Tripp Worldwide that I learned

126 to do business presentations (0.8)

127 >because< I used to be a computer nerd (1.0)

128 I used to design computer < systems > (0.2)

129 and write software (.) and stuff like that (1.0)

130 .hh but the trouble was (.) I had some glass ceiling on my earnings (1.0)

131 < and um: > so >as a result< I wanted something else (.) in life (.)

132 something that could allow me to < break through > that (0.8)

133 .hh and as a result I got a second business going (0.6)

134 and < that's really > (0.6) how we got started in this (0.2)

135 an- that's why I'm here (0.6) tonight

This extract is especially interesting because the speaker says he learned how to do 'business presentations' through his association with Tripp Worldwide (lines 125-126). By stating this, he has offered one **candidate** description for this communicative event; that is, it is a 'business presentation.' In lines 127-135, Michael provides an explanation for why he is sharing this information with the audience. In his account, he first invokes a former occupational identity: 'a computer nerd' (line 127). After invoking this category, he describes certain activities in which he used to engage: designing computer systems, writing software, and 'stuff like that' (lines 129). The use of 'stuff like that' is artfully deployed to construct the other activities as belonging together, and also "does humility" for what could otherwise be described in a very complicated, technical manner.

There was, however, a problem with this former identity which limited his earning potential ('I had some glass ceiling on my earnings'; line 130). He then suggests that he 'wanted something else' that would allow him to solve the problem, to 'break through that' glass ceiling (line 132). By twice using the vague term 'something' (lines 131-132), he creates a **slot** to provide more detail and hints at a solution. This solution was to get a 'second business going' (note the emphasis on starting a 'business'). He then says, and 'that's really' how we (he and his wife; line 77) got started in the business and the reason for him being here tonight. The slower, deliberate use of 'that's really' constructs this version of events as factual, suggesting that he is giving a true and honest rendering for his motivation for making this 'business presentation' (Potter, 1996).

The practice of positioning himself as a former 'computer nerd' and sharing this story with the audience accomplishes a number of actions. First, it suggests that he had a

job and was employed before he got involved with Tripp Worldwide, which will become a salient issue later on when he discusses the various ways to make money (i.e., having a job, being self-employed, having investments, and owning a business). Related to this point, he identifies a problem with being employed, which concerns the "glass ceiling" on earnings. Third, he creates a way for himself and the audience to identify with each other, since many of the people in the audience may also experience the problem of limited earning potential through their current job.

Fourth, by invoking his occupational identity in a technical field, he constructs a sense of legitimacy and credibility that might be salient when talking about the e-commerce aspects of the business (and also accounts for the emcee's introduction of him as being 'au fait' with computers; line 36). Fifth, 'computer nerds' are not necessarily known for their communication skills and ability to speak in front of an audience (an issue the speaker himself orients to in lines 125-129; [link opens into a new window](#)). Thus, by talking in front of the audience, and saying that Tripp Worldwide trained him to do this (lines 125-126), he might also be suggesting that "Look, I can do this, so you can too."⁵ Lastly, by invoking his former occupation identity, Michael manages issues of

⁵ Evidence for the claim that Michael, the speaker, may be suggesting that even a computer nerd can learn to speak in front of an audience and do business presentations is based on a conversation Michael had with me where he was explaining the goals of training sessions ([click here for the larger sequence of interaction; link opens into new window](#)):

44 M: =so you'll find that e- uh you know- and this is also a-
 45 very much into an individual training most of the meeting is to
 46 try and get other people speaking
 47 W: I see () okay
 48 M: So we get used to them holding a microphone (.) saying something in public
 49 W: Right
 50 M: Cos then they lose their fear of public speaking
 51 W: um hmm um hmm=
 52 M: =and then they can do business plans more easily

The claim that Michael is suggesting "Look, I can do this, so you can too" is somewhat speculative, and therefore tentative, since it is based on discourse out of the sequential context of this particular business presentation.

Extract 39. Implications 1 BDM031300CONV:25-69:WJC (1:00/352K)

In this segment, Michael (M), a business owner, is talking with me (W) after a business development meeting. Our talk preceding this excerpt concerns how far my walk will be to the train station. Without any prompting or question on my part, Michael then offers me a bit of advice in terms of how to better understand what I am observing in the training session. He suggests that I bring a guest with me the next I come so that I can have 'someone of my own there' and understand my reactions to the guest hearing the material covered in the training. He goes on to say how this is a 'subtle point':

[XIMPL_1A.mov]

Audio File 20. Implications 1

25 M: And it's quite a subtle point, a subtle thing

26 And you'll find some of the training is structured for

27 very new people

28 W: Okay

29 M: And some of it's just like getting people to

30 stand up and speak for themselves when they first arrive

31 W: Right

32 M: So they get used to speaking () in public ()

33 W: Right

34 W: uhhm su- some of it which is actually aimed at the people

35 who: bring their first two or three or four people

36 W: Okay

37 M: And this meeting sort of aimed at- a sort of very personal level

38 W: Okay

39 M: You'll find that seminars () higher mass () basic ()

40 W: Oh okay

41 M: And this isn't aimed at so much at that >as a< practical level

42 (.)

43 W: I see=

44 M: =so you'll find that e- uh you know- and this is also a-

45 very much into an individual training most of the meeting is to

46 try and get other people speaking

47 W: I see () okay

48 M: So we get used to them holding a microphone (.) saying something in public

49 W: Right

50 M: Cos then they lose their fear of public speaking

51 W: um hmm um hmm=

52 M: =and then they can do business plans more easily

53 W: Okay

54 M: And many other things

55 ()

56 W: Ri:ght

stake by making the inference available that he became involved in the business only after recognizing that it could help him solve a problem of earning more income, and not for a range of other reasons (for example, to sell people on ideas or rope them into anything).

* * *

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57 M: So there's some- there's some things there which look silly
58 and very Mickey Mouse
59 W: uh huh
60 M: But they're actually very effective in getting the
61 results
62 [
63 W: right right yeah
64 M: >cos what we're really trying to do is run
65 → a Dale Carnegie course<
66 in in ()
67 [
68 W: EH HUH uh huh
69 M: >Anyway< well: >good luck< [[leave-taking sequence ensues]]

Jointly Constructing A Problem Or Need

After being introduced, orienting to potential concerns about the audience, framing what is not going to happen in this presentation, invoking an institutional identity, and positioning himself in relation to the business, the speaker discusses six 'issues' or characteristics of a successful internet business, which include: 1) attracting visitors; 2) having those visitors come back to the web site (which is also known as 'stickiness'); providing 3) good customer service or 'personal touch,' 4) security, 5) financial backing, and 6) an efficient delivery system and infrastructure. In the next excerpt, the speaker establishes a reason for why people came to the presentation.

[XBP_07A.mov]

Video File 7. Business Plan Presentation 7

Extract 8. BP 7 BP040600:268-285:WJC (0:32/1.1MB)

'M' refers to Michael, the speaker; BO refers to a business owner; and 'P' refers to a prospect.

268 M: What I'm gonna do is address those issues as- as I go through (0.4)

269 I have some notes here (0.2) so I'm gonna be waving them around (2.0)

270 'cause otherwise I either go completely off the subject (1.0)

271 or I forget something (1.4) eHHH which is () (0.8)

272 now one of the next things I'm going to ad↓ dress (0.6)

273 is because I'm talking about- (1.0) (> <)

274 talking in the abstract about < internet sites > (0.8)

275 < but you all came here because you wanted to make some money >

276 (2.0)

277 I think

278 (0.4)

279 BO: Yes

280 M: Or did >every<one < just come here for a general

281 [[begins circling right hand]]

282 M: lecture on business principles >

283 [

284 Aud: eh huh [[laughter grows slightly for 2.4 seconds; stops circling hand]]

285 M: So I've got to relate it somehow to how you can make some money

At the beginning of this excerpt, the speaker mentions that he will address the six 'issues' that constitute a successful internet business (line 268). Instead of 'talking in the abstract about internet sites,' the speaker orients to a possible reason that the prospects have attended the presentation: 'you all came here because you wanted to make some money.' After a two second silence with no uptake by the audience, the speaker makes this version more tentative by adding 'I think.' After this **downgrade**, and display that the speaker was looking for a response rather than his question being "rhetorical," one woman, who happens to be a business owner and not a prospect⁶, says 'Yes.' The speaker does not acknowledge the 'Yes,' but instead offers an alternative reason the audience may have come: 'or did everyone just come here for a general lecture on business principles.' The speaker displays he is being playful and/or teasing with this version by: a) the satirical tone in his voice, b) playing off inferences associated with 'general lecture' and 'business principles,' and c) the circling of his right hand about half-way through this **formulation**. The audience treats the formulation as a tease by responding with laughter for 2.4 seconds.

This in an interesting sequence of turns since, as discussed earlier, the speaker has addressed the audience respectfully and as intelligent, reflective, and the type who will

⁶ This woman is a business owner and not a person here for their first time since she did not raise her hand when the presenter asked who was here for the first time (line 302). Also, she stayed after the business plan presentation for a Business Development Meeting that business owners attend. It is not clear that other audience members orient to her as a 'business owner' or a 'prospect,' however, in the presentation, or as just another audience member. This is also the same woman who responded (in line 23) to the emcee's 'are you sitting comfortably' (line 22).

thoughtfully consider a 'business idea.' The reason that the speaker offers for the audience to attend the presentation in lines 275, however, suggests a potentially dishonorable motive concerning a desire to make money. When the audience did not take up the speaker's initial formulation about their reason for coming, the speaker supplied another **candidate** reason ('for a general lecture on business principles'). The use of 'general lecture on business principles,' however, suggests that even a thoughtful, reflective audience might be bored or find this topic uninteresting. In this case, then, the speaker offers an extreme version of why someone might come to this communicative event, extreme enough to generate laughter, which then makes the first version seem more acceptable and legitimate. In lines 284, the speaker treats the audience's laughter as if the audience has accepted his version of why they are there (i.e., to 'make some money') and states that he needs to relate what comes next to how the audience can 'make some money,' or what the audience has implicitly "agreed" to.

The Cash-Flow Quadrant: Various Ways To Make Money

After establishing that the audience has come to 'make some money,' the speaker discusses various ways to make money.

[XBP_08A.mov]

Video File 8. Business Plan Presentation 8

Due to technical difficulties, the audio and video are not synchronous.

Extract 9. BP 8 BP040600:286-306:WJC (1:03/2.1MB)

286 M: Now (1.0) >there are various ways of making mo↓ ney↑< (0.4)

287 and there's a thing called the < cash flow quadrant > (1.4)

288 which starts off with a job up here [[writing on the white board]] (2.0)

289 and you draw a quadrant like this (0.8)

290 < and you've got (0.2) self-employment > (1.0) here (2.8)

291 and then you've got business systems here (3.8) [[writing throughout]]

292 don't ask me why I (draw it) because it all
 293 seems very nice and logical (1.2)
 294 and investments (3.0) now (1.0) .hhh (1.0)
 295 now most people (1.8) or many people (0.8)
 296 < think that a job > (0.4) is the way to earn money (3.6)
 297 it's nice and simple (0.8) you trade your time
 298 for some more money (0.4) for some pounds (1.4)
 299 your money- skills are valued or or your abilities
 300 or your time or your efforts are valued at a certain level (1.0)
 301 .hh and you go and you put in so many hours and you're paid (1.2)
 302 it sounds very good (1.4) there's only one limitation to that (1.0)
 303 is that (0.4) if you want more money (0.8) how do you get it (2.0)
 304 I mean- th- th- who here- who here's here for the first time? (1.6)
 305 s- ((looking around room; people raise hands))
 306 so I can just ask a few questions (.) okay (.) absolutely (.) right

In this extract, the speaker discusses 'a thing called the **cash flow quadrant**' (line 287), which is a 2x2 grid of ways 'of making money': job, self-employment, business systems, and investments. The speaker first explains jobs as an exchange of skills, abilities, time, or effort for compensation, and then states that there is a limitation to this approach of making money. That is, the speaker builds up a positive description of a job and then undermines this version by identifying a problem. This problem or limitation is formulated as: 'if you want more money (.) how do you get it.' The speaker then begins to offer a re-formulation ('I mean-') and then re-starts and instead asks who is here for the first time. The re-start signals that a better way to illustrate the point than with a re-formulation is to involve the audience. He looks around the room as people raise their hands to gauge to whom he 'can just ask a few questions.'

Question-Answer Sequence: "Are You Paid As Much As
You Need"

After determining who the prospects are in the audience (since there are also current business owners who have invited the prospects to the meeting), the speaker poses another question to the audience.

[XBP_09A.mov]

Video File 9. Business Plan Presentation 9

Extract 10. BP 9 BP040600:306-335:WJC (0:50/1.7MB)

306 M: so I can just ask a few questions (.) okay (.) absolutely (.) right

307 now- y- yo- say you go in (0.6) uh:: let's see (0.8)

308 are you paid as much money as you need↓ (2.0)

309 (1.2)

310 P: eh huh huh

311 M: I do not- assumed not or you wouldn't be here tonight (.)

312 P: eh huh huh huh ha

313 M: absolutely (.) right (0.2)

314 so (0.4) uh::m: (.) < wha:t would you like > (.) that your job isn't currently

315 funding (0.6) I mean is- your car or something like that (0.4)

316 would you like a better one

317 P: [[slight head nod]]

318 M: what would you ne:ed to get a slightly better car

319 (1.8)

320 M: about how much I mean

321 P: a lot more eh huh huh

322 M: I mean about a hundred quid a month or something would that on a-

323 on lease (0.4) do you or: two hundred quid a month

324 P: sure ((nods head))

325 M: two hundred quid a month (.) right (.) so now if you want a decent car
(0.4)

326 can you go into your boss and say you're undervaluing me

327 I want another two hundred quid a month (0.6)

328 what's he gonna say: 329 (2.0)

330 P: eh huh huh huh

331 M: No: (0.6) but why (0.8) doesn't he value you properly? (0.4)

332 P: He's limited

333 M: He's limited (0.6) that's the thing (0.6) he's limited (0.2) well actually he
isn't

334 entirely limited (.) what he's really limited-

335 well he's limited by two things

After acknowledging with his hands and eye contact who has raised their hands, the speaker selects one prospect and begins to set up a scenario: 'say you go in.' Before he continues, however, the speaker asks the prospect 'are you paid as much money as you need'? There is a 1.2 second silence, followed by soft laughter, which suggest that the answer to that question is obvious and does not require a yes or no; both of which are absent. The speaker orients to this assumption as well by saying that he assumed the person was not paid as much as he needed, or else he 'wouldn't be here tonight.' The speaker then aligns with the prospect by saying 'absolutely' and then asking the prospect: 'what would you like that your job isn't currently funding.' The speaker provides a possible response for the prospect: 'your car or something like would you like a better one.' The prospect nods and then the question-answer sequence continues with the speaker asking how much he would need to get a better car. The prospect says 'a lot more' and then laughs, and the speaker indicates that he wants a more specific figure that would satisfy the prospect's 'need,' which the speaker then provides for the prospect: 'a hundred quid a month or something would that () on lease do you' or two hundred quid a month.'

The prospect provides a minimal response -- 'sure' -- that indicates that the speaker can continue with this sequence. By providing such a short response, the prospect displays recognition that the speaker is interacting with him to demonstrate a point, rather than recognition that the speaker may have wanted the prospect to provide a more extended answer or contest the specific monetary amount.

Of the 'hundred quid' or 'two hundred quid,' the speaker selects 'two hundred quid' and also attributes to the prospect: 'so now you want a decent car' (Edwards, 1997). The speaker then continues the scenario he began back in line 307 about going into the prospect's boss to see that he is being undervalued and that he requests 'another two hundred quid a month.' The speaker then asks the prospect about what his boss' reaction would be ('what's he gonna say') and the prospect again responds with a pause and then laughter. This pause and laughter again indicates that an explicit answer does not need to be provided since the answer is obvious. The speaker then poses a question in the negative form 'doesn't he value you properly,' which projects that a 'no' answer is **preferred** (Sacks, 1987; Bilmes, 1987). The prospect states that his boss is 'limited.' The speaker then acknowledges the prospect's response with a **repeat receipt** ('he's limited'; Puchta, 1999). Next, the speaker starts to agree with the prospect's answer, then starts to mark a disagreement ('well actually he isn't entirely'). He then begins to offer what he is 'really limited-' by, but then does agreement with the prospect by saying 'well he's limited by two things.' The series of re-starts in this turn suggests that the speaker is oriented to not doing a direct disagreement with a prospect's response, and tries to incorporate that response in some way into his presentation, which is another way to display respect to the audience.

To sum up this extract so far, it is especially important to emphasize the following: 1) how both the speaker and the prospect jointly establish that there is a need of some kind to be fulfilled ('what would you like that your job isn't currently funding'), and 2) that establishing this need occurs sequentially before the speaker sets up the

hypothetical scenario where the prospect talks with his boss about being 'undervalued' and getting 'another two hundred quid a month.'

Question-Answer Sequence: "Are You Saving Two-Thirds
of Your Salary"

After the speaker describes the 'two things' the prospect's boss is limited by -- 'the owners of the company want to make that money for themselves' and that the boss will only pay the prospect what he needs to keep him -- the speaker discusses how the 'marketplace' can be unfriendly to employees, especially to those in their forties and fifties. He further discusses how it is difficult to adequately save for a pension while being an employee, and that to adequately maintain the same standard of living in retirement that one has now, employees should be saving two thirds of their current salary. At this point, the speaker poses another question to a member of the audience.

[XBP_10A.mov]

Video File 10. Business Plan Presentation 10

Extract 11. BP 10 BP040600:397-441:WJC (1:11/2.4MB)

'M' refers to Michael, the speaker; P1 and P2 are both prospects in the audience.

397 M: now sir ((points to man in audience))

398 if you're gonna end up with one-third of

399 your final pension- your salary (0.6) to live on (0.8)

400 .hh I would therefore assume

401 you are now saving two-thirds of your salary (0.8)

402 if yo- that's the level you are going to end up living at (0.6)

403 do you see what I mean (0.8)

404 M: so are you saving two-thirds of your salary at the moment

405 P1: I'm saving a hundred percent [[sitting with left arm on chair back]]

406 M: You're saving a hundred percent of your salary

407 [[nods head back; then drops arms]]

408 (2.0)

409 Aud: eh huh huh ha ha 410 []

411 M: blo::ody hell

412 Aud: huh hhih ha ha

413 M: You're- (3.0) [[walking backwards slightly]]

414 M: >can I talk to you later?<

415 P1: [[nods head yes]]

416 Aud: eh huh huh huh huh huh ha [[loud outburst of laughter]]

417 M: You are actually also doing what we're- we-

418 you must be doing something similar to us (0.8)

419 because that's exactly what we're trying to design- (0.6)

420 t- to push people towards and structure people so they can be

421 earning enough in their spare time

422 they can bank their salary (1.0)

423 'til they're doing well enough (1.0) where they

424 can actually decide to move on if they don't-

425 if they're not interested in the job anymore (1.0)

426 and some people do like their job (.) I mean

427 if you're a research physicist or something

428 you love your job (1.2)

429 then you'll probably go on doing it (1.0)

430 if you're a charity worker and you care

431 about people you go on doing it anyway

432 regardless of whether you're paid or not (1.4)

433 you know (.) and that's nice (0.4) and that's a nice position to be in (1.0)

434 so if you're in that sort of position that's great (1.0)

435 M: but I mean you- you- you do you bank all your salary? (0.8)

436 P2: No [[shakes head no]]

437 M: No (0.4) do you even bank two-thirds of your salary

438 P2: No [[shakes head no]]

439 M: Then you're gonna have a hell of a time if you

440 g(h)et thr(h)ough to yo(h)ur pension(h) (0.4) and

441 that is the trouble for most people >anyway<

In lines 397-404, the speaker creates a scenario about pensions and savings where a 'no' answer is expected to his question of the prospect (for example, note how the speaker phrases his question 'I would therefore assume...'). The speaker treats the prospect's answer ('I'm saving a hundred percent') as unexpected (by: repeating back the answer, with the same words, as a question; nodding his head back; exclaiming 'bloody hell'). The audience's laughter (lines 409 and 412) displays appreciation of the unexpected question-answer sequence. The speaker further displays the non-normative nature of the interaction by playfully suggesting a reversal of the roles where the audience member has something to offer the speaker, rather than vice versa ('can I talk to you later?'; the prospect nods yes in the affirmative). The audience appreciates this move with more laughter (line 416), and the speaker is then in a position to account for the unexpected turn of events.

The speaker's account, beginning in line 417, invokes a group identity ('we're' and 'us') by offering the explanation that the prospect 'must be doing something similar to us' and how they (presumably business owners of Tripp Worldwide) can 'structure people' so they can earn 'enough in their spare time' so they 'can bank their salary.' The speaker carries his account further to highlight how people can be more in control of their lives so they 'can actually decide to move on if they don't- if they're not interested in the job anymore' or can have the choice not to if they 'like their job.' This account positions the

business owners of Tripp Worldwide as a group who helps to put people in a desirable position (i.e., so they 'can bank their salary').

After this account, however, the speaker does not return to the first prospect for further interaction with him (for example, by asking him how the prospect is able to 'bank' all of his salary). Instead, the speaker turns to another prospect and asks this prospect if he is saving all of his salary (line 435). The prospect says no. The speaker then asks a similar question that was his original point to the other prospect ('do you even bank two-thirds of your salary?'). This prospect again says no. At line 439, the speaker then re-states the difficulty that this prospect is going to have by not banking two-thirds of his salary, and says that this is 'the trouble for most people anyway' (the 'most people' and the 'anyway' orient to the exception that the first prospect provided).

Formulating The "Problem"

This speaker seemed to be **fishing** for a 'no' answer from the first prospect but instead got an unexpected answer. The speaker's display of surprise, spread out over three turns (407-408, 411, 413-414), treats the first prospect's version as non-normative, an exception, which is consistent with the speaker's point. The speaker's point is subsequently made visible in the interaction with the second problem, and the point is that there is a problem with 'most people's' current situation concerning retirement. That is, a need or a problem exists; there is a disparity between the current situation and the ideal situation that needs to be addressed. The speaker formulates this as a 'problem,' as in lines 445-446 of the next extract.

[XBP_11A.mov]

Video File 11. Business Plan Presentation 11

Extract 12. BP 11 BP040600:442-452:WJC (0:21/738K)

442 M: so there- (.) the point there is (.) OK (0.2)

443 → you've got a job↓ (0.6)

444 → and the problem is increasing your earnings (1.4)
445 so some people they decide and realize
446 that sooner or later they're gonna
447 have to go self-employed (0.6)
448 so that < they own (0.6) their own (0.6) business > (0.8)
449 they have control over their life (1.4)
450 they have control over their earnings (1.4)
451 they have:: uh::m (0.6) and they keep
452 the money and the profit on what they're doing↓

The 'problem' is formulated in such a way that it is inevitable that, when confronting the problem, some people 'decide and realize that sooner or later they're gonna have to go self-employed' which results in them owning 'their own business.' The trope of control, independence, and financial rewards are repeated here to highlight the benefits of owning one's own business.

* * *

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Traquix Is the Answer

After establishing that a problem or need exists with a job (e.g., prospects do not make as much money as they need, they are not saving as much as they need to), the speaker suggests that the inevitable solution is to 'go self-employed' or 'own their own business.' In the next extract, the speaker says that it is not just any business that can be successful, since another 'challenge' looms on the horizon.

[XBP_12A.mov]

Video File 12. Business Plan Presentation 12

Extract 13. BP 12 BP040600:453-469:WJC (0:36/1.2MB)

453 M:→ .hhh but there's another challenge here (1.4)

454 → which is that an awful lot of businesses (1.0) go bust (1.8)

455 .hh because an awful lot of people start off businesses

456 with a::ll the wonderful ideas under the sun (0.8)

457 and a:ll the well meaning things under the sun (1.0)

458 but there's something they haven't thought about (1.2)

459 → some problem around the cor↓ ner (.)

460 → that hasn't been dealt with (1.0)

461 → and they don't get sufficient help (0.8)

462 → or they don't know how to get round it (0.8)

463 and that's the end of it (0.2) very sadly (0.4)

464 and then- then- that's it (0.8) that's the end of their business (1.0)

465 so wha- what's the answer to that? (1.2)

466 → and the answer is this (0.8)

467 → business systems (1.0) being self employed (0.8)

468 → owning your < own business > (1.2)

469 → but using a < well known (.) proven business > system to do it

Even though people start off businesses with good intentions and with 'all the wonderful ideas under the sun,' there are uncertainties in the road ahead, and the dangers of independence and going it alone are made relevant (lines 461-46). The 'very sadly' (line 463) presents the situation as inevitable, lamentable, and just the way things are, as opposed to attributing business failure to a lack or limitation of the people who attempt to start their own business. Further, the **extreme case formulation** of 'that's it that's the end of their business' lends even more drama.

By posing the rhetorical question -- 'what's the answer to that' -- the speaker sets up his own **slot** to provide the solution to this 'problem' (line 465). The 'answer' is exactly what he, and Tripp Worldwide, is offering: the opportunity to own 'your own business but using a well known proven business system to do it.' The speaker goes on for thirty more lines to explain franchising as an example of a business system, and that 'when you've made enough money you can live off the investments,' which orients to the original need of pensions and saving for retirement. The speaker subsequently provides more details of how money is earned through franchising in general, and then through starting up an e-commerce business on the internet with Tripp Worldwide in particular.

Thus, in Extracts BP 9 to BP 12, the speaker establishes, through question-answer sequences with audience members, that there is a need or disparity between a current and ideal situation. After this need or disparity is established, the speaker then provides a way to address this need: the opportunity to be an independent business owner, with the support of a proven business system.

How The Business System Relates to the Internet: "Who Here's A Salesman?"

After hailing business systems as the solution, the speaker addresses the issue of how the idea of a business system relates to the internet.

[XBP_13A.mov]

Video File 13. Business Plan Presentation 13

Extract 14. BP 13 BP040600:680-703:WJC (1:16/2.5MB)

680 M: Ri:ght (0.4) N:ow (1.8)

681 >how does this all link up anyway with the internet< (0.4)

682 what I- what I gotta know-

683 I've gotta business concept where you

684 can make some money (0.4)

685 >and you can make some regenerative income

686 for yourself and these businesses (0.4)

687 how are we going to do it and

688 why is this relevant to the internet< (1.4)

689 .hh it's because >all I'm going to talk about<

670 is a lot of people (.) doing a little at the end of the day (1.8)

671 M: who here's a salesman

672 Aud: (3.0) ((no one raises their hand or provides other indication to speaker))

673 M: you're lying

674 Aud: (0.6)

675 M: statistically should be four of you

676 Aud: ((laughs for about 2.0 seconds))

677 M: I do not believe this

678 (1.2) ((one person raises head))

679 one

680 Aud: ((sparse laughs continue for 2.5 seconds))

681 M: statistically incorrect (1.0)

682 .hh no there should be four (1.0)

683 one in ten I reckon (1.0)

684 but anyway it doesn't matter eh hih hih ha (0.4)

685 at the end of the day (1.0)
 686 the point is what I'm trying to make is (0.8) at the end of the day (1.0)
 687 with any web site (1.0)
 688 with a:n:y business (0.4)
 689 with anything like that (1.0)
 690 you have to create turnover of goods and services or
 691 something at the end of the day (0.4)
 692 or otherwise there's no money
 693 or profit at the end of it (1.0)
 694 .hh and: < if I rely > on starting a business with a lot of amateurs (1.0)
 695 which is basically what we-
 696 well we're not-
 697 we're (0.2) amateurs when we come down to (.)
 698 running our own businesses you might say in our spare time (1.0)
 699 .hh if I start doing- basing that up on an ability to sell (1.0)
 700 I've just proved by this roomful (0.6) I'm not going to get off the ground (2.0)
 701 so I need to have a business which is based on
 702 what everyone can do the whole time (1.2)
 703 and that's what I'm basically talking about

In lines 683-688, the speaker orients to two issues that he will discuss: 1) how money can be made through the Traquix business system, and 2) how this business system relates to the internet. Note the pronoun shifts in this portion (lines 683-687): 'I've gotta business concept where you can make some money and you can make some **regenerative income** for yourself and these businesses how are we going to do it and why is this relevant to the internet'. The speaker positions himself as possessing something that is desirable to the audience, through which the audience (and not necessarily himself) can make some money (note how 'you' is used twice, in addition to

'yourself' to refer to the audience). The use of 'I' and 'we' at this point is potentially problematic since the speaker has established at the beginning of the presentation, and as discussed in the analysis above, that he and the audience are going to mutually explore this business idea together. By presenting himself as having something that the audience does not have, the speaker may contradict the spirit of mutual exploration. The speaker, however, does return to the use of 'we,' thus re-establishing this connection with the audience, when he orients to the two issues he will discuss: 'how are we going to do it and why is this relevant to the internet' (lines 687-688).

These two topics are initially tied together by the phrase 'a lot of people doing a little at the end of the day' (line 670). Using this phrase creates an **interactional slot** to explain what the phrase means, and the speaker fills this slot with a question for the audience: 'who here's a salesman [sic]?' Three seconds of silence ensues where no audience member indicates to the speaker that they are a salesman. This silence, and lack of immediate uptake (which could have been, for example, laughter, raising a hand, etc.), treats the speaker's turn as a **puzzle** and the silence passes the conversational ball back into the court of the speaker. The speaker's next turn is 'you're lying' (line 673). The audience does not treat this new turn as providing a resolution to the first puzzle, but rather, the 0.6 second silence that follows marks this as yet another puzzle to be resolved, and thus making relevant an account for the speaker's 'you're lying' turn.

The speaker provides an account (line 675), indicating that according to statistics from an unidentified source, there should be four audience members who are salespeople. By not providing the source of the statistic, the statistics are difficult to refute, and could potentially be imaginative or contrived. Regardless, the audience treats this new bit of information as sufficient to the 'you're lying' puzzle by laughing for about two seconds and displays to the speaker that any potential trouble from the 'you're lying' accusation has been addressed. The first puzzle (i.e., 'who here's a salesman'), however, is still unresolved and the speaker keeps the puzzle looming for at least another turn by

commenting on his incredulity that no one in the audience is a 'salesman'. During the 1.2 second silence following the speaker's turn (line 677), an audience member slightly raises his hand, and the speaker acknowledges this with the **receipt**, 'one' (line 679). After the 2.5 seconds of silence by the speaker and sparse laughter by some audience members, the speaker revisits his earlier account about the audience being a statistical deviation (line 681).

The short in-breath and 'no' signal the start of a turn that resolves the puzzle for the audience (lines 682-683). The speaker explains that the point of the question and the dramatic display to the audience about his disbelief, was that in order to make a profit 'with any web site with any business with anything like that you have to create a turnover of goods and services' (line 690). Note how the speaker establishes this point by using 'you,' which may refer to the audience members themselves, or also to how anyone in general who is dealing with web sites, businesses, or anything like these would need to do. Further, the repetition of 'with any' three times (Atkinson, 1984) highlights that the speaker's point is a general, well-accepted position, independent of the speaker's **stake** in the matter (Edwards & Potter, 1992). It is also interesting to note how creating a 'turnover of goods and services' (line 690) is another way of talking about selling, but without using the term selling (e.g., see line 699).

The speaker continues his point by stating that 'if I rely on starting a business with a lot of amateurs which is basically what we- well we're not- we're amateurs when we come down to running out own businesses you might say in our spare time' (lines 694-698). The speaker's self-repairs ('what we- well we're not- we're...') mark his own speech as problematic, and the trouble is with the term 'amateurs.' As mentioned above, the speaker has talked in such a way to align himself with the audience and to position the audience as a rational, intelligent group of people who are capable of making their own decisions and not ones who would fall prey to a sales pitch. The use of 'amateurs' here potentially challenges that version by separating himself from the audience and by

putting himself in a privileged position in relation to the audience. The speaker orients to this problematic situation with the self-repairs, and then provides an account to specify his use of 'amateurs.' The account artfully shifts the pronoun 'I' (line 694, 'if I rely on starting a business') to 'we' ('we're amateurs when we come down to running our own businesses in our spare time'), which re-establishes the audience on an equal, respectful grounding. Further, by using the description running the business in 'our spare time,' this plays on an identity where people can juggle many responsibilities, such that they may be competent (i.e., non-amateur) in another aspect of their life, all while simultaneously running a business in their 'spare time.'

Also, note how the speaker uses 'our own' which addresses the issue of independence, and also 'in our spare time' which neutralizes the amateur versus expert issue since it may not be relevant when people run their businesses in their 'spare time.' Further, the speaker addresses in his account the referent of the 'amateur' label: amateur at being a 'salesman' or amateurs at 'starting a business.' The speaker does not fully clear up the ambiguity in this matter because he emphasizes the latter ('starting a business') in his account, but then talks about the 'ability to sell' in line 699. Regardless of the specific referent for the 'amateur' label, the speaker does indicate that the business can not be based on an 'ability to sell' (since the business would not even 'get off the ground,' let alone 'make a profit' which was an earlier formulation) but the business must be based on something else: 'what everyone can do the whole time'.

Invoking Institutional Identity and Marketing By Word of

Mouth

In the next excerpt, which immediately follows the one just discussed, the speaker invokes the founding families of the Traquix Corporation and offers another description of Tripp Worldwide.

[XBP_14A.mov]

Video File 14. Business Plan Presentation 14

Extract 15. BP 14 BP040600:704-717:WJC (0:39/1.3MB)

704 M: now (0.8) there are two people who have been in this b-

705 business- this (.) type of business for a long time (1.0)

706 it's the McKay and VanExel families (5.0) [[writes last names on board]]

707 → .hh because (3.0) Tripp Worldwide (2.0) is a < la:rg e group of: people >
(1.0)

708 → >who are very good at marketing< (1.0) by word of mouth (1.0)

709 → .hh and we're very good (.) at getting people (0.4)

710 → uh you know by- by recommendation (0.8)

711 → to go and do things (1.0)

712 recommending that people visit a web site (0.2)

713 is a very easy thing to do if you think the web site has any advantages (1.0)

714 and I'- hope to convince you of that in a moment (1.0)

715 so if you like the web site (0.8) and ° things like that°

716 it's not difficult to say to people

717 why don't you go and look at this web site

The description of Tripp Worldwide (lines 707-711) comes sequentially after the speaker has 'proved' that audience members are not professional salespeople and that the business is not based on selling since this is not something that 'everyone can do the whole time' (line 702, Extract BP 13). The speaker is now in a position to explain what 'everyone can do the whole time.'

In this description, 'marketing' is emphasized, though it is marketing by 'word of mouth,' which may distinguish among types of marketing, and not being a professional marketer. It is interesting to note that before when the speaker used 'marketing' (Extract BP 5), he downplayed its significance. The use of 'marketing' in this excerpt was not repaired, as it was before, for at least three possible reasons. First, 'marketing' is not used

here to refer to a primary description of the Tripp Worldwide association ('we are a large marketing group'); instead, 'marketing' is used as a contrast to selling, which has already been presented as something that is not particularly desirable and also not an accurate description of what is "going on" in the presentation. Second, 'marketing' is not used on its own, but is made specific by the speaker adding 'by word of mouth.' By discussing 'marketing (1.0) by word of mouth,' this makes it more likely that 'anyone can do' it, and that special expertise is not required.

Third, after 'marketing (1.0) by word of mouth' is used, the speaker changes to the language of 'recommendation.' By using the term 'recommending,' the speaker can balance the issue that he is presenting a business that makes use of established business activities (i.e., 'marketing'), but this is a business that 'everyone can do the whole time' (i.e., 'recommending that people visit a web site'). It is interesting to note that the speaker orients to some potential trouble by using the phrase 'we're very good at getting people.' There are three markers of trouble in this segment, which include: 1) the pause for 0.4 seconds after he says 'at getting people,' 2) the "fumbling" of 'uh you know by-,' and 3) tagging on 'by recommendation' to re-cast 'getting people.' To "get people" to do things may suggest that the person did not want to originally do something in the first place, and may bear resemblance to a process of 'selling.' By using 'recommendation,' and then re-stating 'recommending' in the next line, the speaker counters the notion that the business is about selling.

To recap, the speaker has established, through question-answer sequences, that a problem or need exists, and then offered the Traquix business system as the answer, or solution, to the problem. In explaining the relationship between the business system and the internet, the speaker establishes, through another question-answer sequence, that the business is not about selling. Rather, the business is about something that 'everyone can do the whole time.' He goes on to explain that what everyone can do is to market by 'word of mouth,' which is also described as recommending, or referring, the site to other

people. The use of the phrase 'marketing (1.0) by word of mouth,' has the effect of presenting a legitimate and respectful version of the business and something that everyone can do, while undermining the version that the business is about 'selling.'

* * *

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The Speaker's Closing

Next, the speaker explains the details of how to make money in the business by creating 'turnover of goods and services' (note, not 'selling') and by referring and sponsoring other people in the business. After these topics are addressed, Michael begins to wrap up his presentation.

[XBP_15A.mov]

Video File 15. Business Plan Presentation 15

Extract 16. BP 15 BP040600:1381-1427:WJC (1:22/2.8MB)

1381 M: and there it is in a nutshell (0.2) you know (2.0)

1382 .hh (0.6) I don't know (0.6)

1383 d- do you think you could do this business (1.0)

1384 M: do you know how to buy things

1385 (1.0) [[prospect nods head]]

1386 you can buy things (1.0)

1387 do you know: (0.2) um:: (0.6) i- if you like this

1388 could you um:: oh- >sorry<

1389 [[turns head to white board, back to prospect]]

1390 M: .hh could you recommend them to other people

1391 (0.8) [[not clear from video if prospect acknowledged]]

1392 M: yes (0.8)

1393 and: (0.4) [[facing another prospect]]

1394 in order to learn about how the business system works (0.4)

1395 could you < come along to the occasional evening now and then

1396 M: to learn a bit more about the business >

1397 (0.8) [[prospect nods head]]

1398 M: yes (0.8)

1399 if you do those three things (1.0) you've got a business (1.0)

1399 → so your choice is very simple now (0.8)

1400 → it's I B O (0.6) member (0.6) or client (1.2) [[illustrates 1, 2, 3 with fingers]]

1401 you can be a business owner and make money (1.4)

1402 you can be a member (1.8) and s-ave some money (1.8)

1403 or you can be a client and pay some money (1.4)

1404 Aud: eh huh huh ha

1405 []

1406 M: you know it's the end of the day (1.0) I mean you know (0.8)

1407 what would you like to be

1408 P3: (business owner)

1409 M: you'd like to be an I B O (0.4) a b- business owner (1.4)

1410 what about you sir

1411 P4: ()

1412 M: be an I B O (0.6) a business owner (0.6) absolutely (1.0)

1413 and that's it in a nutshell (0.8) you know (0.8)

1414 BEcome a business owner (1.6)

1415 JOIN the internet wave (1.6)

1416 BE wealthy (1.0)

1417 now for those of you who have been wondering about it (0.6)

1418 [[with index finger raised]] the one bit of advice I can give you (0.2) is: (1.0)

1419 if you can see the tail lights of a bandwagon (1.2)

1420 you've missed it 1421 (2.0)

1422 I need someone to mow my lawn (1.0)

1423 [[turns off microphone, then looks to audience]]

1424 Aud: eh huh huh huh huh ha [[laughter for 4.0 seconds]]

1425 M: [[microphone turned off]] thank you (0.6) [[raises hand]] Aaron

1426 [[Audience applauds for 9.0 seconds as Aaron shakes hands with
1427 Michael and comes to the front of the room]]

Asking for A Commitment From the Audience: "Do You
Think You Could Do This Business?"

At line 1381, the speaker marks a **transition point** in his presentation ('and there it is in a nutshell you know'). In line 1382, the speaker positions himself as not knowing ('I don't know'), which serves as a reason to ask the audience if they think they 'can do this business.' The use of 'I don't know' is subtle, yet artful, since it gives the speaker a legitimate, innocent reason for asking his question (that is, he presents himself as "just asking to find out information, not to be persuasive"). By asking about the audience's (i.e., not singling out one particular prospect) ability to do the business (i.e., 'could' and not "do you want to" or "will you"), the question is posed in a tentative and non-threatening manner.

The speaker then asks three questions of the audience, which he directs at individual prospects. The first question, directed to an individual prospect and not the whole audience, concerns whether or not the prospect knows how to buy things. Again, the question is posed at the level of knowledge and ability, and not, for example, action (i.e., does the audience buy things or has the prospect bought things). Also, the emphasis is on 'buy'ing, which is presumably a relatively simple activity, and not, for example, a more complex activity such as running a business, engaging in 'selling,' or a potentially unlimited number of other practices that could be relevant to the speaker's presentation. Further, the speaker uses a vague referent 'things' rather than anything particular, such as, for example, the products available on the Traquix web site. The prospect slightly nods his head, indicating minimal agreement. It is not clear why the speaker only provides minimal agreement, and not, for example, a stronger form such as 'Yes' or 'absolutely,' 'I can buy things,' etc. However, the speaker treats it as an appropriate response and repeats

'you can buy things' in the manner of a **repeat receipt**. This is a clever use of what takes the structural form of a repeat receipt because it suggests the prospect had actually said these words and the speaker was repeating the prospect's own words back to him, when actually the prospect only nodded his head. The use of 'you can buy things' also establishes for others in the audience that the prospect has indicated agreement.

Next, the speaker poses his second question (lines 1387-1390) about recommending 'this' to other people if the prospect liked it. Again, the question is posed with 'do you know' and made conditional with 'if you like this,' and again pitches at the level of ability (i.e., 'could'). The use of 'this' is also somewhat vague and ambiguous as to whether it refers to the business, the 'things,' the practice of 'buying,' or something else. Then, the speaker displays a lack of having the question being scripted by first saying 'could you um::,' then starting it again 'could you.' He then turns to the whiteboard as if the question emerged from the whiteboard and not himself, turns back to the prospect, and then completes the question ('could you...recommend them to other people'). There is no evidence from the recording that the prospect responded with agreement to the question (though he could have since his back is to the camera or he could have said something quietly that the microphone did not pick up). However, the speaker treats the prospect as having indicated agreement, and makes this information available to the rest of the audience by saying 'yes' (line 1392).

Then, the speaker turns to another prospect and poses his third question (lines 1393-1396). This third question is posed to another part of the audience, and it does not appear as if the speaker is addressing a particular prospect. The content of the question concerns the willingness for 'you' (again, could be 'you' in particular or 'you' in general) to 'learn about how the business system works' by coming 'along to the occasional meeting now and then to learn a bit more about the business.' The question is marked with tentativeness by the use of 'coming along to' (versus, for example, attending or participating in, etc.), 'occasional' and 'now and then,' as well as 'a bit more,' all orienting

to the issue of time and level of involvement and effort required. Additionally, the question implies that the audience does not already need to know how to run a business since they would be 'com[ing] along' to 'learn' about the business system.

The speaker continues his sequential establishment of the three questions by saying 'with those three things, you've got a business.' The sequence of questions and answers, then, allows the speaker to review and highlight three main aspects of the business, while, in a non-threatening way that presents these aspects as uncomplicated and not involving a lot of time or effort, establish that the audience can do the business. Through this sequence, the speaker lays the groundwork for a 'choice' to be made.

By his use of 'so' in line 1399, the speaker suggests some background work has been accomplished. He states 'so your choice is very simple now.' Note the emphasis on choice, which suggests that this is in the audience's own control and not something having to do with the speaker, and that it is 'very simple,' which corresponds to how the speaker has presented the three aspects of the business to be uncomplicated and not requiring extra time or effort. The 'choice' concerns 'IBO member or client,' a range of possibilities that, significantly, does not include doing nothing at all. The speaker then spells out the implications of each choice, which involve making money, saving money, or paying money. The speaker presents these three in an ordered relationship to each other, emphasizing the issue of money. A range of other alternatives could have been emphasized, such as, for example, the level of commitment, time, or effort involved in each of the three choices. Presumably, being a business owner is more involved in the time, effort, or commitment required when compared to being a member or client, but it was the issue of money that was highlighted.⁷ The use of 'make money' orients to the issue that the speaker has been talking about throughout the presentation (i.e., how to

⁷ In a seminar and rally meeting, another speaker stated that if people are not 'ready' to be IBOs, they can start out as members or client, since it still generates turnover for their business and then they can work up to being a business owner.

make money in this business) and was also a reason for at least one prospect coming to the meeting; lines 308-311).

After providing the sequence of implications for each choice, the speaker laughs, which the audience picks up on, and then says 'you know it's the end of the day.' The speaker has used 'at the end of the day' repeatedly (i.e., 14 times) throughout the presentation to suggest what the "heart or essence of the matter is," or what something comes "down to." The use of 'it's the end of the day' signals to the audience that, indeed, it is now the end of the day (and also the end of the presentation) and that all he has talked about in the presentation comes down to this choice. The 'you know' and 'isn't it' appeals to the audience's common understanding of the meaning and implications of this term, and makes a bid for aligning with the audience.

At line 1407, the speaker points to one particular prospect and asks 'what would you like to be.' Note that this speaker (Michael) does not ask for a 'commitment' from the audience as another speaker (Anna) will do in a presentation discussed in the next section. Also note that the speaker does not ask what they would like to 'do' (making relevant an action, such as making, saving, or paying out money), but asks about what they would like to 'be' (which **makes relevant** an identity, such as the categories of IBO, member, and client). This is a subtle way to project an answer that uses the language and categories of the business, rather than general activities, and putting the audience in a position to identify with these categories (see earlier discussion of Biggart, 1989, p. 163 for a similar claim; link opens into new window). Further, asking them what they would 'like to be' is a way to have the audience commit to an identity category without using the language of commitment. This emphasizes the point that the speaker is not trying to persuade or sell the audience on the business.

The recording does not pick up what the prospect says in response to the speaker's question, but again the speaker uses a repeat receipt 'you'd like to be an I B O b- business owner' to display receipt of the prospect's reply and to signal to the audience the answer

is appropriate and valued. The speaker then asks another prospect 'what about you sir,' the implication being that the speaker is asking the same question of this prospect as the first one. Again, the recording does not pick up what the prospect says, but the speaker repeats 'be an I B O business owner' and then adds 'absolutely.' Next, the speaker provides another summary statement 'that's it in a nutshell' and provides what the features of that shell are: 'become a business owner, join the internet wave, be wealthy.' The speaker thus distills his whole presentation into these pithy announcements and is thus consistent with "what it comes down to at the end of the day" tone that the speaker has been building in this portion of his talk.

Establishing Urgency: "The Tail Lights of a Bandwagon"

In lines 1417-1418, the speaker establishes a **slot** to provide some news by saying 'now for those of you who have been wondering about it,' which orients to an unidentified issue that the speaker mentioned earlier. The 'advice' that the speaker dispenses concerns 'if you can see the tail lights of a bandwagon, you've missed it.' While the referent is ambiguous, the speaker may be referring to earlier statements he made about 'jump[ing] on the bandwagon' (lines 1307-1313; See Extract BP 16 below).

[XBP_16A.mov]

Video File 16. Business Plan Presentation 16

Extract 17. BP 16 BP040600:1307-1313:WJC (0:20/704K)

1307 M: you know this is gonna be the biggest internet portal in Europe

1308 you know here is your chance to get in on the ground floor of it

1309 this opportunity won't be here for () it will

1310 still be an opportunity in two or five years time yes and

1311 you'll still be able to make money out of it but not the explosive

1312 growth we're gonna see in the next few months

1313 so this is the time to jump on the bandwagon

The speaker frames lines 1417-1418 (this portion of Extract BP 15 reproduced below; [click here to open into new window](#)) as 'advice' which positions him as advice-provider, and the audience as advice-recipients. This is potentially a sensitive matter given the equality and respect the speaker has cultivated from early on in the presentation. This issue is managed, however, by the use of 'for those of you who have been wondering about it' since this provides an account for why he is dispensing the advice (that is, he constructs it as a matter of the audience's curiosity, and not something necessarily for his own ends). The use of seeing the tail lights puts a creative spin on what otherwise could be seen as a trite, hackneyed expression of "missing the bandwagon." Further, the use of the "missing the bandwagon" metaphor implicitly, rather than explicitly, invokes a sense of urgency and warning that an opportunity will be missed.

Extract 18. BP 15 BP040600:1417-1427:WJC

1417 now for those of you who have been wondering about it (0.6)

1418 [[with index finger raised]] the one bit of advice I can give you (0.2) is: (1.0)

1419 if you can see the tail lights of a bandwagon (1.2)

1420 you've missed it

1421 (2.0)

1422 I need someone to mow my lawn (1.0)

1423 [[turns off microphone, then looks to audience]]

1424 Aud: eh huh huh huh huh ha [[laughter for 4.0 seconds]]

1425 M: [[microphone turned off]] thank you (0.6) [[raises hand]] Aaron

1426 [[Audience applauds for 9.0 seconds as Aaron shakes hands with

1427 Michael and comes to the front of the room]]

There is a 2.0 second pause after the speaker says 'you've missed it.' This pause, and lack of immediate uptake by the audience (for example, laughter), may mark some trouble in the interaction. The speaker then says that he needs someone to mow his lawn,

switches off his microphone signaling a conclusion, and then looks to the audience. Following this, the audience laughs, perhaps in receipt of the 'tail lights' and 'bandwagon' 'advice' and/or recognition of the announcement that he needs someone to mow his lawn. The inference made available by the speaker's turn in line 1422 ('I need someone to mow my lawn') is ambiguous, and seems to be a non sequitur. It may, however, orient to a statement made earlier that he and his wife have a big house in the country (i.e., a large lawn), and orient to the issue of time and status (i.e., he can afford to pay someone to mow his lawn and that he has more important things to do with his time than this, perhaps that he can enjoy the 'lifestyle' afforded by owning his own business). This somewhat puzzling comment is accounted for by the emcee when he comes to the front of the room after Michael finishes.

After coming to the front of the room, the emcee explains that Michael has a seven acre lawn (thus accounting for why Michael might need someone to mow his lawn). Aaron then signals that the business plan presentation is over by stating that they are going to 'break now' and will come back in about fifteen minutes for a training session that Michael will do. Aaron invites people to tea and coffee, and to have a smoke if they so desire (i.e., if they have a 'nicotine fit'). He concludes by stating: 'Hope you enjoyed what you see. If it's for you, fantastic. If it's not for you, fantastic. Have a great life. Thank you.' By concluding in this manner, Aaron again adopts a relaxed, non-threatening manner (that is, not selling or roping), thus positioning the audience as people who can discern whether or not the business is for them.

[XBP_17A.mov]

Video File 17. Business Plan Presentation 17

Audio/video clip (0:26/928K) of this closing segment

To recap, then, the speaker establishes, through question-answer sequences, that the audience can do what he identifies as the three primary aspects of the business, and then implies that a choice becomes inevitable. This choice is framed not in terms of the

level of involvement in the business, but rather as how much money the audience wants to make, save, or have to pay out. The audience is not presented with an option to do nothing. The presenter then asks them what they would 'like to be,' which makes relevant identity categories associated with the business, but does not use the explicit language of 'commitment' like another speaker (Anna; discussed in the next section) will do with people who have already agreed to be business owners (and one or two prospects), and also manages the issue that this speaker (Michael) is not doing selling. Additionally, the speaker emphasizes that being a business owner is a valued identity, one which allows them to be a part of a growing trend ('the internet wave') and a way for them to 'make money' and 'be wealthy,' without having to sell (i.e., 'can you buy things' and 'recommend' the business if you like it) or be involved in complicated activities (i.e., anyone can 'buy things,' 'recommend,' and 'come along' to learn more about the business).

Discussion of the Analysis

Throughout this first section, then, excerpts of a business plan presentation have been analyzed to demonstrate how the speaker manages what the business (and its presentation in a business plan) is and is not about. One of the primary issues oriented to concerns that the business and presentation are not about selling. Instead, the business/presentation is about showing how people can satisfy their needs through buying things and recommending the business to others. Additionally, the speaker positioned himself as part of a larger association that trains people to get their own businesses started, and positions himself in relation to the business by telling a story of how he became involved in the business. Further, the speaker's discourse positioned the audience as knowledgeable, rational individuals who valued independence and autonomy (i.e., the audience can own their own business and they have control over their life and earnings; see lines 448-452 of BP 11).

The organizational sequence of the business plan presentation was also discussed. First, the speaker oriented to potential concerns of the audience and then framed the presentation as one that did not involve selling or roping people into anything. Next, he jointly established with the prospects that they had unfulfilled needs. After this, he presented the Traquix business system as a way to fulfill these needs, while countering that this business was about selling (and instead about buying and making referrals). To close his presentation, the speaker presented the prospects with a choice of becoming a client, member, or individual business owner. He then engaged in another question-answer sequence in which the prospects said they wanted to become business owners. At the very end, the speaker established the urgency of getting involved now by invoking the metaphor of the band wagon.

What's Going On Here? Managing The Sales Pitch Versus Business Presentation Distinction

Significantly, the sequence of the "e-commerce business presentation" follows a standard organizational pattern that characterizes a "sales pitch." Jeff Scott Cook (1989) argues that a standard formula for a "sales pitch" involves the following steps⁸:

Step 1. Make the customer aware that he or she has an immediate problem or unfulfilled need.

Step 2. Present the customer with a way to solve the problem or satisfy the need.

Step 3. Overcome the customer's stated or unstated objections to the solutions you propose.

Step 4. Establish (or reinforce) the urgency of the problem.

⁸ Wilson (1988) argues that there are six steps, or "known selling techniques," that are essential for selling a product or idea: 1. Attract attention; 2. Excite, arouse interest and desire; 3. Inform and explain why; 4. Satisfy concerns, answer objections; 5. Ask for a commitment to action; 6. Protect your credibility. (p. 66)

Step 5. Ask the customer for the order (signature on purchase order, shipping approval, verbal acceptance of the solution, or whatever). (pp. 26-27)

That is, the speaker's "business presentation" contains all of the features of a "sales pitch" as identified by Cook. For example,

- The speaker asks the audience members if they are getting paid enough or have enough money saved for retirement to raise the audience's awareness of having an immediate problem or unfulfilled need;
- The speaker presents owning one's own business with a proven business strategy as a way to satisfy the audience's needs;
- The speaker overcomes the audience's stated or unstated objectives to this solution by stating that the business does not require a lot of capital investment up front, that he does not make money off of registration fees, that the audience does not need to know a lot about running one's own business since there is a large network of other business owners to support those less experienced, etc.;
- The speaker establishes the urgency of the problem by using **extreme case formulations** about getting in on the ground floor and not missing the bandwagon;
- The speaker asks the audience to make a choice regarding the business by asking them if they want to be a business owner, member, or client.

The point of making the comparison to Cook's definition of a "sales pitch" is not to claim that Michael and the prospects were really participating in a business presentation or a sales pitch. Rather, the point is to show an alternative version that the speaker orients to throughout the communicative event. That is, whether this communicative event is a "business presentation" or a "sales pitch" is one of the key features of this discourse. Throughout, the speaker rhetorically builds up that this is indeed a "business presentation" while simultaneously undermining that it is a "sales

pitch." Further, the rhetorical discursive action approach used in the analysis points out the devices employed to accomplish this effect by:

- managing informality;
- framing the event as an "overview of a business idea";
- positioning himself in relation to the business and invoking his former occupational identity;
- positioning the audience and speaker as mutually engaged in an activity;
- casting the audience as intelligent and reflective people who would not fall prey to a sales pitch and who value the autonomy and control of being an entrepreneur;
- highlighting how the business is not about selling but about buying and referral (i.e., what everyone can do); and
- invoking an institutional affiliation with a group of associates whose purpose is to help people start their own businesses, a business that does not involve selling but is a way to fulfill the audience's needs.

* * *

In the next section ("Analysis of Dreams and Goals Discourse"), extracts from a second business meeting are analyzed to highlight a similar sequence of interaction between a presenter and audience members, but featuring discourse about dreams and goals.

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[Link to References section \(opens into new window\).](#)

* Alternative Description of Tripp Worldwide: "We're a
Large Group of Independent Business Owners"

Another description of Tripp Worldwide also highlights the independent business aspects. In the following excerpt, the speaker is discussing six characteristics of a successful internet business. At this point, he has already discussed 1) how it is important to attract visitors, 2) have those visitors come back, and 3) to provide a 'personal touch' with customer service. In this excerpt, he references the other three issues: 4) security, 5) financial backing, and 6) an efficient delivery system and infrastructure. In referencing these last three issues, he states that while Tripp Worldwide cannot offer these aspects, a 'large corporation,' such as Traquix, can.

Extract 19. BP Alt 1 BP040600:738-748:WJC

738 M: Security. Well we can't really offer that. It's not really a household
739 name and people don't really see us as a large corporation. We're
740 not, we're a large group of independent, business owners,
741 all working together as a team. We aren't a large corporate group
742 so we can't offer that security when it comes to doing transactions over
743 something like the internet. So what we need is a large corporation there
744 and we need finance, because, I said, we're not gonna put the money
745 in and neither are we going to ask you to put the money in because
746 I think that, what's the point? If we can get someone else to do it and we
747 can make the money out of it, why not? .hh So that's with that. And
748 we need a delivery system because that's what we're not experts in

In lines 738-748, the speaker contrasts Tripp Worldwide with a 'large corporation' and a 'large corporate group,' and again constructs Tripp Worldwide as a 'large group' of 'independent, business owners.' Like 'loose' (Extract BP 5; line 115) was used to describe

the business association, 'all working together as a team' is added here. Both seem to counter a version that the group has a rigid or inflexible structure, inferences that may be associated with a 'large corporation.'

Alternative Description of Tripp Worldwide: "We Teach
People How To Set Up Businesses"

Towards the end of the presentation, there is another description of what Tripp Worldwide is about. This time, the speaker is talking about how starting one's own e-commerce business does not require a lot of time, and the speaker uses the description to emphasize this point and to underscore the independent aspects of the business. Note lines 1212-1215 in Extract BP Alt 2 below.

Extract 20. BP Alt 2 BP040600:1206-1216:WJC

1206 M: a lot of people are worried, how much time will it take
 1207 a lot of people say to me () I want to think about
 1208 this I don't want to commit myself until I've really got the time
 1209 to do it or whatever it is but I don't know, if you like interfering
 1210 in other people's businesses, then it could take you time. But
 1211 I can tell you it won't be appreciated by the other people. What
 1212 → we do in Tripp Worldwide is we teach people how to set up
 1213 → businesses and we teach people how to be independent business
 1214 → owners. And that's () we run a very good training
 1215 → system. () and unless you want to interfere with those
 1216 people's businesses it won't take a huge amount of time

In lines 1206-1209, the speaker **voices** concerns that the audience members may have about the time commitment to the business (note that that speaker also oriented to potential concerns of the audience at the very beginning of his presentation as well). The speaker, in lines 1209-1211, indicates that the business could demand 'time' (note the

ambiguity here) only if people were to 'interfere in other people's businesses.' This is a clever turn since the speaker plays off the double meaning of business as a) the e-commerce business, and b) activities that one could be "nosey" about or interfere with. Either way, the speaker indicates that the interference would not 'be appreciated' by others (line 1211). The description of Tripp Worldwide (lines 1212-1216) comes after this sequence and makes no mention of marketing. Rather, the emphasis is on training people how to set up their independent businesses, which provides an account consistent with the preceding turns about time and interfering in other's "business." Throughout his presentation, the speaker alternately describes Tripp Worldwide to manage a range of issues. These descriptions varied in terms of the degree to which they were about marketing ('a marketing group,' 'marketing organizations'), the type of marketing activity in which they engaged ('word of mouth,' 'recommendation,' and 'referral'), the group's structure as an association ('loose' and 'works together as a team'), but consistently portrayed Tripp Worldwide as a group that trains people to start their own independent businesses. The use of the term 'marketing, by word of mouth,' has the effect of presenting a legitimate and respectful version of the business, but also being something that everyone can do, since it is making 'recommendations' and 'referrals' rather than 'selling.'

ANALYSIS OF DREAMS AND GOALS DISCOURSE

In the prior section, Michael's business plan presentation was constructed in such a way as to rhetorically build up a version of events, through question-answer sequences, in which prospects could satisfy their needs through buying things and recommending the Traquix web site to others, while simultaneously undermining the version that the business was about selling. Additionally, the speaker's discourse positioned the audience as knowledgeable, rational, autonomous individuals who valued independence and constructed them as the type of people who would not be taken by a sales pitch. Sequentially, the speaker jointly established with the audience that a problem or need existed, and then presented the Traquix business as a vehicle, or way, to solve the problem or to fulfill the need.

In this section, similar question-answer sequences occur in another presentation with a different speaker, but the focus is less on problems or needs, and more on dreams, goals, and passions. The purpose of this section is to illustrate the sequential relevance of these question and answer sequences about 'dreams' and unfulfilled desires.

Establishing the Audience's Goals and Dreams Through Question-Answer Sequences

In this business meeting, the presentation takes place in a private home in the United States, to about eight people, and one month before the Traquix web site is launched in North America. The majority of the audience members at this time, with the exception of the researcher and one or two others, have already decided to start their own e-commerce business, though some just did so within the past month. In the first 28 lines, the speaker, Anna, **manages** issues of (in)formality by saying how 'this is not- this is not gonna be (.2) formal (.) as such (.) um (.) because I'm not formal' (lines 6-8) and how she felt 'it was really important for us ta (.) kinda (.) gather together' and 'get the information' (lines 31-32; Extract DG 2, below) regarding the upcoming launch of the e-commerce

web site (Atkinson, 1982; Puchta, 1999). While the purpose of this meeting was to get people 'up to speed' (line 15; Extract DG 1) about new information regarding the business, and is not a business plan presentation per se, there is some interesting interactional work being accomplished that is relevant to the present discussion of unfulfilled needs and goals and its sequential placement in the interaction.

[XDG_1A.mov]

Audio File 2. Dreams and Goals Discourse 1

Extract 21. DG 1 BP080499:1-28:WJC (1:12/428K)

1 NBO: I'm sitting here so I can hear the bell ring.

2 A: O:ka:y, uh huh ha,

3 well I don't want to have my back to you.

4 NBO: Oh no (.) that's OK-

5 A: And I'm not- this is not-

6 this is not gonna be (.1)

7 formal (.) as such (.) um (0.4)

8 because I'm not formal

9 uh huh huh ha

10 but um (0.4)

11 I did- I did feel that it was really important

12 for us ta (.) kinda (.) gather together because um (0.4)

13 really on an hourly basis (.) there is some really (.)

14 exciting things that are going on and um (0.4)

15 trying to HH keep everybody up to speed on things is um (0.4)

16 kinda challenging right now and- and

17 those that haven't been able to use our (.)

18 um (.) put them- (.) their buil-

19 business on APEXVOICE which is um (0.4)

20 uh a voice mail system: that you can hear (0.4) um
 21 updated- uh we get updates from the corporation
 22 and from Traquix and from (.) uh (.) Tripp Associates and
 23 Finnerty:: and- on- Ro-berto and
 24 all of (.) < our mentors > in the biz-ness (.1) um::
 25 we're getting like five or six of 'em a day just to keep up (.)
 26 it up to speed (.1) so that we are doing things (0.6)
 27 um the ↑ correct way and- and that we use the (.) um (.)
 28 computer the ↓ right way and all of th[?] so (.) uh (.)

[XDG_2A.mov]

Audio File 3. Dreams and Goals Discourse 2

Click on control bar (above) and the audio clip will begin playing in a new window.

Position the new window so you can see it and the transcript (below).

Extract 22. DG 2 BP080499:29-41:WJC (0:34/204K)

'A' refers to 'Anna' the speaker.

29 A: we just kinda had been talking with Marnie
 30 and said you know there was just so much go:ing on (.1)
 31 and this would be a way for us to gather .hhh together and get (.)
 32 get the information (.) and < ↑ I'm sure that > (.) as we talk (.)
 33 you're gonna have (.) um some questions and
 34 if you have paper or whatever:
 35 feel free to jot them down and I will address them (.)
 36 um but I may also address 'em as I'm talking so (.)
 37 [[phone rings in another room]]
 38 A: we'll just kinda wait until (.) um (.) I'm done (.) um and uh

39 [[phone rings second time]]

40 A: if I haven't addressed your questions then I most certainly will (.1) um (.)

41 [[phone rings third time]]

In line 29, the speaker makes reference to another business owner who is in the room, Marnie, who the speaker had talked with earlier to set up this meeting. The speaker then provides an **account** (lines 30-32) that explains the purpose of the meeting. In lines 32-36, the speaker indicates to the audience that they should write down their questions and that she will address them, but that she may also address them while she's talking. This account creates **interactional space** for her to "have the floor" for an extended period of time and suspend the question-answer **turn** taking that might otherwise occur if it were more conversational (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1978). The fact that the phone is ringing (lines 37, 39, 41, 43) without being answered or oriented to by anyone in the meeting **displays** that this is a time not to be interrupted with a phone call. Since there was no more ringing after the fourth ring, the phone was presumably picked up by the answering machine, the caller stopped calling, or someone else not in the meeting, but at the house, picked up the phone. Interestingly, because this presentation took place in a private home, the speaker in this presentation did not have the luxury of having another business owner address the mundane issues of holding questions until the end, limiting distractions, and building up a positive evaluation of herself as Michael, the speaker in the first section, did. Instead, Anna must do this herself.

Dream Building: "Realizing Why We're Together"

In the next extract, which follows immediately after the extract just discussed, note how the speaker describes the e-commerce business (line 51) and asks the audience about their dreams, goals, and what they want to achieve (lines 47-51, 55-57, 85-89, and 94-100).

[XDG_3A.mov]

Audio File 4. Dreams and Goals Discourse 3

Extract 23. DG 3 BP080499:42-101:WJC (1:58/696K)

42 A: I think (.) first and foremost

43 [[phone rings fourth time]]

44 it's really important for us

45 to realize why we're together (.2) um:: and (.)

46 why we chose what we chose (.) um (.)

47 → and uh Traquix is a (.)

48 → really excit:ing (.) um internet business that (.)

49 → we're all- and all (.) can benefit from and- and I know that

50 → many of us are gonna (.) MEGA-bene:fit from

51 → because it's such an exciting opport>unity< (.2)

52 but before you do any↑ thing: (.2)

53 there has to be an impetus for doing it (.4)

54 and um (.) be- and so I kinda just wanna

55 → open it < up to YOU > as to-

56 → and pose a question to all of YOU

57 → as to what you want to achieve (.2)

58 as far as um-

59 if you could write a ↑ script for yourself (.2)

60 for the next (.) five years or the next (.) ten years or

61 how you could see yourself

62 living and what- and doing (.)

63 and being (.) and (.) all of those things (.2)

64 >what kind of< script: (.) 65 could you write for yourself in- in- in your vision

of- of

66 what you want to ha:ve (.2) for yourself (.2)

- 67 Is there anybody that wants ta (.2)
- 68 kinda (.) >share with us?< (.2)
- 69 -I mea- we're not gonn↑ a (.2) uh (1)
- 70 I always feel like when I open it up (.2)
- 71 I go back to when I was in ↓ schoo:l (.2)
- 72 and rai:sing my ↓ ha:nd (.)
- 73 and giving an idea
- 74 and >somebody goin'<
- 75 oh >boo hoo< (.)
- 76 you know (.)
- 77 we're not gonna do: any of that here tonight
- 78 >cause you know ↑ what?< (.4)
- 79 everybody's dre:ams (.2) and
- 80 everybody's ↑ goals
- 81 are individual↓ ized (.)
- 82 so (.4)
- 83 what they are for you (.)
- 84 may not be for me but (.)
- 85 → it's important that you ↑ have- have:
- 86 [[sounds of clanking cutlery]]
- 87 → :a go↓ al (.) or (.) have a dre↑ am to be-
- 88 → or a desire or a passion (.2) u:m (.2)
- 89 → in order for us to really have
- 90 °quality of life (.) and-
- 91 and make the best of wha-
- 92 who we are and
- 93 what we want to be: (.5)

94 → so: um (.) in the° next five to ten ye:ars (.2) is there (.)

95 → something that you can se:e that yo:u would (.)

96 → like to achie:ve or

97 → you would (.2) like to pursue: (.)

98 → or you have a passion for

99 → that you would be able to ha:ve (.)

100 → or (.3) um (.2) acqui:re?

101 (4.5)

The speaker signals a **transition** to a new part of the meeting in line 42 by starting with: 'I think first and foremost.' Rather than starting directly into delivery of the new information that was established as the purpose of the meeting earlier, the speaker provides an account that starts elsewhere. This new point of departure addresses the realization of 'why we're together' (line 45) and 'why we chose what we chose' (line 46); both orient to the issue that they are a part of a group meeting together and that they have all made a similar choice (note how the choice made is left unidentified and taken-for-granted as a shared assumption).

The speaker then provides a description of Traquix as a 'really exciting internet business' that 'we're all- and all can benefit from.' The **repair** from 'we're all-' to 'all' suggests that the speaker **upgrades** the description from something that the people in the room can benefit from to 'all' people. The speaker then provides a further upgrade and returns to the issue that others in the room can benefit from Traquix: 'I know many of us are gonna MEGA-benefit from because it's such an exciting opportunity.' The use of **extreme case formulations**, such as 'MEGA-benefit' often mark a high level of intensity and highlight that the need for action is self-evident (Pomerantz, 1986; Tracy & Anderson, 1999). Though the speaker has established a **slot** for herself to explain what these benefits are, she does not do so. Instead, she says that a prior step must be taken, which is to understand the 'impetus' before action is taken. In lines 54-68, the speaker

hints that she wants to 'pose a question' about what the audience members 'want to achieve' in terms of a 'script' for the next five or ten years.

The speaker then invites the audience to 'share' this script with everyone (lines 67-68). By making this invitation, a **relevant transition place** is marked where an audience member could take up the invitation. However, the speaker maintains the floor to provide a story that lays the "ground rules" for interaction (the ground rule being that the audience will not respond 'oh boo hoo' to anyone's 'script' or 'vision'; lines 69-77). The speaker then provides an account for why people would not be justified in criticizing, or responding negatively to, other people's 'dreams' and 'goals.' The account she provides draws on a **repertoire** of individualism and self-help therapy, such that everybody has their own goals and their own dreams, and should respond in a non-judgmental manner to others (lines 79-83; Bellah et al., 1985).

By stating that criticism of other's goals and dreams will not take place, a pattern for this type of business interaction, or maybe institutional interaction in general, begins to emerge. That is, one feature of this talk is to teach people what the business or institution is about, as well as what it is not about. Like Michael did in the first business plan presentation where he explained that the business presentation was not about selling (e.g., 'I'm not trying to sell you an idea' or 'rope people into anything'), Anna states that this is not about criticizing people's dreams. She accomplishes this by building up a version of her experience in school when other kids used to 'boo hoo' other students' contributions and then saying that the same process will not take place in this situation. Thus, this version of Anna's experience in school rhetorically works against expectations or concerns that audience members may have about talking about their dreams in front of others.

After suggesting that dreams are personal and individual, the speaker states that it is important to have a 'goal' or 'dream' or 'desire' or 'passion.' By using all four terms in this way, she displays that she is not putting particular weight on anyone one term, and is

providing a range of **candidate issues** to which the audience could respond. These terms are also linked to issues of 'quality of life' and self-actualization, or making the best of 'who we are and what we want to be' (lines 90-93). After this, the speaker again poses the question to the audience about their next ten to five years, this time including candidate issues of achievement, passion, and possessions to be acquired (lines 95-100).

Becoming Accountable for One's Dream: Breaking The Ice

After the question is posed by the speaker there is a long silence of 4.5 seconds. In the next extract, a new business owner breaks the silence and responds to the speaker's question.

[XDG_4A.mov]

Audio File 5. Dreams and Goals Discourse 4

Extract 24. DG 4 BP080499:101-132:WJC (1:00/356K)

'A' refers to Anna, the speaker; 'NBO' refers to a new business owner, not identified by name, who just recently decided to start a business. Portions of this excerpt were analyzed in the Introduction.

101 (4.5)

102 NBO: Well I'll go first

103 A: ↑ Good!

104 NBO: to break the ice

105 A: Thanks

106 (1.0)

107 NBO: speaking of- good (.2) er hrr hmm

108 Uhm (1.2) I don't know if I

109 ↑ have a PASSion (1.0)

110 but I just retired after thirty ye:ars (.)

111 of working (1.0)

- 112 and uh (.) so I'm (.)
- 113 < lo::oki:ng > for < some:thing > to < sup:p >lement (.)
- 114 >some of the income< (1)
- 115 that I feel I'm >g(h)onna m(h)iss ou(h)t< o(h)n
- 116 uh huh huh huh
- 117 A: uh huh
- 118 NBO: >because uh:: (.) I haven't
- 119 adjusted to not getting my paycheck< (.2)
- 120 you know (.) every two ↓ weeks (1.2)
- 121 < A::nd u::m > (1.0) so that- (.) and (.)
- 122 I < thi:nk that the in:ter↓ net (.2)
- 123 is the thing > to be in to (.2) uh (.) at this ti↓ me (.)
- 124 and I think that the potential (.4) uh
- 125 for development (1.0) uh
- 126 you know (.) is astronomical (.)
- 127 °and I- I just think it's a good opportu:nity (.5)
- 128 and so I'm interested to see what it ha:s to offer (.2)
- 129 uh (.) to se:e if it would fit in ↑ with my plans (.2)°
- 130 I haven't finalized my (.6) uh (.) five to ten year plan
- 131 they're still in- (.) being formulated
- 132 A: °Mm hmm°

The new business owner states that she will go first and then provides an account which displays that she is doing it 'to break the ice.' The **formulation**, 'break the ice,' **orients to** the issue that the 4.5 second silence was particularly long (i.e., 'ice') and that someone will need to start (i.e., not because she is necessarily eager to be the first audience member to speak). The speaker displays appreciation and encouragement for the audience member with 'Good!' and 'Thanks' (lines 103 and 105). The audience member

then begins her account by displaying uncertainty about how to start (e.g., 'speaking of-good, er hrrr hmm, uhm, etc.). She then states that 'I don't know if I have a passion' which is relevant to the question posed by the speaker, but displays that her version may not warrant the intensity the term 'passion' may infer (which may also be consistent with the 4.5 second pause). The audience member goes on to say that she is looking for something to supplement some of the income she will miss out on as a result of retiring (110-115). Neither the speaker nor other audience members **align** with the new business owner's laughter in lines 115-116, but the speaker does display **receipt** of her statement and that she can continue with an 'uh huh.'

In lines 122-123, the 'NBO' describes the internet as 'the thing to be in to,' with such characteristics as having an 'astronomical' 'potential for development' (lines 124-126), being 'a good opportunity' (line 127), and that it may have something 'to offer' (line 128). Taken together, these descriptions provide a similar assessment that the speaker made relevant earlier in terms of Traquix (lines 47-51) and constructs the internet as an object with particular characteristics. As mentioned above, the use of the **extreme case formulations** makes the need for action self-evident, and thus package an account for why the prospect is interested in the internet.

At lines 128-129, the 'NBO' says she is 'interested to see what it has to offer' and 'to see' if 'it' would 'fit in' with her plans. Whether the 'it' in line 129 refers to the internet or the business opportunity is not clear, but the 'NBO' seems to construct her 'plans' as separate from an object out there in the world and all its potentially good opportunities. Note the accountability work the 'NBO' is doing with her version of the internet and her plans. That is, she talks in a way that suggests (i.e., makes inferences available for others in the room) her plans pre-existed this presentation about the internet business opportunity, even though her plans might not be 'finalized.' The 'NBO' makes herself accountable by providing a version of events where others could infer that she is someone who can recognize and be open to a good opportunity when she sees it (her plans are still

'being formulated'), but who is for now just an interested observer (note repeated use of 'to see'; in lines 128-129). In her account, then, the new business owner presents herself as someone who recognizes and is open to the opportunities the internet provides, but is still cautiously considering whether or not it 'fits in' with plans she has already thought about, independently of this meeting.

Asking For A Commitment: Helping The Audience

Achieve Their Dreams

The new business owner's account continues beyond line 133, and then each audience member goes on to share each of their accounts about their goals and how the Traquix business 'opportunity' can benefit them. After each audience member has gone, and the speaker interjects comments between each person -- which takes about twenty minutes -- the speaker then shares how she and her husband became involved in the business. Note, in the extract below, that after the five and ten year goals of each audience member have been established, how the speaker positions herself and her husband (i.e., 'we'; lines 1007, 1014), as well as Traquix (line 1012).

[XDG_5A.mov]

Audio File 6. Dreams and Goals Discourse 5

Extract 25. DG 5 BP080499:1000-1024:WJC (1:25/504K)

1000 A: So: um:: I'm giving you that history (.) just because (0.8) um:

1001 uh < I wanted to > let you all know that it really truly works

1002 and: we're at a- a point in this business that is really exciting

1003 because (0.6) um (1.0) what I see coming up in the next (0.2)

1004 um year is gonna be phenomenal (0.8)

1005 and for all of you it will be phenomenal (0.8)

1006 as much as you participate in it (.) so (0.6)

1007 → < if we could help you do: > (2.0)

1008 → the kinds of things that you were talking about (0.6)

1009 and they weren't all financial (1.0)

1010 a lot of 'em having to do with the fact (0.2)

1011 of being time-deprived (0.6) um (0.6) uh (0.4)

1012 → the: (0.4) uh (0.2) new Traquix (0.4) is uh really accessible to (.) fast
income

1013 and uh but- uh we'll go through the details of that later (0.8)

1014 → < but if we could help you to achieve the things

1015 → that you mentioned > (1.4) um: (1.2)

1016 → would you (0.6) have a commitment↑ (0.8) um

1017 → to make this a- uh make it a priority for you

1018 → to be able ta (.) achieve the ↑ things that you talked about? (0.8)

1019 and are you- are you willing ta: (0.8) you know

1020 take the steps that (1.0) um: are necessary to: (0.8) make it a priority

1021 in the fact- in the- in the way that (1.8) you put a timeline: (1.6)

1022 → to help (1.0) yourself (1.0) do what's necessary to do in order

1023 → ta (.) achieve (0.2) the things that you ↑ talked about? (1.0)

1024 because (0.8) that's what we ha- found we had to do for ourselves

In line 1000, the speaker accounts for why she provided her 'history' about how she and her husband (who is not present) got started in the business and their successes. She then **makes relevant** the issue that 'this business' is really phenomenal in general, and specifically 'for all of you it will be phenomenal.' She also orients to the issue of independence and personal responsibility by saying 'as much as you participate in it' (line 1006). Next, the speaker invokes a collective **identity** (i.e., 'we'), which could refer to she and her husband and/or Tripp Worldwide, and positions the business as something that can 'help' the audience 'do the kinds of things' they were talking about. This is particularly interesting since she invokes the audience's personal goals at the same time she offers a

way for them to be achieved (i.e., with the 'help' of a collective other). The speaker cuts off the start of what might be a question, and inserts a sequence about how the audience's reasons were not all financial, and that 'a lot of 'em' related to the issue of time ('being time deprived'). In the next line (1012), 'the uh new Traquix' is specifically mentioned and described as accessible to 'fast income' (which orients to both the financial issue and the time issue), while the 'details of that' will be postponed until later in the presentation.

At line 1014, the speaker re-starts the question that began in line 1007, again invoking the previously established goals of the audience, and asks them for a 'commitment' to make 'this' (note the ambiguity here) a priority for them. The speaker keeps the floor at line 1018, and re-phrases the question in lines 1019. At the next completion point of this question (line 1023), she again keeps the floor and does not let the audience answer. Instead, she provides an account for why she may be asking the question, which concerns what she and her husband found they had to do. Throughout lines 1007-1024, the speaker displays sensitivity about asking the audience to commit themselves to the business, which constructs them as not having already done so, as evidenced by the re-start of the question, the repeated invocation of the goals that have been established (and used as warrants for posing the question), and the pauses while asking the questions (lines 1016-1023). Asking for a commitment, on this occasion, is thus constructed by the speaker as a delicate matter. So much so, that she never actually provides a space for the audience to answer, and instead maintains the floor with the following story about her grandmother and the commitment required to become a teacher (lines 1028-1031). Also, note how the speaker returns to the issue of why she is asking for the audience's commitment (lines 1043-1048).

Describing the Business: It's Not A Get-Rich-Quick

Scheme

[XDG_6A.mov]

Audio File 7. Dreams and Goals Discourse 6

Extract 26. DG 6 BP080499:1025-1053:WJC (1:33/552K)

1025 A: um: (0.8) you know >it's automatically decided that if you want
 1026 to be a teacher you know the partic- or the criteria is<
 1027 that you have to go to college (0.8) you know (1.0)
 1028 back when my grandmother was going- was gonna be a
 1029 teacher she- eh huh huh they didn't have a college to go to (.)
 1030 I think she was trained in a matter of a couple of months
 1031 and then (0.2) tossed off into this one room schoolhouse (.) you know (.)
 1032 .hh and so things have (1.8) uh (0.6) pro↓ gressed (.)
 1033 and um we wouldn't- had (.) to go to college
 1034 and you did have to have your master's in order
 1035 to be a teacher (0.6) as you well know
 1036 now it's almost up ta (0.6) getting your Ph.D. in order to (0.2)
 1037 accomplish (.) what things you want to accomplish for yourself (0.8)
 1038 .hh so you have put these things as a priority for you
 1039 and stayed focused on those things (0.8) and
 1040 for all of us to have achieved what we've achieved so far: (0.8)
 1041 we had to make a priority < of what we (.) were focused to do >
 1042 → and the same (0.6) type of principles (0.8)
 1043 um: < apply: > to this business as well
 1044 → and so I'm I- I'm ASking you this because (0.4) it's important to know
 1045 → that as well (0.8) < that it's not like > the the-
 1046 → the fairy tale (1.0) you know (0.4) where the sky is falling (0.6)
 1047 → it's NO↓ T (0.6) you know this get rich (.) quick (0.4) sche:me
 1048 → that (0.2) it's just gonna fl(h)y:: (.)
 1049 → out of the skies into our hands (.) so (0.4)

1050 there- there IS a me↓ tho↑ d (0.2) to be used (0.4)

1051 and it has been very successful (1.0)

1052 and: the one: (.) group of associates that we: feel privileged to be: (.)

1053 uh a- associated with↑ (0.8) is the < Tripp Worldwide > (0.8) group

After the story of her grandmother, and an orientation to the researcher's goal of getting a Ph.D. (line 1036), the speaker emphasizes that the focus is on 'principles' of what each of the audience members have 'achieved so far' and that these same 'principles' apply to 'this business as well.' Note the craft work involved in articulating the commitment to the business as a commitment to the audience's goals and achievements. At line 1044, the speaker provides another account for why she is asking for the audience members to make a commitment to the business, and thus their own personal goals. In this account, the speaker counters a version that the business is the 'fairy tale' 'get-rich-quick scheme,' though a similar version of Traquix was offered earlier in line 1012: 'the uh new Traquix is uh really accessible to fast income.'

The point of noting the variability between versions is not to point out a contradiction, but to see what actions are accomplished and what issues are being managed by the use of each version (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In line 1012, the 'accessible to fast income' was used to orient to audience member's goals of financial issues, being 'time-deprived,' and why the business is particularly phenomenal at this point in time (lines 1003-1004). The 'fairy tale' 'get-rich-quick scheme,' however, is contrasted to a 'method to be used' that 'has been very successful.' This 'successful' 'method' version is more consistent with the 'principles' of 'commitment' that the speaker has asked about earlier and connected to the audience members' prior achievements, and is the antithesis of what is involved with a 'get-rich-quick scheme.' Further, the 'get-rich-quick scheme,' along with the delicacy that the speaker has marked in asking for a commitment from the audience, counters any inferences that the speaker is "selling" the business 'opportunity.' That is, the speaker respectfully invokes 'principles' that the

audience already aligns with, at least according to her version, and indicates the business is not a 'get-rich-quick scheme' (which could be commonly associated with such a "business presentation"). Further, the speaker positions the audience as the type of people who would not be involved in a 'get-rich-quick scheme' and orients to them as people with unique and independent achievements and goals.

Discussion of Analysis

In this section, the speaker created an **interactional space** for the audience to "share" their dreams, goals, and plans for the future, a space in which their contributions will not be criticized by others. In response to the invitation to share, an audience member constructed an account for how she became aware of the business to present herself as business savvy, but who is wary of being taken. After having each person go around the room to share their story, the speaker presented Traquix as a way to help the people achieve their dreams. When she presented the business, however, she carefully built it up to counter a potential concern of the audience: that Traquix is a get-rich-quick scheme. She accomplished this by countering the get-rich-quick version with a description of the business as one with a proven "method" and based on the very same "principles" that allowed the audience to accomplish all that they have achieved thus far in their lives.

There are four important points to take from this analysis. First, a general feature of this type of institutional discourse is that presenters do rhetorical work that orients to and undermines potential expectations or concerns of the audience. Thus, the speaker states that this presentation is not a place to criticize dreams, and it is not a get-rich-quick scheme. Second, both the speaker and the audience member (in this case, a new business owner) orient to the issue of not being taken by a scheme, which suggests that this discourse is not simply monologic, but jointly constructed by the speaker and audience members. Third, there seems to be a general sequence in the presentations in which a gap

is established (in the form of a problem, a need, or a dream) between a current and ideal state, and then the business system is provided as a way to fill this gap (which seems to be consistent with the process of dream building discussed earlier and identified in Pratt, 2000; this point will be further discussed in the Implications section). By employing this sequence, speakers rhetorically counter the notion that the business is not a get-rich-quick scheme or about selling since the business is about a way to fulfill people's dreams or satisfy their needs. Fourth, by rhetorically building up a version of the business as having a proven "method" and stemming out of "principles" the audience shares, the speaker is able to manage ethical issues, such as she is not trying to "take" the audience or sell them on a scheme.

* * *

In the next section ("Analysis of Business Development and Team Meetings"), the analysis of a business development and a team meeting will focus on how speakers describe what the business is and is not about and how speakers employ **positioning strategies** to manage various issues, especially in terms of ethical concerns.

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[Link to References section \(opens into new window\).](#)

ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND TEAM MEETINGS

In the last two sections, excerpts of two business presentations were analyzed to demonstrate how the speakers **manage** what the business (and its presentation in a business plan) is and is not about. One of the primary issues oriented to concerned that the business and presentations are not about selling. Instead, the business/presentation is about showing how people can fulfill their needs, goals, dreams, etc. through buying 'things' and recommending the business to others. Additionally, the speakers and audience members engaged in various **positioning practices** throughout the business presentations to manage a range of **identity** issues. Both speakers positioned themselves in relation to the business by providing **accounts** for how they became involved. Additionally, speakers positioned the audience as knowledgeable, rational individuals who valued independence and autonomy, and who wanted to fulfill their needs, goals and dreams but not by being involved in a get-rich-quick scheme. Further, one audience member constructed an account for how she became aware of the business to present herself as business savvy, but who is wary of being taken by the business presentation. The issue of whether or not the business was a get-rich-quick scheme was managed by building up a version of the business as having a proven "method" and stemming out of "principles" the audience shares.

The purpose of this third analytic section is to investigate how "what this business is about" is discussed in the business development and team meetings to current business owners affiliated with Traquix. As mentioned above, in the business plan presentations to prospects, a salient concern for the speakers was to talk about Traquix as not involving selling, but, among other things, as an opportunity to fulfill one's dreams and goals by buying goods and services, then personally recommending the web site and/or business to others. In business development and team meetings, a similar issue is managed concerning how the business is promoted. Specifically, the promotion of the business is

not based upon convincing or persuading people with techniques, but instead is founded upon a philosophy of establishing trust and building relationships.

In this section, a business development meeting in the U.K., as well as a team meeting in the U.S., will be analyzed for how business owners/speakers describe the Traquix business to other business owners. In the U.K. business development meeting (BDM), the speaker is again Michael (the same speaker from the business plan analytic section) and the audience is made up entirely of existing business owners (i.e., no prospects). BDMs and team meetings¹ are training sessions where business owners who are part of the same network meet to hear speakers talk about how to succeed in the business, to be recognized for their performance in the business, and to be motivated.

Analysis of Portions of a Business Development Meeting

Due to the length of the meeting (about 1.5 hours), the opening portions of the presentation will be paraphrased in the following paragraphs. Michael welcomes the business owners to the meeting and describes it as 'this is the sort of thing which is gonna get your businesses going.' He then states that 'we're gonna go over a few basic things and some more advanced things, and also get- bring you up to date on what's happening.' The first bit of news that the speaker references is the large amount of daily "hits" (that is, how many times a web site, or page, has been viewed) that the Traquix web site in the U.S. has received. The speaker uses the large number of hits as evidence that the business 'model' is working in the U.S. and that it can also work in the U.K., thereby positioning this group of business owners in relation to those in the U.S.

Next, the speaker states that what he wants 'to talk about is some of the things that we've gotta do in order to make sure it's a profitable business.' Michael then tells a story about someone he was talking to this afternoon who sells horse feed over the internet.

¹ The label "business development meeting" was used in the U.K. data, while "team meeting" was used in the U.S. data.

Despite this person having a large number of hits to their web site, they only turn over a small amount of money. The reason for this, Michael claims, is that the people 'have no sort of, no personal touch' which is an 'extra ingredient' that will be talked about in the meeting tonight.

After this, Michael again references the success that U.S. business owners had in 'sponsoring' people (that is, signing people up to be involved in the business) but that some business owners had difficulty getting people to 'put an order in.' Because of this difficulty, Michael says that he will have two business owners/presenters talk about how 'we get them to put an order in.' Following this, Michael relates a story from another speaker at an earlier business meeting. This story had to do with the importance of having a business where people order on a regular basis. Next, the speaker talks about the Tripp Worldwide system, which is where Extract BDM 1 begins.²

Encapsulating the Tripp Worldwide System

[XBDM_01A.mov]

Audio File 8. Business Development Meeting 1

Click on control bar (above) and the audio clip will begin playing in a new window.

Position the new window so you can see it and the transcript (below).

Extract 27. BDM 1 BDM03132000:141-172:WJC (1:17/456K)

141 M: So that is something that's vital.

142 Because you have to remember when we

143 when we talk about ther- there's two things

² Due to the length of the meeting and extracts in this analytic section, the Jefferson-style transcription system is not used. Rather, periods, commas, and other punctuation marks should be understood according to standard reading/writing conventions (i.e., a question mark indicates that a question was asked but not necessarily in a rising tone; a comma refers to a pause in speech that has not been timed, etc.).

144 that are always constant in the Tripp Worldwide system.
145 The Tripp system throughout the world.
146 One is the eight core steps and the other is the four basics.
147 Then after that there comes a whole lot of= ()
148 a whole lot of attitude training and stuff like that.
149 But the actual system if you think about it consists of eight core steps.
150 The first three of them are to do with creating volume.
151 Creating prod- goods going through your business.
152 The second three have got to do with training.
153 Teaching yourself how to become a better businessman.
154 And the last two are to do with taking advice and learning
155 and also giving something back to the team.
156 Because if we don't do our work as a team
157 then we won't build a large business.
158 And that, that that's ().
159 And the four basics are just the mechanics.
160 You know, the obvious things.
161 Which we teach on a on a Thursday night after the business plan.
162 So I'm not going to go into- a labor them here.
163 But they're very simply you know
164 working out who you can talk to about this business
165 but- in doing a list.
166 Then inviting people to take a look at the business plan.
167 Then showing the plan which I hope you're all doing
168 which I'll be talking about um
169 yes I ought to get Susan to talk about it this coming Thursday.
170 And then uh follow-up which is the vital bit.

171 And in a way we'll be touching on that again

172 in one of the speakers who's going to be talking about later, a bit later.

This excerpt provides a succinct encapsulation of what the Tripp business system is about, as well as the content of what takes place in a business development meeting. This encapsulation effect is achieved through the use of a **script formulation** whereby Michael 'very simply' presents the information as routine, patterned, and orderly (Edwards, 1998). What is also interesting to note in this excerpt is the use of the phrases 'creating volume' and 'creating goods going through your business.' There is no mention of "selling," which confirms the point made in the first analytic section that the business is not about "selling," but instead involves a process of 'creating volume' or 'turnover.' Further, Michael formulates the process of sponsoring people in non-threatening terms, such as 'doing a list' of people who can be 'invit[ed] to take a look at the business plan,' and then 'following up' with these people.

After this excerpt, Michael continues the theme about the importance of maintaining a consistent pace for the business and emphasizing the importance of 'getting new people going' in the business.

Getting New People Going and Becoming A Dot Com
Millionaire

[XBDM_02A.mov]

Audio File 9. Business Development Meeting 2

Extract 28. BDM 2 BDM03132000:190-219:WJC (0:55/324K)

190 M: And one of the most vital things is getting new people going.

191 And I think it's something that we're-

192 all of us letting slip through our fingers.

193 You know. I certainly

194 [?]: [[Cough]]

195 M: should have more people here tonight,
196 who haven't come for one reason or another.
197 That means I haven't said the right things
198 to- to inspire them to come.
199 I need to work more on that.
200 And there aren't enough new faces-
201 the number of new faces that we're seeing at the business plans ()
202 we're not seeing enough new faces at the training.
203 Those people will not get off the ground ()
204 if they don't have some training.
205 And that's one of the things that they've learned in America.
206 Very much. ()
207 the big challenge is getting people coming in to things
208 and learn what the system is.
209 Because they all think they can just click on the internet
210 and they are going to be instant dot com millionaires.
211 Yes, some of us are going to be dot com millionaires (d-)
212 I have no problem with that.
213 I'm gonna be a dot com millionaire.
214 You know.
215 And it's gonna gonn-
216 a nice regular cash flow going >on and on and on and on<
217 and instead of having to sell out for a few million and
218 then hope that it doesn't- it's-
219 because it's paper money, a lot of that.

Michael constructs the issue of not 'getting new people going' in the business as a missed opportunity, something that 'all of us' are 'letting slip through our fingers.'

Michael accepts responsibility for not having 'more people here tonight' by suggesting that he hasn't 'said the right things to- to inspire them to come.' Thus, Michael makes the inference available that if he had said 'the right things' more people would have come to the training session. This account places the responsibility for people not coming to be a matter of individual accountability and the communication process, and not a feature of the business system itself. That is, the business system is not to be blamed, but rather he is to be blamed for not saying the right things that could inspire people to come, and that this is something he needs 'to work more on.'

A few lines down, however, responsibility is also attributed to the mindset of new business owners: 'they all think they can just click on the internet and they are going be instant dot com millionaires.' By describing the business in this way, Michael counters the notion that the business is just another get-rich-quick scheme, and that further commitment to the business is required to be successful (i.e., to become a 'dot com millionaire'), which **orients to** a similar issue that Anna (see Extract DG 6; lines 1044-1049) was countering in her presentation to existing business owners. Interestingly, in a business plan presentation to prospects, Michael did not formulate attendance at training sessions to be problematic. Instead, he presented this as a simple, straightforward aspect of the business by asking the prospects if they would be willing to 'come along to the occasional evening now and then to learn a bit more about the business' (see Extract BP 15; lines 1394-1396).

At line 211, Michael provides an account that 'some of us' can indeed become dot com millionaires, and that he himself will be one. As part of this account, Michael systematically uses 'we' and 'us' to contrast with 'they' and 'them.' First, Michael constructs a category of persons called 'new people,' stating that he has not said the right things to get 'them' to come and that 'I' (that is, Michael) needs to work more on that (the use of 'I' locates responsibility with himself, and not with the group). Next, he says that 'we're' not seeing enough 'new faces' at the training sessions. The 'new faces' are then

referred to as 'those people' when Michael states that 'they' will not 'get off the ground unless 'they' have training. The next use of 'they' does not refer to the new people, but refers to what 'they've learned in America' (presumably referring to business owners/presenters in the United States). Then, 'people' is the next category used, leading up to 'they all think' that they can easily become 'dot com millionaires.' Next, Michael states that some of 'us' (importantly, not 'them') will be 'dot com millionaires.' Michael contrasts the type of dot com millionaire the business owners in the room will be (i.e., the kind who have a 'nice regular cash flow going') with the kind who just have their millions as 'paper money.'

By offering this account (lines 211-214), Michael suggests that the business system can make people successful, and that it is in the control of the individual business owner about whether or not he or she becomes a dot com millionaire; specifically, those who come to the training will be successful, while those who do not attend the training will not be successful. Further, Michael positions those in the room as sharing membership in a group with those in America who have already learned something about this issue (presumably since the web site already launched in the U.S. and Canada). Thus, by offering the account that business owners need to attend training sessions, the speaker counters the version that Traquix is a get-rich-quick scheme (or else they would not have to invest the time for training) and also legitimates the Tripp Worldwide business system ('we,' as members of a group who have nice regular cash flows) in relation to, and excluding, other business approaches (those who have their millions on paper; Johnson, 1994; Day, 1998).

To sum up so far, Michael has emphasized the importance of 'creating' consistent 'volume' in the business and 'getting new people going' by having new business owners come to the training sessions to learn more about the business. In the next segment, Michael invites another business owner to provide brief summaries of the contents of audio tapes that are used to train new business owners (this segment lasts approximately

20 minutes). Following this speaker, Michael returns to the front of the audience and highlights a point about how (not) to promote the business to people.

Stop Trying To Persuade People That This Is A Good
Business

[XBDM_03A.mov]

Audio File 10. Business Development Meeting 3

Extract 29. BDM 3 BDM03132000:446-500:WJC (0:43/260K)

446 M: The- the point is

447 .hhh stop trying to persuade people that this is a good business.

448 There are lots of people out there who already-

449 Am I talking to close to the microphone

450 actually 'cause it's distorting it.

451 Is that better, right.

... [[37 lines omitted where Michael, along with other business owners, adjust the microphone settings]] ...

488 M: Anyway, um, completely destroyed my train of thought.

489 Where was I:: uhmm ° internet°

490 [?]: ()

491 M: Oh () yes

492 d- d- don't try and persuade people,

493 where there's absolutely no point. Not at this stage (you know).

494 OK () if you haven't got very many people to deal with,

495 don't know what the hell you're doing then, but still.

496 .hh um () if you haven't got >very many< people,

497 yes () you know () do it do it >if you want<,

498 but it will be an uphill struggle.

499 And () I've hit quite a few people who

500 really can't see the relevance of the internet, yet, you know.

In this excerpt, Michael instructs the business owners not to attempt to 'persuade people that this is a good business.' He begins to provide a reason for not engaging in persuasion, but interrupts himself to adjust the microphone volume. When he returns to his point, he claims that persuading people is pointless 'at this stage.' It is not entirely clear what 'stage' the speaker is referring to, though it may refer to the "pre-launch" period (i.e., before the pan-European version of the web site is launched) that the UK business owners are in, or the "psychological" 'stage' the 'people' are at in terms of them being able to see the 'relevance of the internet'. Note, for now, how the speaker changes from talking about persuasion regarding 'the business' to the 'internet' (line 489).

The speaker provides one reason business owners might be tempted to 'persuade' people and that is if they don't have 'very many people to deal with.' Then, the speaker makes a potentially **identity** threatening assessment when he says 'don't know what the hell you're doing then' (Tracy, 1998). While the speaker has made assessments before, he has done them in a way that maintains an identification with the audience (for example, when he said 'something that we're- all of us letting slip through our fingers' in raising the point about how not enough new business owners are coming to the training sessions). This negative assessment **displays** to the audience that what is normal and expected is that they should have 'many people to deal with' and because there are so many, it is not necessary to take the time to 'persuade.'

The 'but still,' followed by an in-breath and then an 'um' may mark this as a sensitive area based on the assessment he has made. He then re-states 'if you haven't got very many people' then the audience can 'do it' (i.e., persuade) if they want, but that trying to persuade people 'will be an uphill struggle'. Thus, by offering a second version of 'if you haven't got very many people,' the speaker presents himself less as one telling

the audience what to do, but rather as on who is informing them of the consequences of a certain line of action, so that they can make their own decision.

Next, the speaker states that he has come across quite a few people who 'can't see the relevance of the internet yet' (line 500). Here, the speaker constructs a category of people (i.e., those who can't see the relevance of the internet yet); by inference, there is also a category of people who can see the relevance. After constructing this category, the speaker uses 'you know' which is an appeal to common knowledge. This appeal subtly suggests that the people in the room are of the category who can see the relevance of the internet, while those outside the room cannot. Thus, those in the audience are positioned as people who can see an opportunity and use it successfully for a profit, which redresses his earlier identity-threatening, negative assessment of the category of those 'who haven't got many people to deal with.'

As noted above, the speaker began talking about not persuading people of how good the business is, and then switched to the focus to talking about the relevance of the internet. By doing this, the speaker conflates how good the business is with the relevance of the internet. This becomes especially salient in the next excerpt, which immediately follows Extract BDM 3, where Michael goes on to talk about the explosion of the internet in people's awareness.

Don't Hammer 'Em To Death

[XBDM_04A.mov]

Audio File 11. Business Development Meeting 4

Extract 30. BDM 4 BDM03132000:501-542:WJC (1:14/440K)

501 M: At the moment, in Britain,

502 >what is it< thirty-two percent, of well I'm not sure quite what,

503 are on-line. um () whatever those figures are related to it, and,

504 and it's what- where America was a year ago, >you know<

505 The awa:reness is going to just rocket
506 when you think about how many people
507 are on the internet two years ago.
508 It was virtually nobody, you know,
509 very very few people.
510 Only- only a few people who really (res- an so-) their sort of thing.
511 So when I think- I remember when uh,
512 a fr- a friend was trying to persuade me to go on to it,
513 um, sort of seventy year old friend,
514 .hh about uh::, fi:ve years ago,
515 >I mean< I just thought it was a load of nonsense.
516 I couldn't quite see the point.
517 It was all too laboriously too different,
518 before Windows hit the internet.
519 .hhh uhm and it was all sort of command line driven,
520 and () >but anyway< ()
521 .hh uh::m, but the explo::sion is just so fast
522 you almost can't remember, how fast it's been,
523 and given that fact, these people who are-v skeptical today, >you know<,
524 don't hammer 'em to death.
525 Because the less they know until they are at that
526 stage of thinking where they're interested
527 in the internet the better.
528 Because then they won't start looking around too hard
529 for anything else or anything like that.
530 And they won't know what you're up to.
531 So when you're in a year's ti:↓ me,

532 and you re-approach them,

533 and they >suddenly< say,

534 because they >suddenly got interested it now or something<,

535 well ↑ aren't you doing something with the inter↓ net?

536 You (would) say () well ↑ yes of course I ↓ am.

537 You know, I did talk >to you about it<.

538 How's it gone?

539 Brilliantly.

540 And you can get them then.

541 So you know, go for the ones who are ready.

542 Don't try and >persuade< the ones who aren't.

In this excerpt, the speaker makes a case that internet awareness in Britain will 'just rocket' and the 'explosion is just so fast' (note the use of the **extreme case formulations**). The speaker recounts a story about how a friend, of the seventy year old variety, tried to persuade Michael to go on the internet, but that Michael just thought the internet was a load of nonsense' and that he 'couldn't quite see the point.' By telling this story, Michael positions himself as one who at first did not see 'the relevance of the internet,' but, without explicitly mentioning it, he eventually came to see the opportunity it presented.

This story sets him up to construct a category of people -- 'these people who are skeptical today' -- who are not yet interested in the internet. Instead of suggesting that skeptical people are negative, he frames the issue as a positive: if you don't 'hammer 'em to death' they won't know to go look around for any competing business opportunities. Further, by keeping these 'skeptical' people uninformed about the business opportunity provided by the internet, when they 'suddenly' do come around, the business owner will be in a position to 'get them then' (i.e., sign them up for the business). Michael sums up this approach by instructing the audience to 'go for the ones who are ready, don't try and

persuade the ones who aren't.' The use of 'get them then' and 'the less they know the better' constitutes this type of meeting as different than the business plan presentations. That is, this discourse stands in marked contrast to how Michael talked to prospects in the business plan presentations, where he positioned prospects as thoughtful, reflective, and discerning rather than as the kind who could be "gotten" by keeping them uninformed.

Further, by talking about those who are ready and those who aren't, the speaker is also able to construct an account for why people would not be interested in the business. That is, if a prospect is not interested in the business, then it is because they 'are not ready.' However, once they see the 'relevance of the internet,' they will also come around to see the relevance of 'the business,' just like Michael himself presumably did. But how does the audience know who is ready and who is not ready? This is exactly the question Michael posed rhetorically to the audience.

Who Are The Ready?

[XBDM_05A.mov]

Audio File 12. Business Development Meeting 5

Extract 31. BDM 5 BDM03132000:544-558:WJC (0:29/172K)

544 M: .hhh Who are the ready?

545 I don't know.

546 I can tell you there's no rules to it.

547 I've got two sons who love the internet

548 and a daughter who won't use e-mail at all, you know.

549 And- and that's not being sexist.

550 It's just- happens to be so.

551 The other daughter, the handicapped one,

552 loves playing computer games.

553 Whereas (name?), her- her- her bright sister doesn't, you know.

554 It's just purely, it's- it's just purely chance
 555 as to what people like and what people don't.
 556 So [[clears throat]] just don't worry about it, just-
 557 Out there's lots of people.
 558 We've got a dot com business, they haven't.

Determining who is and who is not ready is potentially a problematic issue, and an issue to which the speaker orients by raising the question himself. He states that he doesn't know the answer to his own question but that 'there's no rules to it.'³ To illustrate this claim, he tells a story about his children, and how his boys use the internet but one of his daughters does not. To neutralize any potential sexist overtones of this story, an issue that Michael himself orients to by saying 'that's not being sexist,' he cites his other daughter who plays computer games. There is no indication that the speaker treats the distinction between 'handicapped one' versus 'bright sister' as problematic, nor is there any publicly available evidence that the audience did either. Instead, the speaker uses the distinction to suggest that 'it's just purely chance as to what people like and what people don't,' which is consistent with his earlier version that 'there's no rules' to who is ready and who is not. The speaker then dismisses the issue by telling the audience not to 'worry about it' and that what is important to focus on is that 'there's lots of people' and that 'we've got a dot com business' and 'they haven't.'

By setting up the categories of those with a dot com business and those without one in this way, the speaker suggests that those with the dot com business have something desirable that the others do not have, and that the others will eventually come around to recognizing the business opportunity provided by the internet. Interestingly, the internet and the exploding awareness about it becomes constructed as providing the

³ In the business plan presentation analyzed in the previous section, Michael explained to prospects the following: 'we're looking for people who are, have got that entrepreneurial spark about them, that something extra, who aren't entirely locked into their job.'

opportunity, rather than the business owners themselves. Thus, the business owners themselves do not (and should not, according to the speaker) engage in selling or persuading, because the internet does the persuading itself. Thus, the Tripp Worldwide business owners do not engage in persuasion; rather, business owners let the internet "speak for itself" and they are simply there to provide those people who have come around with the business system provided by Tripp Worldwide.

* * *

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Analysis of Portions of a Team Meeting

The issue concerning the business not being about selling or persuasion is also salient in another business meeting. A second business meeting, called a "team meeting," takes place in a hotel conference room in the northeastern United States about three months after the U.K. business development meeting discussed above. By this time, the Traquix web site has been on-line for just over nine months. There are about 150 business owners in the audience that belong to the same network, or team, of Tripp Worldwide. This meeting takes place over six hours and there are a variety of speakers who, among other things, talk about such topics as goal setting, motivation, and other matters that are geared to help business owners succeed in the Traquix business. Cole, who is married to Anna (the speaker in Extracts DG 1-6; both Anna and Cole are the highest "up-line" business couple at the meeting), has been the emcee for the day. This excerpt is the last part of Cole's closing statements or "wrap up" at the end of the day, where Cole is providing his 'vision' for the business. Cole's vision statement extract is quite long, but especially rich, and will be broken up into smaller segments with analysis in between each segment. [See Note 2] The discussion will ultimately focus on how the speaker manages the issue that the business is not about selling, convincing, or techniques, but about a philosophy and value system based on spirituality, healthy relationships, and trust.

A Vision for the Business: We're Healthy In Relationships

The excerpt begins with Cole talking about a similar problem that Michael addressed (see Extract BDM 2): the difficulty of getting people to come to the business development, or training, meetings. Cole suggests that people will not travel long distances to attend the meetings because 'they don't have the commitment,' that 'it's a stretch it's a challenge' for them, and it is 'not in their pattern.'

[XTM_01A.mov]

Audio File 13. Team Meeting 1

Click on control bar (above) and the audio clip will begin playing in a new window.

Position the new window so you can see it and the transcript (below).

Extract 32.TM 1TM006042000:10-61:WJC(2:06/740K)

010 C:What I want to do is have it in

011 each place in order for us to go to uh

012 tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of people

013 and fill the dome [[reference to a stadium]].

014 Each little bih- each and everyone we've gotta have a seminar

015 that's about one hundred fifty or two hundred fifty people

016 so it's personal enough?

017 Aud:hmmm

018 Aud:um hmmm

019 C:Okay:

020 It's not such a mega, that you can't feel connected.

021 But where people can be fed.

022 Where people can be fed and connected to a value system,

023 Get connected to uh uh approach,

024 uh uh uh a methodo:logy,

025 and listen to people who have

026 uh uh a pattern for life is positive that results in positive.

027 Just like you would go to a doctor to get a prescription

028 or or get some uh uh uh < some form of direction > for healing,

029 so that you could be healthier. It's kinda the same thing an-

030 We're more s- we're more not so much physical,

031 although we certainly are to some degree,

032 and the respect like like my cholesterol >'as gone down now<
033 but i- it,
034 < we're healthy in relationships >.
035 < We're healthy spiritually >.
036 And those things wh- when
037 yo- you flesh those flesh the syst- the toxins so to speak,
038 you begin to ha(h)ve a b(h)etter life.
039 You begin to be able to do things that you weren't able to do
040 and so you feel s- strength in that.
041 Well I wan- that's kinda my vision.
042 I wanta to do that because what happens outta that
043 is if you win the northeast, you can win the world.
044 If you win the northeast you can win the world,
045 because every ethnic group, every religion, every- denominati-
046 every thing you can think of exists:, in that:,
047 wherever I just talked about it doesn't make any
048 difference where it is. You could reach ou-
049 a:ll the people who came through Ellis Island live
050 somewhere in that area. They live in that area.
051 A- and you can find and reach out to those people,
052 from that area, around the world,
053 whether it's the Florida area ta South Carolina ta-
054 Some of you have businesses just all over the cotton-pickin' place
055 It's just unbelievable where you have businesses-
056 the places you connect and that's great.
057 But the point is this:
058 from that northeast we can- we can- spa(h)n the glo(h)be

059 as CNN talks about

060 >you know what I'm sayin'<.

061 But, it's a question of reachin- o- o- of

The speaker begins this excerpt by talking about a problem concerning how it is difficult to have people come to the business meetings on a regular basis. To address this problem, the speaker suggests smaller meetings that are more personal in nature, and that this solution will allow the business to grow ('to go to uh tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of people...'). By this point, the speaker has linked business growth and success to a notion of personal connection. By ending 'so it's personal enough?' in an upward tone he signals to the audience that providing feedback is expected, which they do with 'hmm' and 'um hmm.'

The speaker acknowledges their feedback with 'okay' and continues to explain that if the meetings are too large ('a mega'), the people will not 'feel connected.' The meetings he is proposing will be a place where 'people can be fed and connected to a value system,' a 'methodology,' and a 'pattern for life' that is 'positive' (which is similar to how Anna talked about the business system involving a 'method' and 'principles' in her business plan presentation; see Extract DG 6). Cole does not provide specific details about the content of this 'methodology' and 'value system,' but speaks in abstract terms. Next, he compares this process to going to a doctor for 'some form of direction' and 'healing,' so that 'you could be healthier.' Instead of talking in terms of physical health, he invokes a collective identity to say that 'we're healthy in relationships, we're healthy spiritually' (also note how he slows his speech rate to indicate an important point is being made). Then, he returns to the physical health metaphor to talk about getting rid of the 'toxins' so that you 'begin to have a better life.' The speaker explains this as his 'vision,' and at this point it is ambiguous as to whether he is talking about a spiritual vision or a vision in terms of a "corporate vision," or both (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

He again connects this vision of small meetings in many places to business growth by talking about how 'if you can win the northeast, you can win the world.'⁴ The speaker treats this statement as needing explanation by repeating it after a short pause and then describing how every 'ethnic group,' 'religion,' in fact 'everything you can think of exists' in the northeast. He begins to say how you could 'reach ou-' (which would be consistent with the **repertoire** of connection; Fitch, 1998), but re-starts with a time in U.S. history where 'all the people who came through Ellis Island' are represented in that area. The speaker then returns to how 'you can find and reach out to those people.' After displaying how 'unbelievable' it is that the audience has 'businesses' all over, and connecting 'businesses' to a process of connecting (lines 55-56, 'the places you connect'), he emphasizes his point that the northeast is a place from which there can be tremendous growth ('we can span the globe').

The speaker makes a bid for the audience to indicate agreement ('you know what I'm sayin' followed with a pause), but continues on to talk about how 'it's a question of reachin- o-').

Talking With A Prospect: Sure... We've Gotta Master Some
Mechanics

[XTM_02A.mov]

Audio File 14. Team Meeting 2

Extract 33.TM 2TM06042000:60-115:WJC(2:39/936K)

060 C:>you know what I'm sayin'<.

061 But, it's a question of reachin- o- o- of

⁴ The emphasis on geography here is interesting since one of the purported advantages of an e-commerce business is that geographic boundaries are less important in promoting the business. However, the issue of personal connection and face-to-face meetings is made relevant here by the speaker. See discussion of a similar point concerning virtual training sessions in the Implications section.

062 Su:re there's some mechanics.

063 We've gotta master some mechanics.

064 You gotta learn how ta just like

065 y- we were talking about a little while ago on the- when

066 you guys first got here >you know what I'm sayin'<

067 We were talking about how to contact somebody on the phone.

068 And there's definitely a way that works better than other ways.

069 And why I'm saying that is- Folks-

070 I was sitting up in [[city name]] the other night doing a meeting

071 we were talking and it was about >I don't know< mid- midnight

072 We were talking out in the parking lot we were talking about

073 how to contact somebody on the phone.

074 So: ple:ase can yuh- I'll I- I'm gonna shut up in a second

075 we'r- would you please kno:w

076 that you're not in the business of selling this.

077 You're not in the business of trying convincing people.

078 What you're in the business of is finding out

079 who:ah trusts themselves enough to be with you

080 Aud:humm

081 C:So because what I'm saying is you can work with certain people.

082 You- and you and I are about figuring out who we can work with.

083 Who can we- invest our time with (>and and) certain time<.

084 So if I talk with Larry, what I'm finding out is:

085 does Larry trust Larry enough to sit down and talk

086 with me without some, th- without something

087 to prime the pump to get 'em there.

088 So if I call Larry I'm gonna call and chit chat with 'im there for

089 a while, and I'm gonna then say, we're gonna laugh,
090 I'm gonna say Larry you got any time you're gonna be around
091 < And what I hope he says is:: >,
092 Ye::ah.
093 What that is a statement about is HI:M.
094 Then I'll talk to him about why we're getting together.
095 It's to help him do x y z whatever he's interested in
096 D- do ya follow my point?
097 What I'm interested in finding out is is
098 < does he trust himself enough > to sit down and talk with me.
099 That's all I want to know.
100 Does he trust- that's who I'm looking to find.
101 And if I do the other way, if I call Larry on the phone,
102 we chit chat a little while and I say
103 Hey Larry I got this b- business I'm starting it's really great
104 Very lucrative you can make billions and up and up and up
105 W'all I've done is just destroyed what I'm looking for.
106 < All I've done > is just tried to f~~i~~nd convince him to sit down
107 and talk with me. Then if he does I don't know really,
108 was it me he wanted to be with or was it just,
109 interested in a million dollars or whatever it is.
110 < Because if that's what you teach a person to do: >,
111 just like a value system the next person who comes along
112 and whispers in his ear about another billion dollars,
113 he'll leave you and run to THE:M. (2.0)
114 You teach people all the time, your kids, what to do:
115 (4.5)

The speaker cuts himself off here and re-starts (line 61), stating that there are 'some mechanics' that 'we've gotta master.' By switching to 'mechanics' at this point, the speaker orients to the issue that what he has been talking about may be too abstract or esoteric. To address this, Cole mentions that he was previously talking with some audience members about 'how to contact somebody on the phone' and that 'there's definitely a way that works better than other ways.' By acknowledging this, Cole legitimates the importance of technique and that 'better' techniques may result in business growth. To explain why he makes this comment about some techniques working better than others, he tells a story about how he was talking with people about 'how to contact somebody on the phone' after 'doing a meeting.' The use of details such as indicating the time ('midnight') and place ('in the parking lot') construct this as a story that actually happened (Potter, 1996).

Cole then inserts a sequence before he continues with the story that orients to the issue that he has been talking for a long time, but that he still has something important to say ('so, please can yuh- I'll I- I'm gonna shut up in a second'). After starting to invoke a group identity ('we'r-'; line 75), he re-starts, switches to the pronoun 'you,' and then asks the audience to 'please know that you're not in the business of selling this.' The pronoun shift from 'we' to 'you' allows Cole to make a request of the audience, as if he is asking them to do a favor, rather than making a direct statement. This form invites the audience into what the speaker is saying, and positions them as one who can grant the request to the speaker, rather than the speaker imposing his own version (Craig, Tracy & Spisak, 1986). By doing a re-start and making a request, the speaker further flags this point as important.

In addition to saying that the business is not about selling, the audience should also not be in the 'business of trying convincing people.' By stating what the business is not about, the speaker creates an **interactional space** to describe what the business is about: "what you're in the business of is finding out who:ah trusts themselves enough to

be with you.' The audience acknowledges minimal **receipt** of this with 'humm,' allowing the speaker to continue. The speaker goes on to say that 'you can work with certain people you and you and I are about figuring out who we can work with who can we invest our time with.' Thus, rather than being a sales person or one who convinces, the speaker describes the business owner as a person who figures out who they can work with and who they can invest their time with. Again, both "work" and "invest" have ambiguous meanings here (Bellah et al., 1985). To work or invest with someone could be to engage in a form of business activity or it could be to engage in a kind of therapeutic and/or relational activity.

Next, the speaker uses an audience member to illustrate this point: 'so if I talk with Larry what I'm finding out is does Larry trust Larry enough to sit down and talk with me' without 'something to prime the pump to get 'em there.' By using the terms 'finding out,' and 'sit[ting] down and talk[ing],' the inference is that the process of communication with Larry is one of 'discovery' and not selling, convincing, or a technique ('something to prime the pump to get 'em there'). The phrase 'does Larry trust Larry enough' begins to locate the locus of control, and responsibility, in Larry, and not something about Cole.

The speaker continues with this example and **formulates a script** of what is going to happen: 'I'm gonna call and chit chat with 'im there for a while () and I'm gonna then say () we're gonna laugh I'm gonna say Larry you got any time you're gonna be around, and what I hope he says is... yeah.' Note how the script is constructed as ordinary, innocent, and something that people already in a familiar relationship would do: one person will 'call' the other; they will 'chit chat,' not just for a short time but 'for a while,'; they're 'gonna laugh' (which is artfully inserted in this sequence); the speaker refers to the other person by their first name to indicate familiarity ('Larry'); the speaker asks him if he has time to get together, but asks in an indirect way by asking about if Larry has time to be around (this lets the other person infer the point of the question without requiring the questioner to directly ask; also, by asking if he has time to get together first, the

questioner is able to determine if the other person is available, and then he can ask a more specific question; see discussion of **pre-sequences** in an earlier section; Edwards, 1997; [link opens into new window](#)). Further, Cole is not asking the person for, nor seeking (at least at this time), a commitment to buy anything or sign up for the business. Instead, he is merely asking if the person is available to sit and talk with him and is seeking a simple 'yeah.'

The speaker then says that Larry's answer to Cole's question is 'a statement about 'HIM,' which again locates the responsibility and control to the other person. After Larry agrees to meet with him, it is at this point, Cole says, that the issue of why they are getting together is raised. And rather than this reason being about selling, the purpose of getting together is to 'help him do x y z whatever he's interested in' (which is similar to Anna's description of the business as it being a way to fulfill one's individualized dreams and goals). Cole pauses to ask if the audience understands his point and then emphasizes the type of person that he is looking for is the kind who 'trust[s] himself enough to sit down and talk with me.'

At line 101, the speaker begins to formulate an alternative script of how the interaction could have gone: 'if I do the other way if I call Larry on the phone we chit chat a little while and I say hey Larry I got this b- business I'm starting it's really great very lucrative you can make billions and up and up and up.' In this version, Cole jumps right in to talking about the business and the potential financial benefits without first establishing a particular kind of relationship. The consequences of starting this way, Cole states, is that: 'w'all I've done is just destroyed what I'm looking for.' The speaker states that this alternative version involves 'convinc[ing],' and that with this approach, Cole does not really know if Larry wanted to speak with Cole ('was it me he wanted to be with') or if he was 'just interested in a million dollars or whatever it is.' If the "convincing" approach is used, then Larry would presumably have no loyalty to Cole and Larry would be tempted away, betraying Cole (note how the use of 'whispers' implies

collusion: 'the next person who comes along and whispers in his ear about another billion dollars he'll leave you and run to them'). Again, Cole returns to the issue of a value system and the importance of teaching 'people all the time,' even 'your kids,' 'what to do.'

Techniques Are Outgrowths of a Philosophy

[XTM_03A.mov]

Audio File 15. Team Meeting 3

Extract 34.TM 3TM006042000:115-141:WJC(1:17/452K)

115 (4.5)

116 C:that's why I'm saying in relationships there's: (2.0) equity.

117 In relationship there's: (3.5) strength and there's-

118 D- do you follow do you understand my point.

119 There's relationships, so if it's based on a trust relationship

120 you can do anything.

121 This group of people can be to ten thousand like that,

122 if you just find people who trust you-

123 they trust themselves enough to sit down and talk with ya.

124 That's all you gotta do because that person is not intimidated.

125 and we talked for an hour about that didn't we?

126 Aud:yep

127 C:>And I know< that that's a technique.

128 But it's a philoso- it's an outgrowth of a philosophy.

129 Do you see what I'm saying.

130 If you're in a business where you're trying to convince people,

131 you're gonna di:e.

132 Because somebody will always convince them against you.

133 You're- you're fighting, however the- old they are

134 you're fighting all those years of experience in relationships
 135 .hh that are convincing them not to do something.
 136 Whatever it is you're gonna say. You're gonna lo:se.
 137 But if they'll sit down because they trust themselves enough,
 138 you know what I'm sayin' they're not intimidated
 139 to sit down for an hour to talk about, anything,
 140 that person you can build something with today.
 141 So we talked about that.

After a long pause (4.5 seconds) which marks an emphasis on this point about teaching a value system, the speaker states that 'in relationships there's equity' and 'strength.' With a trust relationship, Cole exclaims, 'you can do anything' and a 'group of people can be to ten thousand like that' ('ten thousand' is a reference to a point level that earns a particular performance bonus and is a marker of business progress and success; see Biggart, 1989). Cole states that the criterion is that 'you just find people who trust you,' which is then repaired to 'they trust themselves enough to sit down and talk with ya.' This is an interesting **repair** here since the first version ('you just find people who trust you') suggests that a business owner might need to earn or convince the prospect of trust, whereas the second version ('they trust themselves enough to sit down and talk with ya') locates the locus of control and responsibility in the individual rather than between people. Cole re-iterates that the process entails 'find[ing] people' who are already a certain way (i.e., 'trust themselves enough...') which counters a version that the business is about selling or convincing.

After stating that he talked about this issue of how to approach people on the phone for about an hour, the speaker asks for confirmation of this from the audience member (line 125). The audience member replies 'yep.' By asking the audience member in this way, and receiving an affirmative response, the story gains credibility and a factual status.

The distinction between 'mechanics' and 'value system' is not finished, however. In line 127, Cole displays that he 'know[s]' the script of calling someone, chit chatting, laughing, asking them if they're going to be around, etc. is a 'technique.' This 'technique,' however, is an 'outgrowth of a philosophy' (the speaker restarts after saying the that the technique is a 'philoso-', and then **downgrades** it to saying that it's an 'outgrowth of a philosophy'). By acknowledging that the script is a 'technique,' Cole displays that he is savvy and aware, but not so savvy and aware as to be manipulative, since the technique comes out of a philosophy. Thus, Cole treats the issue of how to talk on the phone as potentially problematic, a version that requires a further account. By drawing a connection between 'technique' and 'philosophy,' the speaker constructs the script about how to approach a prospect on the phone as legitimate and normative, despite it being a 'technique.'

Next, the speaker elaborates on the consequences of trying to convince people about the business by formulating an **extreme case** ('you're gonna die'): 'if you're in a business where you're trying to convince people you're gonna die because somebody will always convince them against you' (lines 130-131). He goes on to say that 'you're you're fighting however the- old they are you're fighting all those years of experience in relationships that are convincing them not to do something, whatever it is you're gonna say, you're gonna lose.' Here, the speaker suggests that it is a losing battle to fight 'all those years of' presumably negative experience people have that 'convinc[es] them not to do something.' While it is left unsaid, the inference is available that the speaker may be referring to experiences where people have been betrayed or had their trust violated. But if the person 'trust themselves enough' (i.e., 'not intimidated' by the situation of sitting down to talk), then that is a person 'you can build something with today.' Cole signals the end of this story by stating 'so we talked about that' (line 141).

What Is A Quality Person: God Made Them All Great

[XTM_04A.mov]

Audio File 16. Team Meeting 4

Extract 35.TM 4TM006042000:141-181:WJC(1:34/556K)

140 C:that person you can build something with today.

141 So we talked about that.

142 So it's a technique, but it's an outgrowth of a philosophy.

143 Do you see what I'm saying.

144 It's a philosophy of < what is it you're looking for >

145 You build a team of quality people,

146 you will always build a quality- business.

147 Now what is a quality person

148 God made 'em all great. It's, but y-

149 there's a philosophy of life that you will touch

150 far more people, if you touch some.

151 If you try to touch everybody, you never help anyone.

152 I'-you help some, you can help many.

153 It's really- you know the- seems like I remember that

154 Ron was it twelve?

155 R:Yep

156 C:He got twelve together and said go to the

157 four corners they started preaching right?

158 Well ya- ya follow my point?

159 (thinks) that he-

160 he's in the business of saving 'em all through saving some

161 (5.0)

162 Aud:[[Applause starts slowly]]

163 [

164 C:do you get it?

165 Aud:[[Applause builds louder]]

166 C:so buil- () build a bond

167 Aud:[[Applause continues]]

168 [

169 C:he went out walking around for

170 three years with some. They traipsed all over the place.

171 But he created a bond and even

172 they forsake that, but the point is, relationships.

173 You buil- you're looking for people who trust themselves

174 enough to sit down and talk with you so if you call

175 them on the phone, don't entice them.

176 Find out if you're enough.

177 Find out if you're enough, that they accept

178 themselves and you enough to sit down

179 and talk and you'll have a wonderful

180 business that grows.

181 Well, I have that- kinda that vision to want to make that happen.

By saying that 'you can build something' with a person 'today,' Cole adds the element of time to his account, which is reminiscent of Michael's talk about people who are ready to see the relevance of the internet/business and those who aren't. Instead of talking about people who are ready or not ready per se, Cole talks about a 'quality person': 'what is it you're looking for? You build a team of quality people, you will always build a quality business. Now what is a quality person? God made 'em all great.' In the business development meeting, Michael's version of what made a person ready came down to it being 'purely' a matter of 'chance' and that there were 'no rules to it.' Both

versions (Cole's 'God made 'em all great' and Michael's 'purely chance') gloss a potentially complex issue but leave open the possibility that what makes a person 'ready' or 'quality' is potentially anyone, an unrestricted pool, or market. Cole's use of 'God' making all people great is also more consistent with the 'value system' he is talking about, as will soon be made more explicit.

Cole, however, qualifies his comment about what makes a quality person by returning to the notion of a philosophy: 'but y- there's a philosophy of life that you will touch far more people if you touch some. If you try to touch everybody, you never help anyone. You help some, you can help many' (lines 149-152). This qualification is consistent with Cole's vision of having smaller meeting sizes for a more 'personal' touch. This 'philosophy of life', however, is left unidentified and ambiguous, until Cole asks Ron, who was previously introduced as a minister to give an opening prayer for the meeting, 'was it twelve?' By asking this question of an audience member, he defers credibility and expertise on this matter to Ron, constructing it as a spiritual and/or religious matter.

Ron replies 'yep' and then Cole continues to relate a story about 'he' (i.e., Jesus, though the name Jesus is absent) 'got twelve together' (i.e., disciples, though again, this term is not used) 'and said go to the four corners they started preaching right?' (lines 156-157). Cole again asks the audience if they 'follow' his 'point.' Up to this point, Cole has repeatedly used 'do you see what I'm sayin' and 'do you follow' in an almost rhythmic manner, as if the speaker is building a case, adding a new layer and then confirming with the audience that they understand. With this most recent story, Cole adds another layer that draws on a **repertoire** of Christian religion and how Jesus' message was promoted. By not mentioning 'Jesus' or 'disciples', but alluding to them, Cole manages the issue

between business and religion (Fitzpatrick & Reynolds, 1997)⁵. This layer becomes even more explicit when Cole states that 'he- he's in the business of saving 'em all through saving some.'

Being in the 'business of saving 'em all through saving some' cements together a number of layers that Cole has been constructing. First, it makes specific the 'philosophy' and 'value system' that has been mentioned before by referring to tenets of Christian spirituality without explicitly mentioning Christianity or Jesus. Second, it is consistent with the vision of working with small numbers of people to reach 'hundreds of thousands' and 'win' the northeast (from which the rest of the country can be 'reached'). Third, the phrase 'in the business of saving 'em all through saving some' connects to the Traquix business by playing off the double usage of the word business: "business as commercial enterprise" and "business more generally as engaging in an activity." Interestingly, the use of the term 'vision' (lines 41, Extract TM 1; and 181, Extract TM 4) potentially takes on a new meaning to also refer to both a corporate or organizational vision statement and having a religious vision. Fourth, any potential negative connotations of the commercial aspects of the business or using a 'technique' to promote the business are cast in a legitimate light: 'saving' people rather than exploiting them for financial profit. Fifth, 'saving' people is also consistent with other descriptions about the business as not being about selling, but rather as being about helping to make people's lives complete through fulfilling their individualized dreams goals. Sixth, in line 166 where Cole instructs the audience to 'build a bond,' he returns back to his ethic of building relationships with people based on trust.

⁵ The issue of business versus religion was also managed by other speakers. For example, one speaker stated how she too was turned off by references to God and religion that took place in the training meetings, but that she came to see how this was an important factor. Thus, she positioned herself as once being put off by religious references, which orients to and gives **voice** to an objection newer business owners may have, while providing an account that makes such references legitimate and normal.

After stating 'he's in the business of saving 'em all through saving some,' there is an extended pause where Cole presumably pauses to allow this to "sink in" with the audience (line 161). This pregnant pause is interrupted after five seconds with small applause, which grows into louder applause after Cole asks 'do you get it?' The applause is a way for the audience to display agreement with the speaker (Atkinson, 1984). This 'do you get it' also suggests that there is a more "philosophical" point that he has been building up to. Cole continues to talk about the bond that Jesus created with his disciples, which parallels what the business owners should do with new prospects and others in their business team. The point is 'relationships,' Cole says, and he again re-iterates that what 'you're looking for' is 'people who trust themselves enough to sit down and talk with you' and that taking this approach does not involve 'entic[ing]' them. As a contrast to enticing, the speaker instructs the audience to 'find out if you're enough' to see if the person will sit down to talk. The effect of this approach will be, according to Cole, that 'you'll have a wonderful business that grows.' This is Cole's 'vision' of what he wants to make happen.

According to the speaker, then, the way to succeed in this business is not to sell or convince others on this business. If there is any persuasion or convincing that happens, let the 'relationship' do this. That is, the speaker's instruction is to make the relationship 'bond' relevant between the prospect and the business owner relevant, and let this be the factor that determines whether or not the person will 'sit down and talk,' rather than trying to 'entice' them with financial rewards that may result from the business. This is the more "philosophical" point to which the speaker has been building.

Do You Want To Have A Big Business? You Gotta Get Sold Out To It

After making this philosophical point, and towards the end of his segment, the speaker poses a question to the audience.

[XTM_05A.mov]

Audio File 17. Team Meeting 5

Extract 36.TM 5TM006042000:182-212:WJC(1:08/404K)

182 C: You have to ask yourself a question.

183 Do you want to have a big business.

184 Do you want to have a big business

185 that frees you and creates independence

186 You gotta get sold out to it.

187 Just gotta get sold out to that's what I'm gonna buy.

188 I'm always gonna buy there.

189 I'm gonna buy a- everything I can buy here.

190 Right through that web on ditto delivery whatever it is.

191 I'm just sold out to that 'cause it's my business.

192 I understand it so I'm gonna do.

193 What's the big deal of that

194 Why is it so good that we're gonna spend it at Johnson's

195 [[the name of an area chain of stores]]

196 We sold out to them?

197 No we were just advertised, by them, and we went there

198 and maybe they were the best option of those I went to

198 or Smith's [[name of a different store]] or whatever-

199 Wherever you go. But my point is,

200 you have it in your hand to get sold out to,

201 If you're gonna have a big business

202 do you know what that implies

203 A big business means if you take somebody like Allan and Cleo

204 they're on the Board of Directors,

205 they track- they have business, and it is-
 206 you can assess it in terms of economics,
 207 you can assess it in terms of- of,
 208 probably material, things that they own: and
 209 that type of stuff if you want
 210 and you can assess it in all those.
 211 But Allan will always assess it in terms of relationships.
 212 Every time every way.

In this excerpt, Cole poses a question to the audience ('do you want to have a big business'). The sequential position of this question, towards the end of the presentation, is striking because it is similar to Michael's in his business plan presentation to new prospects (where he asked 'do you think you could do this business'; Extract BP 15, line 1383) and Anna's in her business plan/info meeting presentation made to a mixed audience of new prospects and new business owners (where she asked 'would you, have a commitment, um to make this a- uh make it a priority for you'; Extract DG 5, line 1016). Rather than pausing to wait for an answer from the audience, Cole **upgrades** the question by adding the notions of freedom and independence (' do you want to have a big business that frees you and creates independence'; lines 184-185). He again does not wait for an answer from the audience, but immediately follows as if the audience would say yes. If the audience would say yes to the question about wanting a big business (not just any business, but a 'big' one) that allows freedom and independence, then Cole instructs: 'you gotta get sold out to it.'

'Just gotta get sold out to that's what I'm gonna buy. I'm always gonna buy there. I'm gonna buy a- everything I can buy here. Right through that web on duplicate delivery whatever it is. I'm just sold out to that 'cause it's my business I understand it so I'm gonna do' (lines 187-192). The use of 'sold out' here is particularly striking since it re-appropriates a term that normatively has negative connotations (e.g., creative artists

might be branded a "sell out" when they write popular songs or work for a corporation, or academics are accused of "selling out" when they write a popular press book, etc.), and re-casts the term in a positive, valued light (Wood, 1999). The use of 'sold out' is also interesting because it represents an **extreme case** of being completely and utterly convinced or persuaded to do something, which is an issue that the speaker has been countering throughout his 'vision' statement. According to Cole, getting 'sold out' to the business means buying everything they can through the web site, which corresponds to the process of creating turnover (which is an integral part of the business, along with sponsoring new people to create a business network or team).

Cole orients to the issue that being 'sold out' might be problematic when he asks 'what's the big deal of that?' (line 193). He wonders what is 'so good' about Johnson's (the name of an area chain store) that the audience spends their money there. Then, he uses 'sold out' to refer to the process of going to Johnson's: 'we sold out to them?' This use of 'sold out,' however, has a negative connotation here, suggesting that people's integrity or value system may have been compromised. This question also creates a **slot** for an account to be provided that serves as an alternative to getting 'sold out.' The speaker says that he and the audience didn't get 'sold out' to Johnson's, but that they 'were just advertised, by them, and we went there' (line 197). The term 'advertised' is used somewhat pejoratively and is interesting here since Cole has not talked about advertising as a way to promote the business (instead, he has discussed the process of relationship-building). The term 'advertised' serves as a contrast version to being 'sold out' and represents a softened version of persuasion (that is, 'sold out' would be a more extreme version, while being 'advertised' is less extreme). Further, being 'advertised' suggests that this was something that was done to the audience, and that they might not have otherwise chosen the other stores (for example, note how the speaker next says that going to Johnson's or Smith's may have been the 'best option' of 'those' other stores).

This issue of choice is addressed again when the speaker states that 'you have it in your hand to get sold out to.' Thus, becoming 'sold out' to the business is not a passive process, as being 'advertised' by Johnson's or Smith's was. Instead, being 'sold out' is constructed as an active choice, which is made consistent with the issue of freedom and independence Cole mentioned earlier (line 185).

Next, the speaker returns to the issue of a 'big business' and expands on what this 'implies' (lines 201-202). Rather than it being about 'economics' or 'material things,' a 'big business' is about 'relationships.' To establish the credibility of this statement, Cole uses the example of 'Allan and Cleo,' who are on the 'Board of Directors' (and who also happen to be Cole's sponsor, or up-line, in the business, and thus everyone in the audience's up-line).

[XTM_06A.mov]

Audio File 18. Team Meeting 6

Extract 37.TM 6TM006042000:213-262:WJC(1:44/612K)

213 C: Certainly the economics are there and all of that.

214 What I wa- () you are the message. You and I: are the message.

215 We together, aggregately, we are the message.

216 We walk and talk to somebody, we are the message. And they see in you-

217 >I always< I always say to Katie I say

218 We were talking the other day

219 >I say< you know ya- you got in the business

220 in two weeks you sponsored five or six people.

221 Didn't know a thing. Didn't know how to do anything.

222 Just sponsored, half a dozen people.

223 You don't have to learn that to- but why:

224 'Cause you're alive.

225 [?]:(eh huh ha ha)

226 C: You're a live wire.

227 If you're a live wire you'll attract people.

228 It's that simple.

229 You don't have to know everything.

230 What you have to do is: be a live wire.

231 You have to have a message.

232 >Do you understand what I mean<

233 How 'bout when Teddy stands up here,

234 he's a live wire, you know what I'm sayin'.

235 Teddy you sponsor a ton of people,

236 because you're a live wire.

237 Just go be alive

238 and people will want to know what's keepin' you alive.

239 Aud: eh huh huh ha [[LAUGHTER]]

240 T: HEALTHYLITE! [[a product of nutritional supplements sold via Traquix]]

250 Aud: eh huh huh ha

251 [

252 C: THERE SEE:::

253 Aud: [[LAUGHTER; WHISTLES]]

254 C: So, eh [[clears throat]] you get sold out.

255 Get sold out to it. Go to family reunion.

256 Don't worry about, talking to people

257 there's no rejection. There's no way to be rejected.

258 You're the one making the decision.

259 You're always the one making the decision.

260 You're deciding whether you're gonna spend

261 your time with that person or not.

262 In the final analysis that's whate- -ever it is.

Cole points out that 'economics' is one factor (just like 'techniques' are a factor), but re-asserts a more "philosophical" version consistent with spreading a 'message': 'you are the message. You and I, are the message. We together, aggregately....' The speaker then personalizes and illustrates this bit about being 'the message' by talking about how Katie is 'alive' and Teddy is a 'live wire.' That is, the business is not so much, at least at the beginning, about knowing everything ('you don't have to know everything'), but it is about a personal, dynamic energy.

Cole then extends his account about getting 'sold out' (marked by the 'so' in line 254), when he repeats 'you get sold out get sold out to it' and then instructs people to 'go to family reunion' (which is a meeting that business owners who reach a certain performance level are eligible to attend with others in their business team; the label 'family reunion' is consistent with the emphasis on 'relationships'; see Biggart, 1989; Fitzpatrick & Reynolds, 1997). The speaker also tells the audience to not 'worry about talking to people' since 'there's no way to be rejected. You're the one making the decision. You're deciding whether you're gonna spend your time with that person or not, in the final analysis' (256-262). By saying that there is no way to be rejected, and by locating control for decisions in the individual person, Cole continues to construct a version of the business as one of freedom and independence, as well as one that orients to the therapeutic **repertoire** of relationships and trust. Further, by putting the locus of control in the individual, this version builds in an account for what happens if people stray from the 'family': it is not the family or team that is responsible for 'reject[ing] them, but it is the individual person who has chosen to pull themselves out.

To summarize, Cole constructs a 'vision' for a way to promote the business that does not involve convincing people about financial or material rewards of the business (interestingly, it is a given that these rewards will come since at no time does Cole orient to the possibility that these rewards will not come). As an alternative to convincing

people, Cole constructs a version of the business as being about building relationships that are based on trust and a philosophy of life that privileges smaller, more personal team meetings as a way to reach out to hundreds of thousands of people over larger, less personal, 'mega' meetings (though large, rally meetings do occur as part of Tripp Worldwide, Cole does not orient to this in his vision statement). Both convincing people about the financial rewards of the business, and the approach where a business owner sits down with a prospect to build a relationship first as a way in to talking about the business, are constructed as a technique. However, the latter version about building a relationship is formulated as legitimate because it represents an 'outgrowth' of the 'philosophy' of building bonds of trust where people do not feel intimidated and where their years of experience of not trusting people are rendered moot. Further, Cole located the control, and responsibility, for actions in the individual when it came to matters of rejection from the business team, or 'family.' If a person does not feel accepted, it is not the fault of the business team, but rather is in the decision making of the individual business owner.

Summary of the Training Sessions

There are a number of similarities and differences between Michael's remarks at the business development meeting and Cole's vision statement at the team meeting. These include their criteria for prospects who are 'ready' (it's a matter of 'chance') or 'quality' prospects ('God made 'em all great') and in terms of building in an account for why business owners might get rejected from prospects (because they are not at the stage where they see the relevance of an internet business) or in terms of rejections from other business owners (it is the individual making the decision to be pull away since the business family only offers trust and acceptance, not rejection). The most salient issue to this project, however, concerns that the business is constructed as not about persuasion or

convincing people. What does this description of what the business is not about accomplish in their respective versions?

For Michael, the business is not about persuading people because there are so many people to 'hit' and to expose to the business plan. In his talk, Michael has oriented to the U.K. business being in the pre-launch phase, and that many prospects in the U.S. were signed up, or sponsored during this period. If prospects are not receptive to the idea about the internet to begin with, let alone the internet being a lucrative business opportunity, then spending time persuading people about the Traquix business becomes a waste of valuable resources. Further, Michael also constructed the potential of the internet to be so incredible that it persuades itself. Thus, it should not be necessary for a business owner to do any further persuasive work, thus managing issues of business owners' **stake** (Potter, 1996).

For Cole, the business is not about convincing others because the process of convincing violates the relational bond of trust that should be made relevant when talking with a new prospect. This relational ethic is part of a larger philosophy of 'saving' people, a philosophy that is consistent with his 'vision' for promoting the business in an ever expanding market (the language used by Cole seems consistent with the use of evangelical metaphors and corporate evangelism identified in Höpfl & Maddrell, 1996). To convince others, Cole's version runs, especially about the financial rewards, is to counter this larger ethic about relationships and spirituality. Further, there is evidence to suggest that the technique of convincing people is not effective to keeping people in the business. That is, if the initial contact is made with the prospect based on convincing someone about the financial benefits of Traquix, then if someone else comes along with a better financial opportunity, the person would leave the Traquix business and pursue that opportunity. However, if the prospect becomes integrated into the business 'family,' and there is, purportedly, no possibility of rejection, then that person is more likely to stay with the business and to keep up their turnover volume.

Summary of the Business Plan Presentations and Training

Sessions Analyses

To sum up all three analytic sections, then, descriptions of what the business is and is not about, were analyzed to see what topics were being managed and what actions were being accomplished. In both presentations to new prospects and business owners, the business was described as a way to help people fulfill their individual needs, goals, and dreams, through buying products via the Traquix web site, and referring others to become a part of the Tripp Worldwide business 'family.' The business was described in these terms as a way to counter the notion that the business involved processes of selling, persuasion, or convincing. Remarkably, however, the business plan presentation followed a standard organizational pattern of a "sales pitch," while the business development and team meetings attempted to persuade and convince people that the business is not about persuasion or convincing. In each case, versions of what the business was about were countered with versions of what the business was not about to achieve these effects. That is, descriptions or versions of the business were not seen to be statements of essences (what the business was actually about), but rather as tools for accomplishing various types of social actions (such as countering the version that the business is about selling or persuading).

Additionally, presenters and audience members engaged in various positioning practices throughout the business presentations to manage a range of issues. One audience member constructed a story of how she became aware of the business to present herself as one who is savvy enough to be aware of the potential financial opportunities of the internet, but who is cautiously considering whether or not to become involved with the Traquix business. During the business plan presentations and team development meetings, presenters spoke in a way to position the audience as intelligent, rational individuals who valued independence and autonomy, and who want to fulfill their goals and dreams but not by being involved in a get-rich-quick scheme. Thus, the use of

positioning practices were implicated in managing various matters of identity for both the presenters and audience members.

* * *

In the next section ("Implications"), the implications of the analysis will be discussed, as well as avenues for future research in a rhetorical discursive action framework.

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[Link to References section \(opens into new window\).](#)

IMPLICATIONS

In the preceding sections, descriptions of the Traquix business were analyzed in order to see what topics were being **managed** and what interpersonal and organizational processes were being accomplished through descriptions and **positioning practices**. In both presentations to new prospects and business owners, the business was described as a way to help people fulfill their individual needs, goals, and dreams, through buying products via the Traquix web site, and referring others to become a part of the Tripp Worldwide business 'family.' The business was described in these terms as a way to counter the notion that the business involved a process of selling, persuasion, or convincing. The claim was made that these descriptions or versions of the business were not statements of what the business was "actually" about. Rather, the various versions of the business were seen as tools for accomplishing various types of social actions.

Additionally, presenters and audience members engaged in various positioning practices throughout the business presentations to manage a range of issues. Presenters and audience members spoke in a way to position the audience members as knowledgeable, rational individuals who valued independence and autonomy, and who wanted to fulfill their goals and dreams without being lured into a get-rich-quick scheme. Thus, the use of positioning practices was implicated in managing various matters of **identity** for both the presenters and audience members when they talked about how and why they became involved in the business or wanted to do so.

The point of the analysis, though, was not to generalize to all presentations of the Traquix business plan, or even to business plan presentations on a broader scale. Further, it was not to say that all presenters always oriented to the issue of "this is not a sales pitch" or "this is not a get-rich-quick scheme."

For example, there is one case where one speaker, Michael, used the word 'sell' to refer to the Traquix business plan in his presentation to prospects and did not orient to

this as a problematic usage. In this excerpt, the use of 'sell' occurs about mid-way through his business plan presentation, Michael is explaining how a person can make £60,000 a year through the Traquix business.

[XIMPL_0A.mov]

Audio File 19. Implications 0

Extract 38. Implications 0 BP040600:575-584:WJC (0:14/83K)

575 M: .hh >to give you a feel for-

576 what I'm gonna do is show you<

577 → how you can sell a business↓ (2.0)

578 which makes fifteen hundred (2.0)

579 a year (1.5)

580 right=

581 =uh- uh- -s a month sorry []

582 Aud: eh huh hu ha

583 M: fifteen hundred pounds a month (2.0)

584 and what we're going to do is duplicate that

The issue oriented to by the speaker and audience is when Michael says that he is going to show the audience how the business will make £1500 per year rather than £1500 per month. One possible explanation for Michael using the term 'sell' here is that it is in the middle of his presentation after he has already raised the explicit issue that he is not trying to 'sell' the audience anything. Again, however, Michael does not treat 'how you can sell a business' as problematic, nor does the audience at any time throughout the interaction (for example, by making a publicly available **display** that challenges the speaker on this usage or by asking a question at the end of Michael's presentation).

This example (above) is a **deviant case** (see Jacobs, 1988) in the sense that the use of terms like 'sales,' 'selling,' 'sell,' etc. were otherwise used by Michael in his presentation (to new prospects) to refer to what other people and businesses did and as a

way to specifically counter that Traquix and Tripp Worldwide were about selling. This example also illustrates the point that a rhetorical discursive action analysis does not claim that speakers always and in every case orient to an issue that might otherwise be pervasive within a particular business presentation. Rather, variability in terms of **accounts**, orientations, descriptions, etc. is expected given the flexible manner in which language is used, and this variation is a consequence of people performing different actions in their talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

With this caveat stated, the following implications of the analysis will be discussed in this closing section: the importance of analyzing actual interaction; training and pedagogical implications; future avenues of study. This section concludes with the ethical, political, and critical implications raised by this thesis.

Importance of Analyzing Actual Interaction

It is paradoxical that many communication scholars argue that communication (variously defined as the production of a message for an audience, the sharing of meaning, etc.) is consequential to social life, but spend little time analyzing actual interaction. Instead, communication researchers, for varied reasons, have constructed hypothetical or idealized examples of talk, persuaded participants to come into laboratories to collect talk samples, asked subjects to fill out surveys about when, where, and with whom they talk, interview people and then code the answers so that they can be processed statistically or grouped into interpretive themes or typologies, offered philosophical reflections about the communication process, etc. While these approaches have led to productive results and important insights, and will continue to do so, using actual interaction has a number of advantages (Hopper, 1992; Buttny, 1993; Potter & Wetherell, 1995). First, when actual interaction is recorded and transcribed on a **turn-by-turn** basis (for example, according to the Jefferson system), many important

conversational details (such as pauses, re-starts, overlaps, laughter, variable descriptions of events, etc.) become available to ground, and generate new, theoretical claims.

For example, Jefferson (1984) argued that the sequential positioning of laughter is consequential when people engage in the practice of talking about their troubles with one another (e.g., tellers and recipients of troubles laugh at different times, and sometimes together, making relevant certain norms of appropriateness), and that the laughter implicates identity concerns for each person (for example, when troubles-tellers laughs at their own troubles, they display themselves as being able to take the situation lightly). These claims could not have been made in such a persuasive manner without recourse to the fine details of timing, overlap, repairs, etc. In many of the approaches (i.e., surveys, coding studies, philosophical reflections, etc.), these conversational details were never present, viewed as irrelevant, and/or actually removed from analytic consideration (e.g., by coding procedures or not transcribing them, etc.) rather than approaching the details as resources that are analytically important.

A second reason to use recordings of actual interaction is that these materials can be analyzed repeatedly over time (Sacks, 1992). By being able to analyze interaction repeatedly, analysts may be able to construct claims about patterns and subtle nuances that would not otherwise be possible. Further, these recordings can be made publicly available to other analysts so that the scholarly claims can be contested and revised (Tracy, in press).

A third reason to study actual interaction relates to application and training issues. Communication training materials often use scripted or hypothetical interaction rather than actual talk (see Cameron, 1999 for a discursive analysis of such training materials). By studying actual interaction, analysts and practitioners can study what people are actually doing in their talk rather than what we think we may be doing (which is often a result of using idealized examples). While it is often easier to read scripted or reconstructed examples of conversation, since this is more like the familiar process of

reading play scripts, the use of such scripts or reconstructed conversations overlooks the "messiness" of interaction. Upon repeated analysis of actual, transcribed interaction, however, this messiness often turns out to be a highly sophisticated and delicate organization that displays how participants deal with a range of practical interactional issues (Puchta, 2000). This point is more fully discussed below in "Training and Pedagogical Implications."

Fourth, scholars have turned to the use of participant-observation and open-ended interviews in order to construct local theories and models of such organizational practices as managing members' organizational identification practices (Pratt, 2000). Pratt (2000) argues, for example, that an ethnographic approach offers a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the identification process than is available through alternative methods. As discussed earlier, he suggested that the process of organizational identification with an MLM organization works through, among other things, seekership (when an individual is searching for a satisfactory system of meaning to resolve one's discontent), sense-breaking (the breaking down of meaning), and sense-making (the construction of meaning). According to Pratt, an important aspect of sense-breaking is the process of "dream building." Dream building creates a void of meaning by linking the an individual's sense of self to possessions, creating motivation through identifying a gap between where a person is now with where they want to be, and perpetuating these motivating factors.

To support this argument, Pratt drew on his own field notes, archival data (such as books and audio-tapes, etc.), and excerpts from field interviews. Pratt's analysis, however, could be productively supplemented by investigating actual interaction to learn about the specific conversational devices and descriptions used to accomplish the dream building process. Thus, when Anna asked new business owners and prospects to identify their individual dreams (part of Pratt's dream building process), she was (also) managing local, situation-specific concerns about the audience members identity of not being taken,

as well as describing the business in such a way to counter the notion that it was a get-rich-quick scheme. Future research could attempt to draw links between the processes of organizational identification and local, situation-specific management of identities and concerns, thus viewing these processes as occurring simultaneously.

Rather than just studying any interaction with no (or limited) a priori research questions in mind (a characteristic of certain conversation analytic studies, for example; Tracy, 1995), a rhetorical discursive action approach focuses specifically on communication practices in problematic situations and how participants strategically deal with these problems (see also Craig & Tracy, 1995; Tracy, 1997). The goal of a rhetorical discursive action analysis, then, is to demonstrate *what and how* conversational practices are used to construct and deal with interactional problems and issues. As the analysis in this thesis demonstrates, using actual interaction, and analyzing it for its rhetorical and performative features, is a productive approach towards this goal.

Training and Pedagogical Implications

Certain trade books and text books provide tips and organizational structures for how to give a business presentation (Stroh, 1966; Wilson, 1988; Cook, 1989). Often times, these books make use of idealized examples of a presentation, and/or suggest abstract pointers on how to make a successful presentation (Riemer, 1975; see Cameron, 1999 for a critique of this practice). Looking at actual, interactive data of a business plan presentation, however, presents a number of advantages in relation to idealized examples and abstract pointers (Puchta, 2000).

In Cook's (1989) discussion of a how to do a "sales pitch," for example, the first step is to "make the customer aware that he or she has an immediate problem or unfulfilled need." Cook's discussion provides a monologue about how to make the audience aware of their needs. However, in the business plans presentations analyzed for this study, the audience was made aware of the problem interactively, through question-

answer sequences, concerning how much money they needed or what their goals and dreams were. By reading the idealized monologue, there is no indication that any interaction takes place between the presenter and the audience.

Further, an audience member may provide an unexpected answer in a question-answer sequence, as one prospect did in a business plan presentation. The speaker, Michael, was attempting to formulate a problem by demonstrating that most people do not even save two-thirds of their income, which is what Michael claims would be necessary to maintain their current standard of living (it is noteworthy in itself that no one explicitly challenged this claim). When Michael asked the prospect how much he saved, the prospect said that he saved 100% of his income (see Extract BP 10, lines 397-414). Looking at the actual transcript provides insight as to how situations like this are handled on a turn-by-turn basis. A standard formula approach offers what a "sales pitch" or "business presentation" is supposed to look like, but not what one actually does look like.

Third, and more interestingly, perhaps, is that analysis of transcribed interaction reveals a number of issues that are being managed simultaneously that might have otherwise gone unnoticed (Puchta, 1999). For example, in making the customer aware of his or her needs by asking them to share their goals and dreams, the presenter is also building a case that the business is not about actually making a "sales pitch," but that, among other things, the business is a vehicle to fulfill these individualized goals and dreams. Thus, the presenter is simultaneously building up a version of what kind of communicative event is going on, while attempting to construct what kind is not taking place. Nothing in Cook's framework, for example, discusses the issue of "what is (not) going on here" as framed throughout the communicative event.

Fourth, making the audience member aware of a problem is a jointly-constructed process, and not just done in a monologic manner by the presenter (Prus, 1989). That is, both the presenter and audience member are involved in a constructive process, whereby the audience continually agrees to grant the presenter **interactional space** to speak (that

is, they could interrupt with a question, actively disrupt the proceedings, leave the room¹, etc.). The audience engages in applause, laughter, and other non-verbal forms of communication to signal interest and responsiveness. Further, audience members engage in question-answer sequences with the presenters. For example, Michael asked close-ended, focused questions to solicit feedback from the audience as way to make audience members aware of an unfulfilled need they may have, to which audience members replied with answers. When Michael used this approach, he provided **candid** answers to signal to the audience what type of reply he desired, and audience members provided appropriate replies accordingly (for example, see Extract BP 9, lines 316-324).

Fifth, the way that presenters make the customer aware of a problem or need has identity implications (Prus, 1989; Edward & Potter, 1992; Tracy & Naughton, 1994; Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). For example, in his business plan presentation, Michael talked in such a way as to position his audience as people who desired independence, control, and flexibility (for example, see Extract BP 11, lines 448-452). Biggart (1989) has argued that direct selling and MLM organizations rely heavily on a strategy wherein the organizations construct individuals as possessing an entrepreneurial identity. Further, pointing out problems to prospects can be a sensitive, identity-implicative matter because it may suggest that they are limited or deficient in some way and constructs a superior-inferior relationship between the presenter and prospect. However, throughout the presentation, Michael talked in a way to equalize the relationship between himself and the audience, treating the prospects as knowledgeable, rational, and reflective. In instances where his remarks were potentially face threatening to the prospect, Michael provided a brief account that minimized this threat (for example, see Extract BP 10, lines

¹ For example, one person left the room about 3/4 of the way through a public business presentation. The presenter oriented to the prospect by noticing him get out of the seat) but his leaving did not otherwise appear consequential (perhaps because the size of the audience was around 50 people and the prospect did not act in a way to draw considerable attention to himself).

439-441, where he stated 'that is the trouble for most people anyway'; link opens into new window). Another example of the delicate nature of this is when Anna went into an extended account about how this presentation was not like school where critical judgments might be made about the responses that audience members provided (see Extract DG 3, lines 69-84; link opens into new window).

Sixth, the sequence of the standard formula is not always followed. For example, Michael overcame potential objections the audience might have at the very beginning of his presentation (which is Step 3 in Cook's sequence) when he stated that he was not going to sell them an idea or rope them into anything (see Extract BP 4, lines 85-86). This was done before he made the audience aware of a problem (Step 1) and before he provided a solution to that problem (Step 2). Alternatively, the presenter might cycle through the steps by discussing one problem, providing a solution to it, and then talk about providing another problem (for example, see Extract BP 12, lines 453-469

Granted, it takes a great deal of time and energy to record and transcribe an actual business presentation, probably more than it does to formulate abstract points about how to do the presentation. However, analyzing actual transcribed interaction allows presenters a way to more completely understand how the actual steps or activities of a presentation are accomplished on an interactive basis, as well as the complexity of issues that are being managed during the process.

Future Avenues of Study

Thus far, the study of **fact construction** and variable descriptions has primarily taken place in newspaper reports, court room interaction, and scientific discourse (Potter, 1996), while positioning practices have been primarily analyzed in emergency phone calls to the police, academic colloquium talk, and medical contexts (Tracy, in press). Both the study of fact construction and positioning practices have been tied to how participants manage particular dilemmas and identity concerns. This thesis extends these

analytic topics into the area of business presentations and training sessions. One example of a dilemma that is salient in business plan presentations is how business presenters interactionally manage the dilemma of "presenting information" versus making a "sales pitch." A second example of an identity matter that is managed by participants is a concern to not get taken, or sucked into, a get-rich-quick scheme, but simultaneously being able to "recognize a good opportunity." While these two examples are probably not unique to business contexts, how these dilemmas are managed on a turn-by-turn basis has yet to be identified in previous research, and may be present in other interactional contexts, such as how any organization or group recruits or solicits membership.

There are a range of issues that were managed in the data that could be the topic of future analyses. One issue concerns how the current business owners constructed the Traquix business opportunity in such a way that it has something to offer everyone. For example, Michael oriented to this in his business plan presentation when he asked people if they wanted to be clients, members or individual business owners. He also suggested that everyone had concerns about their future or the future of their children. In a seminar and rally, that was not discussed in this thesis, one of the presenters said that if people were not ready to become business owners yet, then they could start out as a client or member (see Extract BP 15; [link opens into new window](#)). Anna also oriented to the issue that the business has something to offer everyone when she stated that everyone has a dream and a goal (see Extract DG 3; [link opens into new window](#)). Since, according to Anna, everyone has an individual dream, and the business is about helping people to fulfill these dreams, then the business can help everyone. Further, in Cole's presentation, he talked about saving everyone through the business (see Extract TM 4; [link opens into new window](#)).

A second issue that could be explored in future analyses extends the study of positioning practices to how people introduced themselves at business development meetings. When new people are asked to introduce themselves, they say who sponsored

them and who in the audience is in their up-line. If new business owners do not state their sponsor, then someone else usually asks them who it is. The process of making relevant their relationship to their network or team seems to confer legitimacy to their attendance at the meeting.

A third issue for future study concerns the how presenters managed constraints on the business owner's independence and autonomy (see Biggart, 1989). Throughout the business plan presentations and the business development meetings, the business was presented as one that provided independence and autonomy to the business owners. However, there are certain constraints on how the business owners can run their business, which include legal issues with the Traquix Corporation as well the established operating procedures of Tripp Worldwide and a business owner's team or network. Since independence and autonomy are privileged in the business, one would expect to see significant efforts to account for constraints on this independence. For example, how people managed the relationship between the network of business owners and the Traquix corporation (see Extract DG 1, lines 20-28; [link opens into new window](#)).

A fourth issue concerns the electronically-mediated forms of communication salient to this e-commerce business. In this thesis, face-to-face interaction was analyzed exclusively. Many current business owners, however, have their own web pages which are used to encourage people to get involved in the business, make announcements to their business teams, provide personal narratives about their involvement in the business, and direct people to the Traquix web site where the e-shopping is actually transacted. While not analyzed in this study, these web pages are also a site for fact construction and positioning practices since business owners describe the business and position themselves relative to the business through their narratives.

Relatedly, one of the problems that both Cole and Michael formulated in their presentations was the difficulty of getting business owners to drive long distances to attend the training sessions. Cole's solution was to have smaller, more local training

meetings, which he tied to an ethic of connection and relationships (see Extract TM 1; link opens into new window). This, however, still relies on traditional face-to-face means of communication. Another possibility is to take fuller advantage of the web-based capabilities of Traquix and set up virtual training sessions and meetings where business owners would not have to drive long distances, but could meet and learn more about the business from their own home. In terms of a rhetorical discursive action approach, then, this raises the possibility of comparing and contrasting various description and positioning strategies in virtual environments versus face-to-face interaction. Further, different problems may need to be addressed in a virtual environment than in the face-to-face presentations and training sessions, which may require new conversational devices and strategies that have not yet been identified.

Ethical, Political, and Critical Issues

Previous research and commentary suggests that people can benefit from participation in multi-level marketing businesses for a variety of reasons (Pratt, 2000) and equally abundant evidence suggests that people's lives can be severely affected in a negative way (Fitzpatrick & Reynolds, 1997). Further, people's experiences of MLM organizations are rarely polarized at the extremes, but are often equivocal and ambiguous (Pratt, 2000). Based on the data for this project, there are a host of ethical, political, and critical issues that are potentially salient, ranging from the use of persuasive techniques when interacting with prospects to employing a particular type of religious or spiritual value system to justify engaging in commercial activity. The rhetorical discursive analytic approach used in this thesis treats the ethical and political issues as a matter that participants actively engage through building up and undermining various versions of events. That is, the focus of analysis is what participants orient to and make relevant in their discourse, rather than analyzing the discourse as a manifestation of a particular

theory of ethical and/or political relations. Thus, what the participants treat as ethical and political issues, and how they do this, is made the topic of analysis (Widdicombe, 1998).

For example, Cole oriented to the issue that how to contact a prospect on the phone was a 'technique' and may be potentially problematic, perhaps even an ethical issue (though the term ethics was not explicitly mentioned). Cole constructed a version of events, referencing a story of Jesus' bond with his disciples and the notion of trusting and accepting relationships, that articulated a link between the category 'technique' and the category 'philosophy' (see Extract TM 3; link opens into new window). By constructing a version where the 'technique' is an 'outgrowth of a philosophy,' Cole was able to connect the practices of promoting the business to a particular 'value system': 'he's in the business of saving 'em all through saving some' (which is consistent with the use of evangelical metaphors identified by Höpfl and Maddrell, 1996). One effect of articulating 'technique' with 'philosophy' was to legitimate the use of the 'technique,' and to render it non-problematic (Sacks, 1974; Edwards, 1991).

Alternative analytic approaches, such as critical discourse analysis (CDA), might approach the business presentations with a particular theory of social relations in order to demonstrate the (re)production of a conservative, nationalistic, bourgeois capitalist ideology (Parker, 1992; Fairclough, 1995). A critical rhetorical approach might seek to analyze the social conditions through which such discourse (for example, the conflation of religious, therapeutic, and business discourses) registers as sensical and/or even possible (Biesecker, 1997). A critical, cultural approach might decry how the purchasing power of the personal household is harnessed into private franchising efforts, representing another manifestation of the McDonald-ization of society (Ritzer, 1996) or how the discourse of enterprise is pervasive in, and serves to constitute distinctions between, both public and private spheres (du Gay, 1996). Further, many other critical questions could be raised about the potential exploitation of personal relationships and community relations in efforts to promote the business, as well as how the work of many

individual business owners are carried out to generate substantial **residual income** for a small, elite group higher up in the organization (Fitzpatrick, 1997).

These are important issues and a critical interrogation of this discourse, any discourse, is a worthwhile and necessary pursuit (Bochner, 1985; Mumby, 1997; Hepburn, 2000). As insightful and provocative as the critical approaches mentioned above are, however, they may not necessarily give insight to how participants themselves manage and grapple with these issues, based on the resources displayed in their discourse (Carbaugh, 1991). Further, such approaches may not address the subtlety and complexity of issues that the audience members and presenters manage on a turn-by-turn basis in their interactions, which is one of the aims of a rhetorical discursive action approach.

By not adopting a critical perspective, however, would it be fair to claim that a RDA analysis ends up naturalizing discourse and buying into a particular ideology? To respond to this question, consider the following example of Cole's use of evangelical discourse in the team meeting. An ideological critique, for example, might argue that Cole's use of evangelical discourse ends up reproducing a conservative Christian ideology and that by not critiquing this usage as such, a RDA analysis makes the discourse appear natural and inevitable (i.e., non-ideological), and thus implicitly buys in to the ideology. This however, would not be a fair or accurate claim. Rather, a RDA approach represents a distinct enterprise from ideological critique and would not engage the issue of whether or not Christian biblical references is or is not ideological, or to what ideology it belongs. Rather, the RDA analytic enterprise is concerned with how certain discourse is *constructed as* ideological or non-ideological and what interactional issues are managed in this constructive process (especially in terms of managing the **dilemma of stake**). For example, Cole's use of evangelical discourse is potentially problematic because the speaker could be undermined as being "preachy" or a "Jesus freak" (that is, as one who has an ideological agenda to push). How did Cole manage this issue? One way was to defer to Ron, a minister in the audience when he raised the issue of 'getting

twelve together.' Thus, it was not Cole who was the religious one, but Ron. Cole also managed the issue of doing being ordinary when he linked the process of promoting the business to a process of the apostles going to 'the four corners' and spreading the gospel. When making this link, Cole also discussed the process in terms of creating relationships and connections, terms that did not involve religion. Thus, Cole was invoking religion, without being religious. Given this example, it would be inaccurate to conclude that a RDA approach ends up naturalizing discourse or buying into whatever ideology the business presentations may represent by not adopting a critical perspective. Instead, a RDA approach investigates the issue of how participants *construct versions as* natural, ordinary, and non-ideological.

This is not to argue, however, that a RDA approach cannot usefully address certain kinds of critical concerns (Hepburn, 2000). For example, by raising awareness of the specific devices that speakers employ in promoting the business through the business plan presentations and in training sessions, current business owners and potential prospects are better prepared to resist the promotion of the business (Atkinson, 1984). Further, by understanding the pervasively rhetorical element of all discourse, especially in the business presentations, people can become more reflectively aware of the ideological versions that are being built up and undermined (Billig, 1988). Thus, people could reflect on and interrogate what version of events is being promoted or privileged and what versions are being undermined. Those who want to resist the business presentations, for example, can give voice to those versions that are undermined (as people already do when descriptions of the business as a "pyramid scheme" are made; Wood & Cox, 1993).

Of course, by highlighting the devices used to build up a certain version of events while undermining less preferred versions, there is a danger of making it easier for presenters to continue, or even refine this practice (Atkinson, 1984). However, it would be less responsible to not engage the discourse, thereby avoiding the issue entirely. One

goal of this thesis is to raise people's awareness of the practices and devices used in business plan presentations and training sessions in hopes that people will invent new ways to engage in these activities in an ethical and socially responsible manner (Swartz, 1997). However, what constitutes ethical activity and social responsibility is up for grabs and negotiated by rhetorically building up versions and undermining others, as Cole displayed in the team meeting. By employing a rhetorical discursive action approach, analysts and practitioners can investigate how these important critical issues are dealt with by participants as part of the business presentations and training sessions themselves.²

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APPENDIX
GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMS

This glossary provides definitions and explanations of selected terms, concepts, and phrases relevant to the business presentations, and principles of fact construction, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. While none of the definitions should be taken as comprehensive treatments, original and/or secondary sources are provided where interested readers can find more detailed information. For an excellent introduction to conversation analysis and fact construction, read Ian Hutchby and Robin Wooffitt's (1996) book entitled Conversation Analysis: Principles, Practices, and Applications (Cambridge: Polity Press). The definitions of terms and concepts in this glossary are selective, highly glossed, and refer to their use in this electronic thesis.

Accounts	Interpretive repertoire
Action-oriented	Manage
Adjacency pair	Makes relevant, Orients to
Aligned	Performative
Cash-flow quadrant	Positioning practices
Candidate issues	Preference
Conversation analysis	Pre-sequence
Deviant case	Puzzle-pass-resolution sequence
Dilemma of stake	Receipt
Displays	Regenerative income, Residual income
Downgrade	Repair
Extreme case formulation	Repeat receipt
Fact construction	Repertoire, Interpretive repertoire
Fishing	Rhetoric
Footing	Script formulation

Formulation	Stake, Stake management
Identity	Transition relevance place
Insertion sequence	Turn
Interaction	Upgrade
Interactional slot	Voice

Accounts, accountability

Buttny (1993) argues that communication and accountability mutually implicate one another because humans are treated as responsible to others when they make accounts about their own and others' actions. That is, communication accounts (e.g., stories, excuses, justifications, etc.) are offered to hold someone or oneself responsible for actions or to absolve someone or oneself of this responsibility. Related to the notion of accountability is a concern for normativity. Following from Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodological view that rather than analyzing how norms become internalized and then reproduced or deviated from, the focus should shift to study the methods people use (thus ethno-method-ology) to invoke, challenge, and transform norms in the process of accounting for their own and others' actions. For more information, see Buttny (1993) and Antaki (1994).

Action-oriented. See **performative**.

Adjacency pair

Adjacency pairs are sequences of interaction that tend to occur in specific patterns. For example, questions tend to precede answers; acceptances or rejections tend to follow invitations, etc.

Aligned, or alignment

Alignment refers to intersubjectivity and the relationship established between people (as closer or more distant). To say that a person aligns themselves with another could, among other things, mean that their communication puts them closer to another, or in agreement with a person (see Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1996). See also "positioning

practices." Potter (1996) uses alignment to refer to how speakers present a factual account as their own or distance themselves from it. See also "footing."

Cash-flow quadrant

This refers to a book entitled "Cash Flow Quadrant: Rich Dad's Guide to Financial Freedom" written by Robert T. Kiyosaki, Jim Ward, and Sharon L. Lechter. In the book, Kiyosaki describes a quadrant of four ways to generate cash flow: having a job, being self-employed, earning money from investments, and owning one's own business.

Candidate (issues, answers, etc.)

The use of "candidate" here refers to one among a range of possibilities. For example, a "candidate response" to an invitation could be an enthusiastic acceptance, a hesitant acceptance, and drawn-out rejection, a curt rejection, a slap in the face, etc. Speakers may provide possible, or candidate, responses to a question, for example, as a way to signal what type of response is appropriate. See Antaki & Widdicombe (1998) for more details.

Conversation analysis, CA

Conversation analysis (or, CA), which emerges out of Harvey Sack's work in the discipline of sociology in the late 1960s and early 1970s, addresses questions about how everyday talk is organized, how people coordinate their talk in interaction, and what is the relationship between talk and social processes more broadly defined. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998), the aim of CA is "to reveal the tacit, organized reasoning procedures which inform the production of naturally occurring talk [as distinct from, for example, talk generated in a laboratory or other contrived context]. The way in which in which utterances are designed is informed by organized procedures, methods, and resources which are tied to the contexts in which they are produced, and which are available to participants by virtue of their membership in a natural language community" (p. 1).

Deviant case

Deviant cases, or deviant case analysis, is a practice associated with **conversation analysis** and refers to a process of finding specific examples of interaction that deviate from a pattern of regularities that have thus far been observed in a range of single examples (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). Deviant cases provide an opportunity to refine, develop, and contest existing generalizations made about specific conversational phenomena. See also Jacobs (1988) for more information).

Dilemma of stake

According to Potter (1996) the dilemma of stake refers to the fact that anything "a person (or group) says or does may be discounted a product of stake or interest" (p. 110). It is important to understand that the focus is not on whether or not people actually have psychological interests or desires, but that people *treat one another as having* interests, ambitions, desires, investments, etc. See **stake, stake management** below for more information.

Displays

The term "displays" is often used in conversation analytic circles to refer to something that is made publicly available, and in contrast to intentions, cognitions, or anything else that purportedly may be going on inside someone's head. The term further suggests that there is no way to determine what is "actually" going on (for example, in terms of intentions or in terms of cognitive processes), but that analysts and participants in interaction us rely on what can be seen, heard, etc. and make inferences based on this empirical observation. For example, rather than saying a speaker is sad, a conversation analyst would state that a person displays sadness (through facial expressions, tone of voice, rate of speech, what is or isn't said. etc.). See Antaki & Widdicombe (1998) for more details.

Extreme case formulation

Extreme case formulations (ECFs) were discussed in Pomerantz (1986) and relate to how people provide warrants for claims they made. ECFs are ways of referring to a

person, object, event, etc. by making reference to its maximal or minimum properties or characteristics. For example, "everyone," "never," "always," "totally," "infinitesimal," etc. According to the summary provided by Hutchby & Wooffitt (1996, pp. 209-211), extreme case formulations could be used to defend against possible challenges to a complaint or accusation a speaker is making; when attributing a cause to an object or person; may be used to show how an action or situation is morally right or wrong. They argue that Pomerantz's work is important because it shows how persuasion underpins routine conversational activities such as complaining, justifying, accusing, etc.; it highlights the how persuasion can be a very subtle process; and highlights the relationship between language use and how events in the world are described.

Fact construction

Fact construction refers to how versions of the world are assembled together and stabilized as factual and independent of the discourse producer, and often to manage issues of "stake" (Potter, 1996). The process of fact construction is "one of attempting to reify descriptions as solid and literal" and the opposite process of destruction is to "ironize descriptions as partial, interested, or defective in some other way" (pp. 112-113). See also "stake management."

Fishing

Fishing for information (or, for example, a compliment) refers to indirect ways of requesting information, in contrast to direct, straightforward ways of asking a question, for example. Pomerantz (1980) argued that people can "fish" for information by providing a factual account from the speaker's perspective (for example, "I think I might go to the party tonight"), thus "inviting" the other person to provide the sought-after information (for example, "Oh really. I'm going too). Thus, by telling their side of the events (or "my side" tellings), the recipient is put in a position to reciprocate what her or his plans are. See also Hutchby & Wooffitt (1996, pp. 126-127).

Footing

The concept of footing was developed by Erving Goffman (1979, 1981). Goffman describe roles for speakers (principal, author, and animator) and listeners (addressed recipient, over-hearer, and eavesdropper) in interactions. Potter (1996) illustrates the differences among these roles with the example of a shy boy who wants to ask a girl out on a date. The shy boy may get a friend to think of some words to represent his feelings and another friend to pass these words along to the girl. The principal refers to the shy boy (the person whose position is being represented), the author refers to the first friend who writes the words, and the animator (the second friend who tells the girl). In terms of the listening roles, the girl is the addressed recipient, her friends that might be with her would be the over-hearer, and there might be an eavesdropper who is discreetly listening in from a nearby table. These distinct roles imply different levels of accountability. For example, the animator is just someone who is just "passing things along" and the addressed recipient is in a position to respond to the animator's words. See Potter (1996, p. 143) and Clayman (1992) for his discussion of how neutrality is achieved in news interviews (for example, by the interviewer quoting, or animating, someone else's words or the perspective of a generalized other in a potentially sensitive or contentious situation with an interviewee) and Levinson (1988) for his systematic rendering of Goffman's work. See Edwards & Potter (1992, p. 38) where they problematize the notion that people are the original authors of their own talk by reference to the rhetorical commonplaces of accounting (Billig, 1992) and Derrida's deconstruction of speech act theory (Derrida, 1977a,b).

Formulation

A formulation is a summary statement or gloss on a longer, more complex version. A formulation selects out and highlights only certain aspects of an earlier version, thus provides the "gist" of what someone is saying. See Hutchby & Wooffitt (1996, pp. 152-153) for more details.

Identity

In this thesis, identity is viewed as a categorical resource that is drawn upon and made relevant by participants to do various actions. That is, identity (e.g., as a specific gender, occupation, race, communicator role, etc.) can be seen as a social category that people use in their talk, on particular occasions, to do some interactional business (such as blame, justify, compliment, etc.). See Antaki & Widdicombe (1998) for more details.

Insertion sequence

Insertion sequences are sequences that occur in between **adjacency pairs** (see above) such as question-answer sequences. In the excerpt below, Rick asks a question (line), but Jordan does not answer it, at least not right away. Instead, she asks, or inserts, a question of her own. In this case, Jordan does not ignore Rick's question, but defers it until more relevant information is obtained. Jordan treats Rick's reply in line 3 as providing sufficient information, and completes the second part of the question-answer adjacency pair that started in line 1. See Hutchby, 1998 for more information.

1 Rick: Hey are you busy tonight?

2 Jordan: Why do you ask?

3 Rick: Well I was wondering if you wanted to go to a party?

4 Jordan: Oh, yeah I'm free.

Interaction

Interaction refers to the management, negotiation, and coordination of relatively orderly and meaningful communication between cultural members.

Interactional slot or space

An interactional slot or space refers to the turn-taking structure in interaction. When a person poses a question, a slot is provided for a person to provide an answer; when a person makes an invitation, a slot is provided for an acceptance or rejection. (The question-answer and invitation-acceptance/rejection sequences are also known as "adjacency pairs"). A speaker can also create an interactional slot by posing a "rhetorical question" or through a **puzzle-pass-resolution sequence** (see below). To say that a

speaker creates an interactional slot or space does not imply that speakers have unbounded agency. That is, the structure of turn-taking and creation of slots for interaction is a structural, normative feature of interaction that participants orient to. However, participants may be aware of this structural, normative feature and exploit it strategically, thus "creating" an interactional space by asking a particular kind of question, for example. See also **Turn**

Interpretive repertoire

According to Potter (1996), interpretative or interpretive repertoires are "systematically related sets of terms, often used with stylistic and grammatical coherence, and often organized around one or more central metaphors" (p. 116). A classic study in this area is Gilbert & Mulkey (1984) which argued that scientists (specifically, biochemists who were studying a process known as oxidative phosphorylation) can describe their activities in terms of an "empiricist repertoire" and a "contingent repertoire." In the empiricist repertoire (often found at conferences, in published materials, etc.) scientists communicated in general, distant terms, focusing on empirical data and not subjective beliefs and perceptions, which suggested objectivity and neutrality. In contrast, the "contingent repertoire" refers to the subjective, personal features such as interests, desires, beliefs, etc. This repertoire was often invoked to describe other scientist's work and to account for inconsistencies between one scientist's research and another scientist's research. Gilbert and Mulkey argued that scientist's had both repertoires available to them, but the use of one repertoire carries particular implications.

Manage, management

The term manage or management (as in "a speaker is managing her or his identity") is best understood as a metaphor that suggests a person is engaging active, coordinated conversational work. This metaphor is used in contrast to a conduit view of talk that sees communication as simply the exchange of information or messages from

one person to another. The emphasis on active, coordination does not suggest that a communicator is necessarily consciously aware of what he or she may be doing.

Orients to, makes relevant

The phrase "orients to" is used in conversation analytic circles to refer to how a speaker in an interaction treats or acts toward someone or something. There are a range of plausible ways of acting or treating someone (for example, as a woman, a mother, a partner, a teacher, an American, etc.), but one speaker may treat, or orient to, another in a certain way on a particular occasion. Thus, what speakers orient to is what is "made relevant" in the interaction as far as the participants are concerned. Alternatively, a person could "orient to" what another just said as a question, a joke, a tease, something to get angry about, etc. See Antaki & Widdicombe (1998) for more details.

Performative, action-oriented

The term performative, or action-oriented, as it used in this thesis suggests that talk performs certain jobs or actions, such as indicating affection, managing identity, or proposing certain positions and denying counter positions (See Hopper & Drummond, 1990; Shotter, 1993 for more details).

Positioning practice(s), strategies

Positioning practices refer to ways that people position themselves in relation to others, events, their own ideas, etc. How people position themselves has implications for what inferences can be drawn. For example, when making an academic presentation, a person can position themselves closer to their ideas by saying how much time and commitment they have invested in thinking about a particular issue. Alternatively, they can say that they have just started thinking about this issue last week. By positioning themselves closer to their ideas, the audience can draw the inference, among many others, that the person may have expertise in a particular area and can ask more complicated or challenging question in comparison to someone who has just thought about the idea for a shorter amount of time. People could also position themselves further or closer in terms

of their relationship to someone, for example, as "a guy I know," "a business partner," or "a friend." All three may be more or less accurate, but each makes certain inferences available (for example, by describing someone as a "friend," this makes a person relationship more relevant than a "business partner" might). See Tracy (1997) and Tracy & Anderson (1999) for more details. See also "alignment." Positioning practices could also include Goffman's (1981) work on "footing" and subsequent extensions of this work (Atkinson, 1992; Bergmann, 1992; Potter, 1996; see "footing").

Preference, dispreference

The concept of (dis)preference does not refer to a person's psychological inclination or attitude toward a behavior, but is used to designate systematic patterns and variations in how conversational turns are produced (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1996, p. 66). Thus, the preferred response to a question is an answer, though a question does not determine an answer will be provided (for example, the person may ignore the question, ask another question before answering the other person's question, etc.). The structurally preferred response to an invitation is an acceptance, rather than a rejection (or, dispreferred response). This explains why when we acceptances are often made quickly and without much interactional trouble while rejections are often couched in politeness strategies and after an account is provided for why the person is rejecting or is not able to accept the invitation. Thus, preference structure is not deterministic, but normative. See Hutchby & Wooffit (1996) for more details.

Pre-sequences

Pre-sequences are orderly sequence of turns that precede and make relevant a subsequent sequence (see Hutchby, 1998 for more details). For example, lines 1-2 represent a pre-sequence since the Rick asks an initial question (line 1) before he asks a subsequent question (line 3). If Jordan had indicated that she was busy (line 2), then Rick might not have invited her to a party (line 3).

1 Rick: Hey are you busy tonight?

2 Jordan: Don't have any plans yet

3 Rick: 'wanna go to a party?

4 Jordan: Sure

Puzzle-pass-resolution sequence

The puzzle-pass-resolution sequence was identified in Schenkein (1978). It describes a common sequence of conversational turns where a speaker makes a statement that is treated by the next speaker as puzzling, confusing, or a mystery of some kind. The second speaker "passes" the conversational ball back to the first speaker to provide an explanation, clarification or resolution of the puzzle. For example:

1 A: What are you doing tonight?

2 B: Just spending time with my good friend Jim. (puzzle)

3 A: Jim? (a pass, which treats B's turn in line 2 as a puzzle)

4 B: You know, Jim Beam. (resolution)

5 A: Oh, right. (which treats B's turn in line 4 as resolution to the puzzle, which makes this turn a **receipt** of the resolution)

Receipt

A receipt is a way of showing, displaying, acknowledging, or otherwise being responsive to a previous conversational turn. For example, one speaker might provide a receipt (such as "um hmm," "yes," "I know," etc.) to indicate they heard or received information that another speaker provided. See example of a receipt in the "puzzle-pass-resolution sequence." See also **repeat receipt**

Regenerative income, residual income

Regenerative income is a phrase used in the business presentations to refer to incoming cash flow without providing extra effort or work to bring in the income. For example, investments in the stock market provide regenerative income in the form of dividends or interest payments.

Repair

The concept of repair covers a wide range of phenomena in conversation analytic circles. This might include what seem to be errors in turn-taking procedures and overlapping talk (that is, who speaks next and when), as well as corrections in terms of substantive, content issues of what someone has just said (for example, by substituting a word or phrase with another). Further, speakers may repair, fix, correct, re-word their own turn, or initiate a repair in someone else's turn. See Hutchby and Wooffitt (1996, pp. 56-69) and Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks (1987) for more details.

Repeat receipt

Repeat receipts were identified the moderation of focus groups (Puchta, 1999). Consider the following hypothetical scenario from a marketing focus group. In the hypothetical extract below, Mod stands for the focus group moderator, and P stands for focus group participants.

1 M: So how do you feel about this advertisement? How does it make you feel?

2 P1: I thought it was kind of silly.

3 M: Um hmm, OK. (receipt) Anyone else?

4 P2: It made me feel happy.

5 M: Happy, good. (Repeat receipt)

The moderator provides a receipt to the first recipient, which acknowledges that the moderator heard the participant's contribution and provided a repeat receipt to the second participant (that is, the moderator repeated a portion or all of the participants' turn in the moderator's turn). Puchta argued that repeat receipts are used to acknowledge an audience member's contribution and to signal to the audience a particular answer is appropriate and valued.

Repertoire (see Interpretive repertoire)

Rhetoric, rhetorical features of talk

While the study of rhetoric has a distinguished history in the field of communication studies and traces its lineage back to Ancient Greece, in this thesis,

rhetoric refers to how versions of self, other, events, the world, etc. are built up and undermined in relation to alternative, rival versions (Billig, 1987; Potter, 1996). In terms of the rhetorical features of talk, I mean that talk presents a particular view or version of the world, "which others can accept, challenge, reject, or assimilate" (see Duck, 1994, p. 12). For more information, see Bizzell & Herzberg, 1990.

Script formulation

This refers to a process of describing a person or events in a routine, predictable, patterned, or repetitive way. This concept suggests that there is no completely objective, neutral way to describe people or events, and that they could be described patterned and routine or unplanned and spontaneous. Further, certain inferences can be drawn from descriptions of situations as an instance of a general pattern (for example, there is just how things are and have been), or as an anomaly or an exception (for example, this is something that we should pay attention to since it is outside of the norm). See Edwards, 1997, pp. 144-149 for more information.

Stake, stake management

Stake refers to the relationship between one's claims and one's interests or motivations in producing that claim. Potter (1996) has identified a number of ways that people inoculate themselves from their stake or investment in a situation. One is stake confession, which is making explicit one's intentions, desires, or interests which suggests they recognize their interests in themselves and can stand outside of them. Another is by producing indifference or uncertainty about a claim, which suggests that have limited stake, or commitment, to their position on a matter (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, pp. 220-221). See also **dilemma of stake** above.

Transition relevance place

Transition relevance places (TRPs) refer, in general, to the turn-taking structure of conversations and, in particular, to places where a transition from one speaker's turn to another is made relevant. The term "made relevant" (see above) is used to highlight that it

is the participants themselves in an interaction who orient to when it is normatively (in)appropriate for a speaker to complete a turn and for the next speaker to begin the turn (for example, if speaker B starts to talk before Speaker A is finished, then Speaker A might say something along the lines of "Hey, I wasn't finished yet. Don't interrupt me." See Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1978) and Hutchby & Wooffitt (1996, pp. 48-49) for more details.

Turn

A turn is a basic unit of analysis in conversation analysis, and in contrast to, among other things, books, stanzas, sentences, words, phonemes, etc. Conversation analysts argue that interaction is best understood and analyzed as a sequence of turns. One turn might involve a question, an answer, a complaint, etc. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt (1996), the "next turn is the place where speakers display their understanding of the prior turn's possible completion" (p. 38). In addition to the sequential understanding of where turns start and stop, there is also a normative and inferential component to turns. That is, the "next turn" reveals how the speaker understood the content and implications of the prior turn. See pp. 38-39 for more details.

Upgrade/downgrade

Upgrade or downgrade refers to raising (maximizing) or lowering (minimizing) the intensity, severity, strength, etc. of a description or assessment. For example, in the hypothetical interaction below, B follows A's initial assessment of the weather by "upgrading" it:

1 A: It's a nice day today (initial assessment)

2 B: Yes, it's gorgeous! (upgrade of initial assessment)

See Potter (1996) for more details.

Voice, voicing, giving voice

Hutchby and Wooffitt (1996, pp. 225-228) argue that speakers may present information in such a way that it is heard as reported talk, or talk that someone else may

have said (see "footing" and Goffman's distinctions between principals, authors, and animators). They go on to argue that speakers may engage in "active voicing" which is when speakers design utterances to be heard *as if* the utterances were said at the time. Active voicing, they argue, is often used to "warrant the factual status of claims and undermine the possibility of sceptical [sic] responses."

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