

Have You Placed Your Order?

The fact is, yes, you have. Every time you play you are mentally placing an order, and whatever you get as a *result* is a direct reflection of what you ordered, whether you are aware of it or not. *Everything we do is the result of a thought.* In terms of trumpet playing (or playing any instrument for that matter), our product, or *result*, is a function of our thinking. This sounds fairly simple so far, and it is, but how well do we employ this truth in our daily practice and in performance?

The premise of this article is that *the very most powerful tool we have is our imagination of the result.*

Don't get me wrong - all of the physical (kinesthetic) responses we work for years to develop are absolutely necessary. We must have a well developed embouchure and the air that goes with it that (ideally) allows us to play anything we want to, with a great sound, in any register, at any dynamic level, for a long period of time. We must have the technical proficiency and flexibility to negotiate whatever challenges the music calls for. In addition to these physical things, we must also be good readers, have excellent intonation, and have a strong sense of musicality. Furthermore, we must also be able to handle the stress of performance and be able to work well with others in a variety of conditions.

That gets to be a lot of things to control - but there *is* a way to do it. As stated earlier, everything we do is the result of a thought. So, what if we could come up with the "one thought" that causes all of these complicated elements of trumpet playing to line up *just so*, with a great degree of efficiency?

What I am about to explain must be employed every time we take the horn out of the case. It must be put into use in the practice room *and* in the concert hall or recording studio. Whether we are working on long tones, a technically difficult passage, a lyrical song, high register, sight reading, improvisation, excerpts, you name it - we must have in our imagination an extremely well-defined concept of what it is we are striving to sound like - what I call "the result." This imagination of the result must be in the context of the music and must include the elements of timbre, volume, presence, pitch, time, attitude, and any other musical consideration that is appropriate. With practice, it is possible to imagine these elements in an entirety, which results in the concept of the "one thought." At that point, trumpet playing becomes much simplified - now we simply "order" the result in our imagination and blow through that which we imagine.

It is important to understand that although this concept is simple, for most of us it is not easy to master. It takes a lot of practice and consistent application to learn the mental/aural imagery skills and to learn to trust that it works. It does work beautifully, yet our tendency often is to want to be in control of all of our mechanical workings, even though we simply are not equipped to do that efficiently. Put more bluntly, “you can’t do it that way.” Those that *think* they can control all of their kinesthetic responses, when playing well, are really in the intuitive mode described above and may not even realize it. Most others never play at a really high level, they simply spin their wheels playing at a mediocre level and dealing with ongoing “hit or miss” results.

If you want to experience a great degree of mental and physical freedom as a player, and at a higher level than ever before, learn to “place your order” for that excellent *result* every time the horn is out of the case. When the mind is totally occupied with that “one thought,” you are free to come the closest you can to your potential.

Develop the ability to *imagine the result* and then really plug into this technique. Enjoy!

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