

## All you need to know about speaking in public – Successfully!

**S**peaking in public is a joy to some and a dread for others. Most of us are nervous and very few of us can claim that they are entirely without some concerns about the audience, their material and how they will be received.

Here are the top ten tips for public speakers that will ensure a polished competent performance, leaving your audience informed, entertained and wanting more!

### 1 Speaking in public is a exercise in selling

**Selling?** What has that got to do with a serious lecture on solemn topics? Everything! Presentations are about 'selling' an idea, a concept, a theory, a model or a notion. Persuading people about your ideas, your research, your *raison-d'être* is a selling job. Making people *buy-in* to what you are talking

about is the key position to take before you start. Ask yourself the question; 'How will I make people *buy-in* to what I'm talking about?' That thought helps you to clarify how you will go about your presentation. Think of your presentation as a selling exercise.

### 2 Enjoy being nervous

**Enjoy** being nervous, are you crazy? Let's start at the beginning. Nervous and confidence go together. You've been invited to speak because you know something! For that moment you are the expert. You've done the research, know your stuff and you are the expert. The audience will want to listen to you. And, do you know what? They will be praying you will do well. Audiences turn up

wanting a good speaker and you wont let them down.

Nervous? Well, that's good. There isn't a public performer in the world who doesn't get a bit nervous. It is an energy that you will be able to channel into your presentation. Nervousness gives you the edge, the adrenalin gives you the vitality and the tenseness you feel makes you alert. Enjoy being nervous – it's a good thing!

### 3 Preparation

**The** more you prepare, the more comfortable you will be, the more comfortable you are the better your performance. How to prepare? Remember the tip about seeing a presentation as a selling exercise? That's the secret of preparation.

If you are selling something, ask yourself, 'what does the audience want to buy'? In other words; put yourself in the place of the person sitting in the fifth row of the audience. Why are they there? What do they want to learn from you?

What are their key deliverables? Figure that out and that will guide your preparation.

Don't start with a blank PowerPoint screen – start with a blank piece of paper and write down the sentinel points, your key aims and how you will sell them to the audience. During the time leading up to the presentation, collect material. Look out for data, information, quotes and pictures you can scan-in and use to illustrate your points.

### 4 Content

**First**, aim to get the audience's attention. Tell them something to lock 'em in; "Ladies and gentlemen, in the next 30 minutes I'm going to explain why my organisation is going to make a pivotal contribution to the NHS and make a significant input to the running of your organisation".

Use an 'extraordinary' fact, a quote, reference, a piece of data or an historical anecdote.

Where possible tell stories about real people and real organisations.

The rest is easy. You will need an opening a message and a close. You must: present your facts, make the case and appeal for action; or show something is not right, show how to put it right and ask for help in the doing. Use one message at a time.

End with a 'call to arms'. Appeal for action; 'contact me at email@someplace'. End with a pertinent quote. End, memorably.

## 5 Work the audience.

Audiences find it difficult to pay attention for more than 20 minutes. Every 10 minutes, try and take the audience away from the subject and bring them back. This regains their attention.

The all time top way of keeping an audience spell-bound is enthusiasm.....

Use a real life story or an anecdote.

The all time top way of keeping an audience spell-bound is enthusiasm – yours and lots of it!

## 6 PowerPoint!

**At** the Pentagon, the US military banned the use of PowerPoint and made presenters SPEAK! Ouch! Life without PowerPoint – you cannot be serious!

Well, seriously, however, although PowerPoint is now the industry standard for making presentations, remember; it is not there as a prompt for you; to put your script on the screen, or to display a whole load of text that the audience won't read.

All visual aids are just that – AIDS.

*Make sure you do these five things – without fail, every time, all the time:*

- Make sure you have a back-up of your presentation. Memory sticks are best, many slim-line lap-tops don't have CD drives.
  - Find out about the 'Pack and Go' option in PowerPoint, it is an encapsulated version

of PowerPoint that will make sure you can use your presentation – anywhere.

- Arrive early – check the equipment works.
- If you have sent your presentation along, in advance, *still* arrive early and make sure it is loaded and works to your satisfaction (and *still* carry a spare on a memory stick).
- Think about what you would do if the system fails.....arh!

**What would you do if PowerPoint failed – write your contingency plan here:**

## 7 What to wear?

**One** line answer. If you think you look good, you'll perform better – end of story.

Longer answer, wear what you'd wear, every day, to work. That defines you. Better still, wear what

you'd wear for an interview for your next job (You never know who is in the audience!)

Oh, and wherever appropriate – wear a smile!

## 8 Delivery

The phrase 'public speaking' is a bit of a myth. You need to think about 'audience speaking'. Grand gestures and a 'big-voice' might be right for Trafalgar Square – but not quite right for a workshop in a hotel in Huddersfield.

Try and make eye contact with the audience. If it is a big audience, speak to the back row and not the front. If you can deliver your presentation away from a lectern, do so but don't pace up and down.

### *Don't*

- Stand on one leg (nervous speakers often do!)
- Walk up and down
- Turn your back to the audience to read your own slides

Moving around to give emphasis, or to change position between one point and the next is OK. But, don't pace. It irritates the audience – and you need all the friends you can get!

If you speak from behind a lectern be sure to check there is at least one third of you body height clearly visible from all parts of the room. If you're short, stand on your brief case! Never speak from behind a table –

try and stand to one-side. And, never speak sitting down.

## 9 Keep to time

**Never**, never, never over-run. Take off your wrist watch and put it in your eye-line to make sure you know where you are. And, rehearse your presentations to be confident that you can run to time.

Check you have enough time before you accept the invitation to speak. Sort it out before hand.

## 10 Don't

- **Don't** use jokes (unless you are a natural stand-up comedian). This doesn't mean you can't be humorous, but don't tell jokes – anecdotes are fine.
- **Don't** use jargon – even to an audience of professionals.
- **Don't** blind the audience with science, statistics or data.
- **Don't** apologise for standing in for someone, for being unprepared (just don't turn up and speak) or for not being an expert – you can be authoritative and having an opinion, without being an expert.

### And, if you can do this- you've cracked it:

- Gain the audience's acceptance – "I'm here today to share a few ideas in the hope that you might agree and find them useful".
- Smile – everyone relaxes with a smile
- Tell the audience how long you will speak for and what you are aiming to do
- Try and make a speech like a conversation – with colour and up's and down's in the rhythm of delivery
- Use eye contact to draw the audience in
- Always face the audience
- Synchronise what you say with your body language
- Don't forget the power of silence
- Be ENTHUSIASTIC!

### Questions from the audience? Great!

**Always** make it clear that you will take questions at the *end* of the presentation – time permitting. Otherwise you could be peppered with questions though-out, then you might forget where you are up to and over run your time.

Don't know the answer? No problem. Confess immediately and promise to get back to the questioner with the answer and ask for contact

details to be passed to you afterwards. Or, say; 'It's a good question – I don't know the answer to it – is there any on in the audience that might have a view?'

Don't argue with a questioner, keep smiling and stay in charge!



Being able to speak to an audience is a huge gift, defines leaders and creates magic. It is not a mystery and is not a secret. You can do it! Know your stuff, be enthusiastic, share your vision and understand what the audience want – that's all there is to it! Good luck!

Find out about personal executive coaching – for better public speaking and delivering presentations that go 'PoW'  
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