



Public Speaking

Quick Tips & Tactics for Enterprising Entrepreneurs

Public Speaking

Engaging your audience

Public speaking can be scary. 75% of the population is thought to have a fear of public speaking, making it one of the most common phobias. It can stop many people from sharing their views and achieving goals, but like all fears, it can be conquered.

Effectively communicating means that before you deliver a message, you need to know why the audience should care. If you don't know why they are there, then they won't be able to figure it out either. If they can't figure it out then they are going to be wondering when you're going to stop talking. That's no fun for anyone.

If you've ever been entranced by a message that you would normally find tedious, ask yourself why. Years ago millions of viewers would tune into Seinfeld episodes week after week and then talk about it at work, yet it was a show about nothing. Jerry Seinfeld joked about the fact that the show had no real premise and the characters weren't particularly likeable, yet it was a complete success. The trick was the delivery. It was funny, preposterous and sometimes shocking. It always got your attention. Be intentional when you speak, care about what you are saying and think about what your audience needs and you will engage them.

Be Honest

Being honest is also critical to success. When you lie or misrepresent the facts, you send clues. Unless you're a professional liar or award-winning actor your body will give you away. Your speech may slow, and have more pauses. Your face may flush; you may have a nervous reaction or stutter. Even if your audience isn't filled with police detectives, your manner will make the audience uncomfortable. What's more, lying about one element of your presentation can undermine your entire presentation if people realize what you've done. Lying also discredits you and your brand.

Be Helpful & Responsive

If your audience has questions, help them to ask; don't put them on the spot or ridicule them if the answer seems obvious. Let them ask questions in the middle of your presentation, that's

how engagement works.

- Always be polite.
- Avoid racy language or any comments that are derogatory to a specific group.
- A sense of humour is great since it will help you and your audience to relax, but it shouldn't come at someone else's expense.

Be patient

Speed talking through your presentation will ensure that your message is unclear. Speak slowly and enunciate clearly.

Speaking Tips

- Get the attention right off the bat. Start with a funny story, a shocking statistic, a current event that is related to your topic, or a provocative question.
- Give them the reasons why they should listen.
- Break your argument into clear segments (three is the magic number in communications but if necessary you can add more but not much more).
- The body of your speech (or the middle) is where you will deliver your main messages or information.
- Give your audience an opportunity to ask questions.
- Watch the time you have been given and stay within your limits.
- End by briefly summarizing what you've said to ensure your messages have been delivered.

Getting the Delivery Right

When you are writing your speech or presentation, make sure the comprehension level of your language is appropriate to the audience. It is easy to slip into jargon or language that you are familiar with, but resist the urge. Unless you know that all or most of the audience is intimate with your subject matter, keep your language plain.

Practice

Practice your speech or presentation; this will help you to sound more natural when you are delivering it, and minor interruptions like questions are less likely to throw you off. If you are using slides, avoid reading every word. It will make you sound like a robot and begs the question, why does the audience need you, if all you're going to do is read? Let the slides reinforce your key messages; you should be delivering the colour commentary. In other words, tell stories or provide examples that make your facts come alive.

Be Creative

Look for ways to make your presentation interesting; provide a new perspective or approach. Try to think of a new way of delivering all of your information, even if you can't always do this successfully, the act of trying will keep your content interesting.

Be confident

As long as you are presenting, you are the expert. If you're not sure how to sound confident, then keep in mind that doing things like dropping your pitch at the end of a sentence is often associated with certainty and dominance. On a related note, don't draw attention to your mistakes. Avoid repeating sentences. Keep in mind that this is a performance, delivering a good speech usually involves some acting - act confident, even if you aren't.

- Change the pace and tone of your speech. When you don't vary your tone then you drone.
- Don't mumble or whisper. Speak to the person furthest away from you, that way you ensure everyone can hear.

Listen

Pay attention to the body language of your audience. Are they asleep? Engaged? Bored? If they are repeatedly looking at their watches or twitching in their seats that's a hint for you to engage them with a question or speed up the process. If someone provides you with additional information during a speech, accept it and thank the audience member for their contribution. If they are adding information, then they are paying attention.

Tips on Dealing with Difficult Situations

Although it doesn't happen often, every once in a while you will come across someone who wants to challenge the authority of the speaker. They may have an agenda of their own and are looking for a forum. They may simply be cranky. Whatever the reason for the interruption, keep these tips in mind.

Challenge a negative premise. The world isn't always doom and gloom and worst-case scenarios are interesting, but not the only eventuality. Most speakers don't want to pull their audience into a negative place, manage the negative commentary.

- Don't repeat baiting words. Use your own words or risk being quoted later with words you never intended to utter.
- Be calm yet assertive.
- Don't speak on behalf of others.
- Remember your brand, any comment you make will be recalled as being organizational.
- Give a reason why you can't answer a question and move on.
- Don't guess or speculate.
- Break up multi-part questions in your answer.

Tips on Managing Nerves

All public speakers experience nerves at some point, even the most experienced. Avoid doing things that will exacerbate or enhance your nervousness.

- Don't drink too much coffee or caffeinated pop just before speaking.
- Be prepared for your presentation materials.

- Avoid drinking alcohol before a speech.
- Do deep breathing exercises (breath from your belly), shoulder rolls and neck stretches all help you to physically relax.
- Keep your food intake to simple non-fatty meals.
- Avoid taking medication that will make you drowsy.
- Visualize yourself speaking; imagine yourself confident and assured.
- Be yourself, be genuine and natural.
- Realize that people want you to succeed; they want a good presentation as well.
- Forget about yourself; people want to hear your message to focus on it, not yourself.
- Try to think ahead of all possible questions you may be asked.
- Bring cheat notes for yourself in case your mind goes blank.