

STAND UP AND



How to drive your training into professional speaking.

Many of us hold a nationally recognised qualification, a valid driver's licence, proving we are competent behind the wheel of a car. But what you can't do with this licence is drive a bus or ten ton truck. It's still driving, but there would be a different bag of tricks and set of skills to acquire depending on the individual.

Many trainers are competent public speakers, and hold nationally recognised qualifications from the training sector. Like learning to drive a bus though, stepping up on the platform of professional speaking, may require a different bag of tricks. For example, consider the shorter time span, amount of content required, microphones, different delivery skills and the attendees' level of knowledge about your topic and you get my gist.

So before you start driving, here are a couple of ideas to consider.

Pre-Event

As with any training session, you want to be organised, but a speaking spot will usually include an emcee. Be responsible for your branding with an introduction that positions you professionally. Make sure the emcee or organiser has it in plenty of time and always bring a spare with you. (For more on writing a good introduction see <http://www.emcee.com.au/freearticles.htm>)

Always use a microphone, it will give you credibility, control and help to connect you with the audience. (And save your voice in the long run). For your own comfort, do a sound check as early as possible to avoid any last minute hitches.

As an emcee, I often notice speakers who leave their notes or props on the lectern, until it is their turn to speak. Big mistake! Once they are whisked away by the emcee or presenter before you, you will look and feel the idiot as you scramble to track them down.

Wow Open

Anyone can say G'day, Good afternoon, hello, how are you. (And the emcee probably already has!). Tell them something they don't know! In a speaking spot, you may only have 30-60 minutes in total and the first and last 30 seconds have the most impact. A US humourist, Tim Gard, once told me, open with a wow, solve their problems, close with a wow.

You need to engage your listeners quickly by opening with a bold statement, short story/case study, quote or amazing statistic relevant to your topic. (And by the way, we had no idea you were nervous...so don't tell us!)

Your Content

It's difficult to chop a full or even ½ day training session into a 45-60 minute keynote. It's even more frustrating when the speaker keeps uttering, "I've run out of time" and they are on point 3 of the 10 in the brochure. Ask yourself, what do I want my audience to remember, stick to the brief and then cull your content to 2-3 major points. If you still have too much information left, it's a perfect opportunity to send them to your website for more (free) information. And please – if you offer make sure its there.

We all need to have respect for the programme as well, and the other presenters or entertainment yet to perform. Time yourself beforehand, ideally you want to speak at 60-70 words per minute, practise the entire presentation once or twice, so you can deliver your key messages confidently and professionally.

Your Image

There is an old saying in the industry; audience members listen to a male speaker, and then check out his grooming and dress. With a female, they check out the dress and grooming first, then if they like it – will listen.

BE COUNTED

The audience is there to hear your message, not be distracted by dress, accessories or hair, unless of course you are a Clown Dr and that *is* your message! Your image, like your branding, will remain in people's minds for a long time to come, make sure it's the right one. Get professional help if you are unsure. Check out www.evolutzia.com.au

Men – a handkerchief used more than 3 times is a germ ridden rag.

Ladies – dangly anything, though a fashion statement sends the wrong message from the platform.

Promoting your Business.

Many presenters feel the point of speaking is to increase awareness of who they are and what business they are in. But 'selling' from the platform is quite a controversial topic, let's face it, no one likes to be sold to. Unless a speaker has prior arrangements with the event organiser, they need to deliver value as an expert, not advertorials. This is where you can refer to your handouts, subtly drop ideas or suggestions on how you can be of assistance, or mention upcoming workshops or professional development opportunities. Make the most of networking opportunities during the programme. Or ask the emcee to mention that you will be at the back of the room and happy to chat or sign your latest book or CD series after your presentation.

Platform Skills

Remember VAK? Most trainers understand the importance of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning to engage listeners. The same applies to speaking from the platform. If you stand in the one spot, hugging the lectern while you speak into the microphone, you could very well lose your kinaesthetic learners. Drone-on in a monotone, reading from the power point without stories, animation or inflection in your voice and there goes another third of your audience.

We learn multi-sensorally which means the more senses you can incorporate in the presentation, the more chances your message will grab the audience's attention and then keep it. *Describe* how it tasted or smelled, *show* them what it felt like, make *them* do the appropriate movement or action to stimulate and sustain interest and attention. Appropriate movement, varied pace of delivery, gestures, facial expressions, props, music and stories with real live characters can offer the participants a feast of stimuli appealing to all learner types.

Using Powerpoint

Why are we still discussing this? Because other than walking or presenting in front of slides, too much data, as well as reading from slides, are still the two biggest sins committed in business presentations today.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Not only do they add variety,

and impact, but pictures and graphics can add humour to your presentation as well. Powerpoint should be an addition, like any other prop, that supports your message or argument and is memorable.

If information overload is the problem, put it on to your clear, concise and colourful handouts. They will have high impact, involve attendee participation and have entertainment/educational value long after your presentation.

Your Close

Like your open, you want to be memorable and go out with a wow. One good way to ruin this is to go over time so you are rushed. A professional emcee will provide you with whatever time signals you prefer. Most speakers I work with are happy with a five and a two minute warning, giving them adequate time to summarise key points and close. If you are planning to take questions from the audience, make sure you do so before you close, as you have no control over others, their questions and the final feelings left lingering in the room. A comment like, "Just before I close, are there any questions?", will leave you in control and able to close just the way you had planned.

Post Event

Only ask for feedback/evaluation from those who are experts or have expertise on your topic (or people who love you!). Otherwise you may be judged by someone who really has no relevant background, no right to comment or is just having a bad day!

The best advice I was ever given was to 'Never Stop Learning'. There are many ways to observe people presenting, go to the movies, turn the volume off on the TV or observe other speakers for what you do and don't like. You could have professional mentoring or attend workshops to hone your skills. The National Speakers Association represents professional speakers worldwide and has monthly meetings on the business of speaking, in a city near you. www.nationalspeakers.asn.au

Never be afraid to drive the big rigs; just make sure you are competent *and* confident before you head out.

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