

Build Your Business AND Credibility THROUGH Public Speaking

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Would you like to sell to 40 prospects at the same time? Well, step up to the microphone. Service organizations such as Kiwanis Clubs, Rotary, Lion's or Optimist Clubs are always looking for a speaker to address their group for free. It's a win-win situation. They get a speaker at no charge. You have a terrific promotional tool and more importantly are perceived as an expert in your field. Does that sound like a good head start over your competition?

Tips for Your Talk

We've all heard that the fear of death is often surpassed by the fear of public speaking. Think about the positive results of delivering a presentation and that might motivate you to work through your fears. In case that isn't enough, take time to work through these exercises to help you channel all that nervousness into energy.

Physical Preparation: Warm up and relax your body and face.

- Stand on one leg and shake the other. When you put your foot back on the ground it's going to feel lighter than the other one. Now, switch legs and shake. You want your energy to go through the floor



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and out of your head. This sounds quite cosmic; it isn't. It's a practical technique used by actors.

- Shake your hands — fast. Hold them above your head, bending at the wrist and elbow and then bring your hands back down. This will make your hand movements more natural.

- Warm up your face muscles by chewing in a highly exaggerated way. Do shoulder and neck rolls. Imagine that you're eye level with a clock. As you look at 12, pull as much of your face up to 12 as you can; now move it to 3, then down to 6 and finally over to 9.

All of these exercises serve to warm you up and relax you. Those exaggerated movements make it easier for your movements to flow more naturally. Preparation is a key element to making a solid presentation. Here are a few tips that will help you make an effective presentation.

The Opening

Psychologists have proven that the first and last 30 seconds of any speech have the most impact, so give the open and close of your talk a little extra thought, time and effort. Do not open with "Ladies and Gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be here tonight." It's wasting too much of those precious 30 seconds.

Opening a speech with a joke or funny story is the conventional wisdom. Before you do, ask yourself these questions:

- Is it appropriate to the occasion, for the audience?

- Is it in good taste?
- Does it relate to me (my product or service) or the event or the group?

Does It Support Your Topic or Its Key Points?

A humorous story or an inspirational vignette, either of which relates to your topic or audience, are sure ways to get an audience's attention. However, it may take more presentation skill than you possess in the beginning. It's safer and more effective to give the audience what you know.

A good way to open your speech is by giving the audience the information they most want to hear. By now, you know the questions you hear most at a cocktail reception or professional society meeting. Well, put the answers to those questions in your speech.

A scientist with Genentech was preparing a speech for a women's group. Since most of the audience didn't know what scientists are like or what they do, he told them what it was like to be a scientist. "Being a scientist is like doing a jigsaw puzzle in a snowstorm at night... you don't have all the pieces...and you don't have the picture to work from." You can say more with less.

The Closing

The close should be one of the highlights of your speech. Summarize the key elements to your presentation; i.e. overview of the local real estate market, your investment process, the value of a home's

preventative maintenance, etc. If you're going to take questions, say, "Before my closing remarks, are there any questions?" Finish with something inspirational that ties into your theme.

The Genentech scientist told of the frustrations of being a scientist and he closed by saying, "People often ask, 'Why should anyone want to be a scientist?'" His closing story told of a particularly information-intensive medical conference he attended. The final speaker of the day opened with: "I am a 32-year-old wife and mother of two. I have AIDS. Please work fast," she said to the scientists. He got a standing ovation for the speech.

Outline for Your Speech

Two basic outlines work well for the beginning speaker.

Then-Now-How outline: "This is where I was. This is where I am. This is how I got here." This outline will help you tell the audience who you are and why you are qualified to speak on the topic you've chosen. Recently, a friend asked that I help her with a talk she had asked to present. I asked three vital questions you must also ask yourself:

- Who is the group to whom you are speaking?
- How long will your talk be?
- Why have they asked you to speak?

My friend had been asked to do a 25-minute speech for the local board of realtors because of her great success in real estate. I suggested she follow the Then-Now-How outline and open like this: "Twelve years ago, when I went into the real estate business, I had never sold anything but Girl Scout cookies and hadn't done well with that. Last year, I sold \$50 million of real estate in a slow market selling homes that averaged \$150,000 each.

In the next 30 minutes you will learn exactly how I did that — and how you can too!”

The question and answer format: People in your audience are like the people you meet in your business or at a cocktail party; they probably all ask you many of the same questions about your work. Think of the questions prospects, clients and friends ask you about your business.

Now you can open with, “The five questions I am most frequently asked about investments (or whatever your field is) are...” Pose the first question to the audience and answer it for them in a conversational manner, just like you would to a prospective customer. You may have never given a speech before, but you certainly have answered the questions.

Writing Your Speech

I don't believe in sitting down and writing a speech. Instead, gather and collect ideas that can build your speech. If you're going to be addressing a group in the next few weeks, keep a note pad with you and jot down ideas, situations that relate to your talk. When you actually write your talk, you'll have lots of material to fit into your outline.

Presenting the Speech

Do not read your speech. Write key points in bold felt tip pen on a pad you keep on the lectern or table (or in a large, bold typeface in your

Word document). Unless you rely a lot on your notes, don't stand behind the lectern throughout your entire talk. It puts a barrier between you and the audience and they feel it. However, if you feel more secure standing behind the lectern, do not lean on it.

The introduction: Write your own introduction. Use your resume as a guide, but customize it to fit the topic on which you're speaking. Do not include your job as a lifeguard in your intro unless it directly relates to your subject.

Consider these ideas: How long have you been involved in the community? What makes you an expert? Do you have a connection to the organization?


Handouts: Develop a page detailing your key points. Or if you've had an article published, make copies for the audience members. Make sure that the handout includes your name, address, telephone number, e-mail and Web address.

Business Cards: If your goal is to develop business contacts, always collect business cards from

the audience members. You can offer to send additional information, articles or tip sheets to them. Or you can offer a door prize (this can be a product you sell or certificate for service, a free evaluation of financial status, etc.) and ask that everyone drop their business cards in a box from which you or the program chair will draw the winner (or winners) at the end of your talk.

The business cards give you prospects with whom you can follow up later. If you offer to provide attendees with written material, you might include an order blank for your product or service.

Just do it!

Speaking before a group of strangers can be intimidating, but keep focused on the positive impact the presentation will have on your business reputation and your bottom line. Don't expect to be a magnificent speaker the first time out. Your goal is to present the most valuable information possible to the members of the audience. Think of it as the beginning of many long-term relationships. 



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