



EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING

Getting your butterflies to fly in formation!

You have rehearsed your speech or presentation, you have organised your notes or slides, you are knowledgeable about your topic, and you believe you are prepared. Yet one key ingredient is missing, you are not at ease! You are nervous, maybe even sweating, you have butterflies in your stomach and wish you could be some place else rather than facing your audience.

Does this sound all too familiar? By virtue of our professions we are often called upon to do presentations, a variety of different kinds of speeches, address meetings and often have to speak impromptu. Yet how many of us experience untold anxiety.

Eight Lessons to Effective Public Speaking

1. Venue

Arrive early in order to familiarise yourself with the venue and equipment, try and do this the day before if possible so you have time to make contingency plans. The layout of the room and the equipment should never be a surprise to you.

2. Voice Preparation

Prepare like a pro. Avoid eating or drinking milk products prior to speaking this can generate phlegm, rather drink warm water with a little bit of lemon and honey, this loosens the vocal chords. Eat light foods, nothing too heavy and constricting prior to speaking.

3. Dress Code

Always dress professionally or appropriate to your occasion. Avoid clothing that will constrain your movement or make you feel too warm.

4. First Impressions Count

Approach the lectern or podium with confidence and a smile. Your audience will already start forming an impression of you as you approach the lectern or podium before you even utter any words. Once you are at the lectern or podium facing the audience you have a window of opportunity when for that moment the entire audience is focused on you, to grab their attention and set the tone to entice them to continue to listen to you. You can do

this with a quote, an anecdote, some humour, a story, whatever suits your particular style or personality but it must fit in with your topic and form part of the golden thread through to your conclusion.

5. Read Your Audience

There are three learning styles visual (learning through seeing), auditory (learn through listening) and kinaesthetic (learn through moving, doing and touching). It is always wise to include a mix that will appeal to a broad audience. For example visual learners enjoy power point slides, graphics, flip charts they sit in the front to avoid obstructions that will prevent them from seeing, auditory learners learn best from verbal speech, they interpret underlying meanings through listening to tone and pitch(vocal variety), written information may have little meaning until it is heard, kinaesthetic learners find it hard to sit still and become distracted by their need for activity, a practical demonstration will get their attention.

6. Your Body Talks

Body language is an important part of speaking, used correctly it can enhance your speech or presentation. However it should be natural and in tune with what you are saying. Movement can also be a release valve for the nervous energy you are feeling. Stance, gait, hand gestures, facial expressions and above all eye contact can assist in achieving your speech or presentation's purpose.

7. Get Comfortable with Visual Aids

Visuals must be appropriate for what you are conveying to your audience. Used confidently and smoothly they can be a valuable tool. The most commonly used today are power point slides. However avoid death by power point, that is, standing and reading everything off the slides. PowerPoint is not the presentation, you are the presentation! Keep visual aids simple, visible and use them to reinforce your message, instead of letting them become the message.

8. Get To the Point

Ensure that your message is clear, speak with confidence and ensure that any supporting material contributes directly to the message you are conveying. Create a strong opening, a body that conveys your message and a conclusion that draws all the threads together and reinforces the message.

The butterflies will always be there but following these simple, tried and tested steps is routine that will get your butterflies flying in formation. And above all practice, practice, practice, speak at every opportunity that you get it really does make perfect!