

## 10 top tips to make you an awesome public speaker

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At one point or another we all have to speak in front of people, here are our experts' tips

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Public speaking isn't something that comes naturally - though the best speakers in the business do manage to make it look that way.

A speaker can no more go out and deliver a brilliant presentation that is organised, logical, appealing and entertaining, than a magician really can make an elephant disappear. But you can make quick gains when it comes to standing in front of an

audience, whether you're speaking at an internal conference, presenting to shareholders, or pitching for business to potential clients.

If you would like to deliver a better presentation or a speech, you just need to remember our Three Golden Principles - Authority, Authenticity and Audience - and we have expanded them here to 10 top tips.

## **Authority**

It's really important for you to have authority when you are on stage. Public speaking is an act of leadership. Although you don't want to come across as a demagogue, be very careful about letting anything undermine your authority.

### **1 Know what you are talking about**

You should know more about the subject than you have put in your speech. You should be at ease with the subject matter. You are an expert on the topic, and your opinion matters.

### **2 Don't apologise**

If you open with an apology for being under-prepared, you will get off to a bad start. "Why didn't you prepare more?" the audience will ask. If the nerves start to take hold, they will affect your ability to communicate, the audience will stop listening to you and they will start worrying about your welfare.

### **3 Be in charge of the space**

Try not to get anchored behind a lectern if you have a large space you can walk around. Arrive early to check the sound and lights are all as they should be - there is nothing that distracts more from the smooth running of a speech than feedback from a microphone or a PowerPoint remote control that doesn't quite work as it should. With all technology, have a contingency plan in case it breaks down.

## **Authenticity**

You want to be the best version of yourself, not a second-rate copy of someone else. Audiences like to feel that they've been let in to see the 'real' you. Get rid of the idea of what a 'good speaker' does, and ask yourself what you should be doing. Good speakers are themselves.

### **4 Be yourself**

Everyone else is taken. What do people like about you? What are the qualities that attract people to you? Play to your strengths. If you don't think you're naturally funny, don't open with a joke.

## **5 Review footage**

Watching yourself back is a really fast way of improving your presentation skills. We all have unconscious habits that we adopt when under pressure, and it isn't until we look back at ourselves that we realise just how distracting all that cuff-tugging and hair touching can be to the audience. Watch with the sound down, listen without watching and take notes. You will learn a lot about yourself.

## **6 Use your nervous energy for good**

Nervousness can make the best of us tongue-tied and fog-brained. Shift the focus from yourself, and turn that nervous energy into enthusiasm for delivering your presentation because a small hit of adrenaline is a useful way of keeping your energy levels up.

### **Audience**

The most important people in a presentation are the audience. As the speaker you have a job to do - to present information to the audience so that it is useful to them. It's really not about you.

## **7 Respond to the needs of the audience**

This can be as simple as keeping to time, or being aware that you are delivering the first presentation after lunch, and the audience would rather be having a siesta, so do something different that will engage them: have a panel discussion, get them to discuss a topic at their tables in groups, or write post-it notes on an ideas wall - anything that lets people go at their own pace and doesn't tax the attention too much.

## **8 Make your presentation appeal to the people in the audience**

You can't please everyone all the time, but think about who you are talking to. If they want facts, that's what you give them. If they want personal stories, open your heart. If you have a mixed audience, you should aim to present enough different sorts of information to please as many people as you can.

## **9 It's a conversation not a speech**

Audiences are not passively sitting there and letting your words wash over them - or they shouldn't be. They will respond to what you are saying and, if you can pick up on this, you will find the speech turning into a conversation. If they respond with skepticism to something you've said, you might want to add another example or statistic. If they laugh with you, it means they are on your side.

## **10 Enjoy it**

There is absolutely no harm in having a good time on stage. Audiences respond well to it, you feel better for having had a good time and you will have that indefinable "something" about you that says "I should be here". Even if your presentation is on a

serious topic, remember you are giving the audience information that is helpful, comforting or will save them from disaster. You are helping, even if the news is bad.

So wherever you are speaking and whatever you are speaking about, when you have finished the presentation, try to feel satisfied with what you have done. If you don't, ask why not - and what you can do about next time and make the necessary changes.