

“It is not sufficient to know what one ought to say, but one must also know how to say it”. - Aristotle

Public Speaking

1. Introduction to Public Speaking

History

Public speaking has been an integral part of the development and growth of virtually every major civilization in history. From the early Greek philosophers and Roman Senate, humans have utilized the method of public oration to communicate ideas, present knowledge, discuss, debate, influence, decide issues and change history.

Throughout most of our early history most of the renowned speakers occupied political, religious and royal positions. In the last 150 years many more individuals from various walks of life have taken the stage as public communicators of vision, ideas, attitudes and values.

Many famous words and lines from public orations still occupy special places on our shared vocabulary. “Never have so many owed so much to so few” (Sir Winston Churchill). “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” (President John F. Kennedy). “I have a dream!” (Martin Luther King Jr.). “Fuddle Duddle” (Pierre Elliott Trudeau).

The common success traits of all these individuals were the ability to get and hold the attention of their target audiences, communicate ideas that were relevant and pertinent and communicate in such a way that allowed the information to be well understood and comfortable for the audience.

Today many individuals make their living simply by having the ability to communicate with an audience. Television news anchors, sportscasters, self-help experts, financial analysts, business people, service clubs, volunteer organizations, religious leaders, educators, comedians, politicians – virtually anyone who has cause to communicate with an audience.

In this program participants will learn how to prepare, organize and present information for audiences of various size and composition utilizing a number of presentation tools.

(Interactive assignment: Select a famous public speaker whom you feel is really good at what they do. Identify the traits, skills and characteristics you see as their strengths. Discuss your selection with a person at your table).

“My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then say it with the utmost levity”. – George Bernard Shaw

Benefits, Uses and Applications

For many public speaking represents a huge challenge and at times a seemingly insurmountable task. Actually standing in front of a group of individuals and communicating is one of the most common fears we have according to several surveys.

So why would we as individuals seek to become proficient at public speaking?

From a personal standpoint, the ability to speak publicly with confidence creates significant opportunities for growth in personal confidence, self-esteem, personal vocabulary and communication skills. Public speaking also gives one the opportunity to talk to and sometimes with other people about something of interest to them, which meets their needs as you perceive them. It also provides opportunity to bring your opinion or point of view to the attention of other people through goal directed, well developed and usually uninterrupted talking. Something that usually is not available through casual conversation. These are all transferable skills we will use again and again no matter where our personal and professional paths take us.

Professionally, good public speaking skills are often considered when promotions to higher levels of leadership, management and organizational representation are available. From an organizational perspective, the ability to communicate a message to an entire group of co-workers, staff, volunteers, shareholders, membership or the general public is an invaluable tool.

As a Kin representative within the organization and externally in our clubs' communities, the ability to speak well in public is essential to represent the quality and professionalism that Kin strives to convey. Every time we are communicating as a Kin representative in our community we are also speaking directly with our potential future membership. We need to ensure that our sometimes first contact with these potential members is one that leaves the impression we strive to create and one that these membership candidates favour.

Clearly there is tremendous benefit in acquiring the ability to speak well in public. Ability is comprised of learning the hard skills of planning and presentation and the proper mind set or attitude. The latter is usually the more challenging to acquire.

Essential Skills for Public Oration

Public speaking skills can be divided in to two categories, physiological (what you do) and psychological (your mindset/approach). Mastering both will ensure the best possibilities of success.

Physiological

Voice tone and inflection – Your voice is one of the most powerful and persuasive tools you have at your disposal. It does not have to be the loudest, lowest or strongest. It does have to provide the necessary attributes to hold the attention of your audience. One of the classic stereotypes of a less than effective speaker is the one who speaks in a monotone voice and puts everyone assembled to sleep. Voice tone can be used to accentuate a point of information (loudly

or softly), evoke emotion or passion, provide humour, transition from point to point or simply keep the audience's attention.

Projection – Perhaps one of the most effective skills a speaker can have is that of projecting his/her voice anywhere in the room at will. This talent allows the speaker to not only ensure they are being heard by all but can assist in creating a “connection” with individuals or portions of audience. Projection is simply the art of placing your voice where you select the specific area or individuals and speak specifically to them. The best method of gaining experience and practice is to begin with an empty hall or room, then pick a specific object or location and focus all your speaking energy towards that point.

Posture – Most studies state that close to 70% of all communication is non-verbal. If this is the case then there is a tremendous opportunity especially for public speakers to heighten the impact of their communication through their physical positioning and posture. Standing tall and being alert will indicate to the audience that the speaker genuinely wants to communicate the information. Conversely, a speaker who cradles the podium as if it is supporting him/her and is slouched over will tend to transfer their lack of sincerity to the audience or trigger an emergency first aid response. Practice your stance and movements (if desired) so you portray yourself as someone the audience needs to listen to. Remember, you already have the unique opportunity to leverage your presence into meaningful communication.

Movement – As with posture, how you move is a major part of your overall communication effectiveness. Moving as you speak is very much a personal preference. Some individuals prefer to conduct their presentation solely from behind a podium while others feel restricted by such an apparatus and move freely around the stage and sometimes even into the audience. There is no right or wrong method here as long as the movement is aligned with your personal style, topic and venue. If you choose to remain in one place then make sure you have everything you need for the presentation (clock, props, Audio visual aids) right at your fingertips. If you tend to travel when you speak make sure you strategically locate your resources in locations you can easily access or coordinate their presence with support staff.

Psychological

Developing your style – The single most important point to keep top of mind is “Your style is your style!”

“There is no other human being in the world like you. Hundreds of millions of people have two eyes and a nose and a mouth; and none of them have exactly your traits and methods and cast of mind. Few of them will talk and express themselves just as you do when you are speaking naturally. In other words you have individuality. As a speaker it is your most precious possession.” – Dale Carnegie.

You need to create and evolve your speaking style and presence for yourself. You will be most comfortable presenting and this will be reflected to your audiences. Being comfortable with your style is one of the first requirements in gaining the self-confidence and self-esteem so commonly sought.

Many individuals who begin to speak publicly make the mistake of trying to emulate a speaker who's style they admire. While it is beneficial to take bits and pieces to integrate into your own style development, too frequently a promising speaker will avoid further growth and experience in speaking due to the frustration of trying to copy their style and personality of someone else.

Engaging your audience and shifting style to accommodate – A major component of success in a speaker's presentation is the ability to engage the audience. When people are attentive, responsive and committed to listening to the message, it allows the presentation to unfold as it should.

So how does the speaker gain the attention of the audience?

Topic – Selecting a topic that you know and feel passionate about immediately creates an energy that is easily transferred into your presentation. Knowing the topic means knowing the content and that makes it easier to organize and plan your presentation, its points and message.

Knowledge of content – Often speakers are required to speak about topics and relate content with which they do not have a comfortable level of knowledge. This initially could present a significant challenge although the remedy is usually close at hand. Research, research, research provides not only the content of the presentation. It will also increase the speaker's knowledge and level of comfort and familiarity with the topic. Research can include many methods in addition to visiting the local library. The internet allows for a substantial increase in information available and will provide other sources such as local, national and international experts, most recent versions of publications, documents, studies and data. The ability to source and interview individuals related to the topic should always be considered as it provides an excellent opportunity to add a human element in the way of a personal anecdote or story. Something that most audiences appreciate.

“A good speaker is one who can rise to the occasion and promptly sits down”. – O.A. Battista in Saturday Evening Post.

Planning – One of the best ways to build confidence in yourself and your presentation is to be as prepared as possible. Knowing the “who, what, where, why and when of your presentation allows you to gain the upper hand on controlling as much as possible the rollout of the presentation.

Who – Who is the audience? Are they a group that is from a specific team, department, organization, or are they made up of the general public? What are their other demographics (age, gender, lifestyle)? What is their state of mind (skeptical, argumentative, fun loving)?

What – What is the topic? How does the topic relate to the audience (known issue, general information)? What is the purpose of the presentation (motivational, topical, current event, industry specific, recruitment, entertainment)?

Where – Where is the presentation? What is the venue? What audio-visual aids are available? What is the size, shape, set up of the room or area in which the presentation will occur?

Why – Why is this presentation taking place? What is the desired point(s), message, and outcome? How is this presentation positioned within the context of the overall function (after meal keynote, opening or closing address, motivational rally)?

When – When is the date for the presentation? What is the sequence of smaller duties and events that need to happen leading up to and including the presentation? Is there provision for a post-presentation debrief, evaluation and analysis?

Use of humour – It is interesting that the popular thinking around the use of humour usually advocates the telling of a funny story or joke at the beginning of one's presentation. It is thought that this strategy will "lighten up" the audience and create a relaxed atmosphere for the rest of the presentation. However this can be a double-edged sword as the wrong type of story or humour can seem weak and silly and actually offend some members of the audience. One must be careful of what type of humour to use and when. Thorough knowledge of the intended audience is an absolute must in order to leverage the use of humour. Ensure the humour you use is already part of your style and that you are comfortable with it. Match the type of humour to the topic and audience. Cracking off a series of "one-liners" about the constant lack of punctuality of bus drivers is not appropriate for an audience of transit employees (exaggeration).

“The mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the minute you're born and never stops until you get up to speak in public”. – Roscoe Drummond

Overcoming stage fright – Certainly one of the largest psychological barriers to ford is being nervous before and during a presentation. In fact it is the single-most difficulty professional speakers continually navigate.

There are many reasons that make up the nervousness that accompanies public speaking. Lilyan Wilder in her book "7 Steps to Fearless Speaking" actually narrows these apprehensions into 5 categories.

The first of which is called "career terror" where one feels that their very career hangs in the balance every time they give a presentation, speech or briefing to their co-workers, directors or others professionals. "Left unchecked by their sufferers, this fear can lead to individuals passing up good opportunities and shrink from taking leadership roles."

Second, Wilder identifies perfectionism as another fear that impacts the development and success of presenters. "Communicating what you want to say, what you know, think and feel is the ultimate goal of the effort. And you can't accomplish that effectively, much less pleurably, if you are terrified of making even a tiny mistake".

Third is the feeling of panic itself. Most of us consciously or unconsciously associate very real manifestations of our panic. Shaking hands, nervous twitches, stuttering and slurring words, voice loss and perspiring are all common indicators of degrees of panic. On the extreme end of the physical indicator scale, some individuals will actually faint or go completely blank in the face of anticipating having to speak in front of an audience. Controlling your physiology will go

a long way to easing your psychological burden. Practice in breathing will allow the body to relax and help the mind clear itself from the self-imposed gridlock it's feeling. There are many relaxing and focusing techniques available. The key is to select a couple that work to you and to incorporate them into your preparation routine. This way they become part of your normal prep and are at and when you feel the need for their use.

Number four, according to Wilder is avoidance. Avoidance is a problem shared by many. It is self-sabotage that will virtually guarantee anxiety, fear and diminished performance. "If avoidance is a major source of fear for you, face it. Make yourself turn on the computer, pick up the pen, and put some words on paper. Respect yourself and your audience by knowing that what you have to say and how you want to say it is valuable."

The last category of fear revolves around a trauma of a continuous or previous experience in speaking in public, sometimes very early in life. Being admonished for mixing up the lines in an elementary school play, being ridiculed by peers for not having the right answer in class or constantly being cut off in conversation by others are all examples of traumatic experiences that will conspire to subdue our desire to speak publicly. Sometimes it takes a professional to assist in identifying the cause of the fear and other times the cause is evident. Wilder remarks, "You need to bring to the surface those experiences you internalized and face them for what they have done to you."

Being nervous is natural. Actually most presenters, no matter their experience, feel better if there are a few butterflies present. It indicates that they are on top of their presentation and have the "edge" needed to perform.

The key is when to recognize that the butterflies have grown into a mass of turmoil and take the necessary personal steps to minimize them.

Assignment: Select two different topics upon which to base a one-minute talk for each. The first topic needs to be something that either interests you a great deal or you feel very passionate about. The second is one that you have no great interest in or do not have great depth of knowledge).

Planning Your Talk and "Talking your Plan"

The importance of planning your presentation

Content research – While it is always prudent to speak on a topic with which you have a degree of familiarity and comfort, you will also find that you will be asked to deliver a presentation on topics that you are not familiar with. Either scenario should result in the same process. Researching your topic is of primary importance to ensure relevance, competence, accuracy and most of all confidence in your delivery. Take into account the nature of the topic and its relationship to the audience. Will it be controversial, a current event, factual with a lot of statistics and facts, the giving or receiving of an award or a eulogy?

Ensure you have a variety of sources to draw your material from. Aside from the obvious local library and the Internet, there are many other sources from which to draw information. Individuals who have experience or a personal affiliation with the topic are valuable for their own

“spin” or the stories they can offer. The human element is one that always interests audiences. Periodicals, journals and magazines often present another point of view of an issue or subject that would be rather provocative for an audience. Just a reminder, if you quote a source other than your own then please take the necessary steps to acknowledge the source. Unless of course they would wish to remain anonymous.

Scheduling tasks and utilizing lead up time – This topic has been covered in some detail in a previous segment but it bears review. Developing a schedule is paramount to being well organized and ensuring the presentation will go according to your plan. There are many variables to consider (research and writing, editing and proof reading, venue contact and coordination, support staff briefing, rehearsal, audio visual and other props, your dress and appearance). Developing a chronological checklist usually helps to plan not only what but when items need to be taken care of. Start the checklist as soon as the engagement is confirmed. This will allow you the maximum lead up time to prepare and to consider all details, delegate where you can and focus on your preparation.

Venue considerations – Part of the consideration given in planning should be allocated for the venue in which the presentation is to be made. It’s size, acoustics, location, lighting, podium or stage position relative to the audience as well as size and seating arrangements of the audience may be considerations when planning a speaking engagement. The more you know of what the venue offers, the better you can plan for your presentation. Most speakers will take the time to visit the venue if possible. If most of your speaking engagements take place within your community you may already be familiar with most of the meeting venues. For unfamiliar venues or out of town engagements, you can usually acquire the information you need from the management or booking coordinator of the venue you will be using. Venue familiarization should take place early in the planning process as it can impact other preparations (audio-visual selection and set up).

Audio-visual and technology – Today even the smallest presentation can look quite impressive due to the advancement and array of audio visual aids available to the general public. LCD projectors and software such as MS Power-Point [™] allow virtually anyone to create and present remarkable works and impressive graphics.

However one must be careful to complement the presentation content and the venue with the appropriate technology. A flashy, graphic loaded slideshow may well overpower the content and the message. On the other hand, using black and white overheads in a presentation designed to motivate usually has a less than desired effect.

The actual presentation is no time to learn the technology. If you are going to incorporate AV into your presentation then you must be competent and comfortable using it. If you don’t have immediate access to the technology arrange to rent or borrow the equipment so you can become familiar with it. If you are uncomfortable with its operation then solicit a support person who is and designate them as the primary operator. Knowing the technology also allows for the contingency planning in case it fails.

Utilization of Support personnel – When possible and where appropriate, presenters should look to involve at least one other individual in their presentation especially if the utilization of

audio-visual or other technology is planned. Delegating some of the pre-presentation logistics and in program responsibilities for items such as audio-visual, sound, lighting and the handout of materials will decrease considerable distraction for the presenter. Having to interrupt the presentation to turn the lights or projector on or off or handing out materials usually has a less than desirable on audience attention and the continuity of the presentation.

One must make sure that if the decision is made to use support personnel then these individuals must be given clear expectations and responsibilities and have the appropriate training and knowledge of the venue and operation of AV and other technology. Do not make assumptions on roles and responsibilities. Otherwise the conversation may go something like; “I thought you were going to do lower the lights!”

Anticipating the unexpected (having backup options) – Part of planning for a presentation is answering the question; “What if...?” What if the microphone doesn’t work or is providing large amounts of feedback? What if the LCD projector won’t “talk” to the computer? What if you forget your overhead transparencies or slides? What if the weather is bad and you are either delayed or can’t make it? What if the presentation is moved to another room or venue at the last minute?

All of these scenarios can and do happen quite frequently. They need to be acknowledged, and anticipated when finalizing your plans. While still an interruption, these challenges are reduced and the disturbance can be minimized. Strategies for dealing with these types of challenges should be included on your planning checklist.

Mental Preparation

Taking time to focus Yourself – This procedure means many things to many different speakers. Some like to seek out a quiet place prior to speaking so they can organize their thoughts and review the presentation. Others like to be in the middle of the proceedings, sometimes interacting with their audiences before they speak. Each of us has or will develop our own technique for focusing on our presentations. The key is to find your preference and use it. It may help to reflect on what you already do to prepare yourself to focus on important tasks and responsibilities. You may not have to reinvent the wheel in order to use your existing technique. Just a little fine-tuning may be all that is need to use the same technique when preparing to speak.

Rehearsal, rehearsal, rehearsal – Knowing your material is the base for success. You will be more confident/credible in your delivery, more relaxed and more conscious of incorporating more speaking techniques such as pace, tone, projection, humour and movement into your presentation.

Even though you might be the expert on your topic/material, rehearsing allows you to finalize the organization of your thoughts and fine tune your presentation in consideration of your audience.

Timing – The well worn saying, “Timing is everything” holds very true especially as it pertains to public speaking. “That speaker speaks the best who gives their audience the most knowledge and takes from it the least time”. – Old Proverb. Over speaking is like overstaying one’s welcome. The host will be polite but will seldom invite you back. Keep your talk within the time

allotted. Make sure you allow for introductions and “thank yous”, audio-visual changes, handouts and possible comments and questions from the audience within your time allotment.

Be prepared to adjust your presentation in light of the session starting later or the schedule is running late. In your pre-planning decide what material can be sacrificed and have a revised copy of your presentation on hand for you and your support staff to refer to if need be and do feel free to take the credit for having put the itinerary back on schedule!

Using visualization – Seeing how your presentation will go in your own mind will contribute significantly to the planning process. It will also increase your own comfort and confidence in the delivery. Picture how the presentation will start, where the audience will be seated, the lighting level, volume of the microphone, the positioning of the stage and podium. Think about how the audience is acting/reacting to you and how you will end the presentation. Obviously it will serve well to conduct a pre presentation visit to the venue or at least obtain dimensions or photos of the area holding the event. Having a clear mental picture of the “where” of the presentation will help in the “how” of the delivery.

“Talking and eloquence are not the same: to speak, and to speak well are two things. A fool may talk, but a wise person speaks” - Ben Jonson

Utilizing a coach/critic – Having a third party to give you insightful and sometimes honest feedback can be the difference between a good presentation and a really dynamic, impactful session. Coaches can be anyone you choose although they should be able to be honest, give accurate, constructive feedback, know the topic and the audience and most of all, available. Your coach should be involved early in the planning and should be your primary sounding board as you develop your content and plan your delivery. Coaches can also hold the role of your support staff.

Evaluation – All presenters who are serious about developing their skills and style should seek evaluation at every opportunity. Quality feedback will allow individuals to gain insight into what they do well and area they need to improve. This information can be obtained from many sources and methods. A few of the more common of these are formal and informal feedback from peers, colleagues and coaches, and a formal evaluation distributed to and collected from the audience. Most professional speaking organizations use written evaluations as a major tool in providing feedback to aspiring speakers as well as grading their development. Criteria such as volume, clarity, flow, presence, impact, use of props, appearance and preparedness provide essential feedback for the individual to analyze and develop strategies for improvement.

Without the commitment to continually improve the quality of your speaking, little or no progress will be made and your opportunities will shrink.

Assignment: Using the Speakers Evaluation Form provided, please complete and be prepared to discuss your evaluations of the current speakers. We will use the evaluation as a basis for constructive discussion as an example of a learning tool.

The Presenters Checklist:

The Client

Who are they (club, community group, parents, professional group)?

How many will be present?

The purpose of the presentation (award, recognition, key note address ect.)?

Client expectations (entertainment, humour, factual, personal)?

The Content

What is the main purpose of the content (to educate, entertain, motivate)?

What is your degree of knowledge and comfort with the proposed topic (very familiar, somewhat familiar, not familiar at all)?

What will be your research sources?

The Venue:

Where?

How big/small?

Have own Audio-Visual?

Can you visit before presentation?

Support Staff

Who are they?

What roles will they perform (technical, logistics, coaching)

When will they be involved?

Your Chronological Plan

Map out starting today, all the necessary steps and activities necessary in your preparation of the presentation. Include start and due dates, who is responsible and possible contingency steps to address unforeseen obstacles.

Speaker's Evaluation

Please rate your overall satisfaction of the presentation out of 10 (10 – excellent, 5 – satisfactory, 1 – very poor) by circling the number that is most appropriate for you.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Using the scoring system from above please evaluate the speaker according to the following criteria:

Ability to communicate topic/ideas clearly 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Demonstrated knowledge of topic 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Ability to deliver according to time lines 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Organized and prepared for delivery 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Use of audio-visual and props 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Ability to engage audience 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Professional in appearance 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

What did you most enjoy? _____

What did you least enjoy? _____

What did you find of most value? _____

What was of least value to you? _____

What could have been better? _____

Thank you for your feedback. Our goal is to deliver the best!