

## **Public Speaking With Confidence**

Not everyone has a natural capability to speak in public. Some people lack the confidence and others get too nervous to concentrate. The idea of standing in front of a group of people and being the sole focus of everyone's attention also makes people, who are humble and unassuming, uncomfortable. The presentation can be as first-class as they come, but if the presenter isn't engaging and capable of maintaining audience interest, the presentation will be unsuccessful.

Despite discomfort, many of us are at some time called upon to make a public address, whether at a conference, a lecture, or company event. And whether we are speaking in front of 1,000 people at a conference or 10 people in your company department, chances are we want to do well. The art of speaking publicly can be enhanced by taking some simple steps. These include:

### **1. Watch What You Eat**

The last thing you want to be doing while speaking is clearing your throat all the time. Avoiding dairy products prior to your talk will reduce the chances that you'll have some build-up in your throat. Likewise, you probably don't want to be too thirsty while talking, as so you should avoid salty foods and bananas, which will increase your urge to drink.

### **2. Keep Water Close By**

Naturally you want to make sure you have some water nearby in case nerves cause a small case of dry mouth. You want to have the water with you so you can take small sips as needed. Depending on the length of your talk, you want to balance your need to wet your mouth with your wish to avoid building up water in your system. You may not be able to take a bathroom break during the talk, and it becomes uncomfortable speaking and difficult to concentrate when your bladder is knocking.

### **3. Release Energy Before the Talk**

While you may not be able to hit the gym right before you talk, you can release some energy before you begin by shaking up the muscles a bit. The release of energy will relax you and allow you to give your talk in a paced and casual manner. The energy, if not released, may cause you to race through as it is pushing the talk out of you.

### **4. Neutralize Your Risks**

There are some things that you most dread, such as falling on your way up the stage, standing before the group with your fly open, and other embarrassing possibilities. Neutralize these risks by going through a checklist before going on, and wearing clothing (and shoes) that are comfortable and risk free.

### **5. Face the Mirror**

Before you go on face the mirror and practice your talk. Make sure you know the pace you want to speak, the jokes you want to tell, and how you want to time your delivery. By

practicing you'll gain confidence and become comfortable with your talk, and when it's show time it will feel like just one more time.

## **6. Pick Your Points**

One of the challenges speakers have is they fail to connect with their audience, and one of the key reasons this happens is because the speaker does not rotate his/her eye contact around the room. The best way to prevent this is to pick your points around the room and rotate your eye contact to each point systematically (but not mechanically). Make sure your points are at eye level with the audience and not above their heads so that the people watching you get the sense that you are interacting with them.

## **7. Speak Up**

People will find it hard to stay attentive and interested if you are not speaking clearly and loud enough for them to hear you comfortably. Make sure you find the volume level that will do the trick.

## **8. Feel Free to Speak Freely**

People know how to read. Your presentation is not a bedtime story where you read directly off the slides (unless you actually want everyone to fall asleep). Use your slides as topic indicators, and expand on the information on each slide in a manner that resembles an ad lib routine. It is entertaining and gives people the impression you are in command of your material (of course, your ad lib routine is well rehearsed).

## **9. Move Around**

Another way to bore the life out of your audience is to stand behind a podium as if you are hiding behind it. Unless you forgot your pants and need to stay behind the podium to hide your nakedness, move around. It forces the audience to move with you, keeping their attention. This does not mean you move like a quarterback avoiding a sack, but it does mean that you move freely and in an unforced manner.

## **10. Smile**

Your presence will be appreciated and you will be more likeable if you smile. You need not appear like an extra from a toothpaste commercial, but you do need to appear that you are pleased to be there and pleased to be addressing the people before you.

Speaking can be stressful, but it can also be fun. It is a good feeling when you connect with people and share with them information that they did not have prior to meeting you. You can enjoy the opportunity to speak publicly if you come fully prepared and comfortable. The attention you get and the expertise assigned to you makes publicly speaking a worthwhile and useful chore. Get good at it and it will be good to you too.