
The Mathis Group's

Messenger

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Conquering the Fear of Public Speaking

When someone is afraid of speaking in front of people, we've all heard the suggestion of picturing the audience in their underwear. While that trick might work for some people, just the thought of it makes me a little uncomfortable. Let us share with you some other techniques that will leave you with less awkward thoughts.

First, let's look at some myths that most people believe about public speaking.

Public speaking comes naturally to people



Everyone has gotten butterflies in his or her stomach at one point in time. While it's true that public speaking becomes easier the more you do it, it rarely gets to where there is never any fear.

Public speaking requires highly educated people

Anyone can become proficient at public speaking, regardless of their educational level. It doesn't take a college degree to have knowledge about a certain topic. Experience and knowledge come from many different avenues--education is only one of them.

Public speaking is an easy way to make a living

Public speaking is NOT an easy way to make a living. It takes lots of preparation to become a presenter who relays the message well while being interesting.

Public speaking doesn't require much preparation

If you're not well prepared for your presentation, you will come across as incompetent and having no credibility in what you are saying. Be prepared. Go over your presentation several times before the big day. Become an expert on the topic by doing hours worth of research.

Anticipate questions that may arise and how you will answer each.

Public speaking can be accomplished on a wing and a prayer

If you try to just "get up there and wing it", everyone will be able to tell. The audience knows when a person has put the time and effort into a presentation and when they haven't.

We've all heard speakers who were very engaging and energizing. On the other hand, we've also heard speakers who bore you to tears and put you to sleep. How can you ensure that you don't become the latter of the two?

1. Have a detailed understanding of a topic
2. Have a detailed understanding of the crowd
3. Be friendly when presenting
4. Be self assured, but not cocky
5. Be excited about what you are talking about
6. Have the ability to pass the excitement over to a crowd
7. Be tasteful with humor and stories
8. Be credible when speaking

Keeping each of these things in mind will keep you focused, knowledgeable, and entertaining while presenting.

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*Do not let what you cannot do interfere
with what you can do.
John Wooden
College Basketball Coach*

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thorough knowledge of your audience by thinking about the following questions:

To whom will you be speaking?

What are their needs?

What is their educational background?

What are their mental attitudes?

Are you the only speaker or are you one of many?

What do they know about your topic?

What do they think about you?

What is the history of your audience as a group?

What is the program surrounding your speech?



Keeping your presentation within the context of these answers will help you to create the best presentation for the given audience. Next month, we will give you tips on creating that perfect presentation.

Before speaking, it may be helpful to do a self-evaluation of your presentation. Some of the most effective ways to evaluate your presentation are to:

- List your strengths and weaknesses
- Video or audio tape a live presentation
- Ask friends and loved ones to give feedback
- Contact a speaking coach for pointers
- Compare your skills to others speaking

Any of these techniques will help you know if your presentation will be effective. Taping yourself will not only let you listen to the content of your presentation, but it will let you know if you have any “habits” of which you are not aware. For example, do you jingle change or keys in your pockets? Do you say “um” or “uh”? Do you use excessive gestures? Do you pace so much your audience feels like they are at a tennis match? Most of the time, all of these things are done without us realizing we are even doing them. Knowing ahead of time any problem areas will allow you to correct them and polish your presentation before the big day comes.

The final aspect to consider before presenting is to know your audience. Know what is expected of you. Have a



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