



Dezvoltarea Durabilă a Parteneriatelor Transfrontaliere



The secret to great presentations: enthusiasm

By Doug Stanart

If you take only one piece of advice about public speaking, make sure that it is this pearl of wisdom. If you focus on this one simple thing, the number of times you say "uhm" won't matter. If you focus on this one thing, your gestures and not knowing what to do with your hands won't matter. If you focus on this one thing, then the occasional loss of train of thought won't matter. In fact, if you focus on this one simple thing, you can break just about every rule that public speakers are supposed to abide by, and you will still win over your audience.

This one simple rule has transformed countless mediocre speakers into good speakers, scores of good speakers into great speakers, and numerous great speakers into world-class speakers.

This simple rule that can make or break a speaker is... ENTHUSIASM.

That's right, if you have a little excitement in your talk and a spring in your step, people pay attention. Your audience will have just about as much excitement about your talk as you do, and no more. So, if you want to win over your audience, add a sparkle of enthusiasm.

One of my mentors told me that there are two rules to live by in the world of professional speakers. She said, "Rule number one is to never speak on a topic that you yourself are not enthusiastic about, and rule number two is that if you ever violate rule number one, fake it 'til you make it."

Frank Bettger in his book *How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling* said it a different way. He said, "If you act enthusiastic, then you'll be enthusiastic."

For those of us who get nervous in front of groups, it's even easier. In the previous chapter I pointed out that 90% of our nervousness doesn't even show. Let's look at the other 10%. When we are nervous, we often cut out preambles and get right to the point, our rate of speech typically speeds up, we tend to move around a lot more, and we may move our hands around more than normal. Well, when we are excited about something, we do the exact same things.

Years ago, when I was a sales manager, I was often amazed at the number of times that a brand new sales person without a lot of product knowledge and absolutely no experience, could close sale after sale while my more seasoned people were struggling. The more times I went on sales calls with these new people, the more I started to

notice a pattern. New salespeople are often nervous, so when they walk into an office on a sales call, they tend to cut right to the chase. They also generally talk faster because they are afraid they'll forget something. They have a tough time sitting still because of the nervousness, so they move around a lot.

I noticed that these symptoms of nervousness worked to the advantage of these new salespeople, because their prospects looked across the table at salespeople who appeared to be extremely enthusiastic about what they were selling. I would imagine that these potential buyers were saying things to themselves like, "if this person believes so much in this product, it must be good."

We as speakers can also use our nervousness to our advantage. When we turn that pent up nervousness into energy and enthusiasm, our audience can't help but be energized as well.

WRONG

Many myths about public speaking have been passed along from person to person over the years, and the one thing that is consistent about these myths is that the people who pass them along are still nervous about speaking. After facilitating over 200 public speaking classes and never having a single person fail to significantly reduce his/her fear of speaking, I had a dramatic realization. Just about everything I was taught about public speaking while I was in school and from well meaning peers and coworkers - WAS WRONG!

Below are the top three myths that we have identified, and some simple tips that will help you reduce your fear or nervousness.

Myth #1: If you write out a talk and memorize it, you'll be more comfortable.

This is the fastest, easiest way to make your presentation boring and canned and to make you more nervous. When you memorize a talk word-for-word, any slight hiccup or distraction can throw you off track. That can increase your nervousness. Instead, write out just a few key points and practice giving stories or examples to back up each point.

Myth #2: More facts/details will better clarify your topic.

Most of us believe that a little is good, more is better, and a whole bunch is just right in public speaking. If I can give you 10 reasons why my topic is true, then that is obviously better than two or three reasons, right? Well in public speaking, the more points we offer, the more confused our audience can become. A good rule of thumb is five or less. So, after you decide on your topic, narrow down the key points that support your topic to around five key points or fewer. If your talk requires more than five points, then it would be best to divide the presentation into two different talks.

Myth #3: Nervous habits make you a poor speaker.

Most people think that "Uhms," talking fast, and nervous gestures are bad, but in fact, these things can make you very relatable to your audience. "Uhm" is a normal word in the English language. We say this word all the time in normal conversation. When it's not there, the speaker can sound phony and forced. Plus, I've found that if you try to get yourself to stop saying "Uhm," you'll probably just start saying it more often anyway. Also, when people speak fast and move more, they show energy and enthusiasm. I've had many speakers come through my classes who were scared to get up and speak at the beginning of the program, but when they did speak, the audience thought that they were excellent speakers. The audience saw the nervousness and assumed it was enthusiasm.

Realize that speaking well is like learning to play golf. If you get a group of hackers together to coach each other, you're just going to get a group of people very proficient at a bad golf swing. However, if you get a good coach, he can shave strokes off in no time. If you really want to get good at public speaking quickly, get a good coach who doesn't buy-in to all the speaking myths.

