

How to Respond To Questions From The Floor

Answering questions from an audience is a real example of speaking off the cuff. After you have given a presentation, or during a workshop, it is common for the audience to ask questions and not all of them are expected and not all have straight forward answers. If you are giving a sales pitch or trying to gain new business, you can expect to receive testing questions. If you are speaking on a difficult or contentious issue, you can expect some strong questions from an emotional audience. How well you answer these questions can often be a determinant of how the audience perceives your ideas and how likely they are to respond to your message.

Preparation, anticipation and thinking from your audiences point of view, will always help you respond to questions more effectively. In fact getting ready for questions, before you speak or present, is a little like preparing for an exam. You know what your material covers, you know the areas of contention and dispute and you know which aspects will potentially divide an audience. You prepare for a range of questions that the audience may ask you and this is the secret to being good at responding to questions.

Having done lots of preparation, structuring your responses in a standard way will ensure you consistently give good answers that meet the needs of the audience. Enclosed is a simple model that allows you to buy a little time, be respectful, include all the audience and make it relevant to everyone.

1. Repeat the question and look at the person answering the question. State their name if you can read their name badge or if you know them. Stating their name and repeating the question allows you to buy a little time while you think, but it also ensures that everyone in the audience has heard the question and indeed you have heard the question correctly (If you misstate the question you will see a shake of the head and other body language from the asker of the question – you can then seek clarification)

2. Create relevance for the whole audience in the question and in your answer. You should broaden the answer to meet the needs of the whole group. This is known as “Chunk it up”. You can then drill down and answer the specific “niche” question, but the whole audience now understands what is in your answer for them and will be listening.

3. Be concise and to the point in your answer. This is not the time to go off on tangents.

4. Make eye contact first with the questioner and then with the whole audience. The questioner may have asked the question, but the whole audience wants to be involved in the answer. If you respond entirely to the questioner, then you risk losing the rest of the audience.

5. Summarise the answer and thank the questioner, returning eye contact to the questioner.

Some other tips that relate to answering questions from the audience include:-

- Set the rules for questions up front, early in your presentation. Do you want questions as you go? Are you going to allow 15 minutes towards the end of your presentation for questions? Are you going to allow 1 question per person to be fair to all the audience in the limited time? Decide what works best for your session and set the rules.
- Your question and answer session should not be the final part of your talk and you may need to summarise or repeat your final conclusion, take home message or call to action after any question session. If you end with questions and the last question of the day is controversial or contentious or difficult, the audience may walk away with that as their message, rather than what you want them to walk away with.
- If during a question and answer session you are asked something that you do not know, you can agree to find out and get back to the audience. Often you will have a colleague or work partner who is working, teaching or researching in that particular niche area and you feel that you would have a more exact answer to the question. Or you may ask the audience if anyone knows the answer of a question that is out of your expertise or out of scope of your topic. Certainly don't bluff your way if you do not know the answer.

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Peter is often asked "what is his secret for moving from a position of pain and inability to a position of power and success". In Peter's keynote presentations he can show your audience how to move from Disability to Ability; How to turn Adversity into Success; How to turn Lemons into Lemonade.

If you do need a conference speaker and would like to book Peter, then contact him at peterdhu@bigpond.net.au

Public Speaking Mentoring Program

Starting out on your journey to become a more confident and effective public speaker and presenter can be daunting and time consuming and involve many bumps along the

way. Many people do my public speaking workshops, and other workshops, hoping for a quick fix or magic pill that will instantly make them successful as speakers. This generally does not happen and it is the hard work, preparation and practise that leads to your success.

The public speaking mentoring program helps to guide you and fast track you on your way to speaking success. The program includes monthly coffee cup mentoring sessions, 20 minute one on one phone coaching sessions, webinars, resources and more, to ensure you move quicker and reach the goals that you want in your speaking.

For a fee of \$25 a month, you get value of over \$380 per month. If you would like to know more about the program, please contact me or go to my website at

<http://www.peterdhu.com.au/mentoring-program/>

Upcoming Workshops And Events

I have some early dates for 2011 and if you want more details, or a workshop near you, please contact me

- 8 December 2010 – Webinar “How to organise and structure an effective presentation or speech
- 13 December 2010 – Coffee Cup Mentoring
- 17 January 2011 – Coffee Cup Mentoring
- 19 January – Webinar “How to reduce nerves and speak with increased confidence”
- 28 January – Perth Workshop
- 31 January to 3 February – Melbourne Workshops x 4
- 22 February - Webinar “How to build rapport and connect with the audience”
- 24 February – Bunbury Workshop

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