

Public Speaking

Peter Dhu, Public Speaking Dynamics

Present to the Entire Audience



One thing that I regularly notice when doing public speaking training, is that when the students are presenting, they sometimes present to one person or to one side of the room, rather than the whole audience.

This is most obvious when the presenter is introducing another person in the room, or they are responding to a question from one person in the room. The response is directed almost entirely at the person who asked the question or the person being introduced by the presenter.

I recommend that when you do respond to one person in the audience, whether it is by way of an introduction or via a response to a question, that you involve the entire audience. This means you engage the entire audience with eye contact, inclusive gestures and direct your response to everyone in the room. While one person may have asked the question, the entire audience is interested in your response and the information that you are providing. You can finish by acknowledging the questioner and thanking them for their question. But include everyone in your response.

Resist Time Pressure – The Power of the Pause

Resist time pressure, take your time and don't speak until you are ready, is some of the best advice that I can give to anyone who is nervous when public speaking, or who is just starting in their public speaking journey.

I often see speakers rush to the front and begin speaking immediately, sometimes beginning before they have taken the lectern or centre stage and faced the audience. I see speakers respond to questions by going immediately into a response and then finding that they have lost their way, or they are unsure how to answer the question.

When speaking or responding to questions, smile, take your time, pause make eye contact and then begin to speak. If you need more time to organise your thoughts to respond to a question, then thank the person for their question and restate the question or paraphrase it so that you have it clear in your mind and the audience is now clear what the question was. This buys you a little more time and you can identify your viewpoint and work out how you are going to structure your response. (Cont'd)

"Brevity is the first rule of public speaking"

Theodore Sorensen

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Another situation where I also use pause, is when my mind goes blank, or I lose my way. I just pause, make eye contact, wait for my thoughts to return and start speaking. Sometimes I forget a point, but the audience does not know I have lost my way, they just think that I have paused for effect and to create meaning and suspense.

So resist time pressure and don't be afraid to pause.

Too Much Information

The great speakers around the world tend to keep their information concise, to the point and generally they try and leave the audience with one big message. We have all heard of death by PowerPoint and we have all been to presentations where we have left wondering exactly what was the point of the talk, what was the take home message.

The Keep It Simple (KIS) principal is alive and well and a good rule to follow when preparing and delivering a speech or presentation. Professor George Millar suggests that 3 to 5 bits of information are enough to assimilate at any one time and in my experience 3 is better than 5.

Herbert Simon, Nobel Prize winner, stated that "a wealth of information causes a poverty of attention".

This is the KIS principal.

Other Stuff

I have just published and released my first hard copy book, "7 steps to overcome your fear of public speaking". It is available for \$25 including postage and handling, by contacting me directly. I have also made the book available on line as an e book and that can be purchased on the web page for \$9.90, if you prefer a paperless copy.

My next public speaking workshops in Perth will be in mid to late January and then again in February.

Melbourne is scheduled for the 28th January (full day).

Bunbury is scheduled for the 2nd of February (half day) and 3rd of February (full day workshop).

Sydney is scheduled for 22nd February (half day – thinking and speaking off the cuff).

I also do individual one on one coaching if you have a speaking assignment or speaking challenge that you need extra help with.

