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To: Richard
Subject: Your Leading Ways #20



Number 20

Our theme in this issue: *If You Know The Mistakes Speakers Make Then, You Can Avoid Them and Deliver Like An Expert*

Leader Tip of the Month

If you believe as I do that :: Great Leaders Are Great Communicators, then it is time to place more emphasis on speaking skills.

"As an executive reaches middle management and beyond, or move to own their own business the primary criteria for success are communication and motivation skills, rather than just job performance."

--- Roger Ailes

on to Leading Ways.... **If You Know The Mistakes Speakers Make, Then You Can Avoid Them and Deliver Like An Expert**

Perhaps you already view yourself as an accomplished business audience presenter, or an accomplished public speaker.

However, just like great singers or sportspeople if we do not continue to practice and hone our skills, we simply will not remain at the top of our game.

Feedback objectivity from someone qualified to render an opinion is good starting point, but even then we should use a cross-check by understanding the more common faults of speakers.

Far from an exhaustive checklist the following abridged version is to provide focus for continued improvement and polish:

- Not understanding that 55% of your audiences' interpretation is determined non-verbally. It starts with your grooming, continues with how you hold yourself, use facial expressions, smile, and relate to your audience. *In the first 7-seconds they will have formed an opinion about you, **even before you open your mouth.***
- Make sure you analyze your audience - not only their demographics, but also their situational characteristics. This analysis will lead to a presentation with more relevant content.
- Understand what you want the outcome of your presentation to be. What do you want the audience to do as a result of listening to you?
- Don't forget the 5 P's. *Poor Planning Produces Poor Performances.* You can instantly tell if a speaker has not really planned or rehearsed. If the speaker has rehearsed enough their attention will be focussed on you, the audience.
- *Remember, You Are The Message.* Statistics and PowerPoint will not dazzle, it is your conversation with the audience that counts. Do you exude professionalism and confidence? Are you using vocal variety?
- **The Enemy of Speakers is Sameness.** Although new research has shown that people learn 85% of the time visually [probably due to our increased use of TV, computers and text-messaging over the last two decades] not only should your presentations take into account all learning styles, but there should also be voice transitions. Drop into a third-party voice from time-to-time as though you were both parties to a conversation; and while in your own voice, vary the pace and pitch for increased impact.
- **Facts are boring!** Your audience can get those from books or the internet. What your audience wants is your experience, judgement, successes and failures; or what the facts have meant to you personally.

"It is no use saying, 'We are doing our best.' You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary."

-- Winston Churchill

- Giving your audience an information dump. In an attempt to establish our credibility most of us provide too much information. A good rule-of-thumb is one key point for every 45 to 60 minutes. All sub-points should support the main point.
- **Stories are Powerful** -- after 48 hours they may be all your audience remembers from your presentation.
- Forgetting to quote other people and sources. Quoting others lends credibility to your presentation, and is in effect a 3rd party endorsement of your message.
- Lies, lies and statistics. Again, do not bury your audience with data. Pick a few strong facts and simplify. Instead of saying 67.3% say things like "two out of three people agree....."
- Joke telling -- many executives I coach want me to put a joke at the front-end of their presentation. Why, because they want to be entertaining. If you must tell a joke, then perhaps tell one against yourself. The three R's. Remember, it must be **Realistic** to use a joke, **Relevant** to your presentation, and most of all don't **Read** it.
- You need both a **powerful opening**, and a **powerful close**. I usually do not write the opening until I have structured my entire speech. After the initial pause your powerful opening must jolt your audience out of their thoughts and into your world. If the opening doesn't excite you, it won't excite your audience.
- **Fillers** -- don't overdo them. Many would tell you never to use Ah's Um's etc, but remember this is a conversation with your audience. We all use the occasional one in a conversation, so you can use the occasional one in your presentation. Just don't overdo it.
- **If you must read!** Sometimes reading may be required in that there may be, for

example, medical facts or legal issues where precise wording is necessary. *In that case there is a golden rule.* Look down at the notes, gather up some words, look up and deliver to your audience. Pause to look down again, take in the words, look up and deliver to your audience. Practice each day by using a newspaper. Look down, gather up part of a story, look up and deliver in front of a mirror.

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- **Making Ground Through the Q & A** -- Often when questions are asked for there is a stony silence, and so I either [1] gather up questions by arriving early and meeting people. In that way I understand what is of interest to attendees and incorporate it into my session, or alternatively [2] I lead off with "*Quite often I am asked.....*" I usually have two or three prepared questions as they can be a good ice-breaker.

A mistake speakers frequently make is to end their presentation with the Question & Answer session. If you do this you run the risk of the point of your presentation being lost. From the Q & A it is imperative that you move back in to your presentation, recap on the main points, and then leave your audience with a powerful close and Call to Action.

By the way, what is it that you want your audience to do as a result of your presentation? Often presenters forget!

- **The P-A-U-S-E** Do not underestimate the power of the pause. It starts with a pause, and not a thank-you after you are introduced. When people first see you after the introduction you have 7 seconds to make a lasting first impression, and that may be before you even open your mouth. After the p-a-u-s-e launch into your powerful opening and move the audience into your world. Use pauses throughout your presentation, with a final pause just before your grand finale.
- **Leaving a lasting impression** - I call them terminal tear-jerkers, where your final message is to TAP INTO THE EMOTIONS by instilling Pride, Hope, Love or Fear in order to move the audience to action.

"They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

- Carl Buechner

Book of the month

Networking Magic by: Rick Frishman & Jill Lublin

ISBN 1-59337-020-2 Adams Media

- ... from the book *"The most successful networkers build relationships with others because they love people and the dynamics of relationships..... You can't always be the taker; you must be prepared to give at least two or three items for every one you receive.... better yet, don't count; just give."*

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"Good sometimes gets in the way of us striving to be great. Perhaps it's because we become too comfortable or complacent." -- Pastor Kevin

Have a great week!

Denis

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