



SPEAKERS' CORNER NEWSLETTER



April 2015

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Celebrating 18 years in business

We launched Speakers' Corner in 1997 so this April is our 18th anniversary. Last year we sent out a book of stories which delighted one client so much she sent us a box of brownies for our efforts. We've got a sweet tooth so we loved that. (Let us know whether you'd like another copy.)

Then and now we were just two people who came from the advertising and marketing worlds and who were passionate about good communication.

We wanted every delegate to know we had sat **in their seat, experienced their business, felt their anxiety, shared their aspirations.**

That was our point-of-difference, our USP. We had real life experience on both the agency side and the client side of this business. Then and now there are two of us for every workshop.

So after training over 6,000 delegates, what have we learnt? What can we share with you now to help you deal with your perennial dilemmas?

Start with what you're best at.

We knew from our own professional experience, that a person's ability to present their case was the key to them building successful business relationships. So we began with Presentation Skills - we still believe it's the single most important skill any manager can have!

Over the years we have seen the standard of presenting falling. An over-reliance on powerpoint and a belief that clients need to see everything, have meant that well-meaning managers actually fail to make a personal connection.

In a competitive market when there is little to choose between one agency's recommendations and another's, the real point of difference may hinge on the personal connection made in the presentation process.

If it was all about the content and powerpoint, why are chemistry meetings still key?

We passionately believe that "Good decisions come from good presentations". It's true!

So keep on polishing your presentation skills. And if you haven't been on a workshop for several years sign up now or risk getting not just rusty, but losing your competitive edge.



Move with the market

Sometimes the market you're in goes through a bad spell. We'd like to tell you another true story about our early days. After a couple of years in business we realised we needed to go international as UK training budgets were shrinking.

How did we do this? We sent an attractive exploratory offer out to our contacts and Leo Burnett Europe were the first to bite. 'Would we go and train anywhere?' They asked. Where was this leading, we wondered? Somewhere no one else wanted to go?

Not at all. Their reply was Copenhagen. The date mid-summer's day. We couldn't have started our international training in a better location or on a better day.

After a successful training day, we went with our client to the Tivoli Gardens. It seemed half of Copenhagen was there celebrating mid-summer. The whole experience has left a lasting memory.

It was a great way to end the day and start a new working relationship with a major agency group. Since then we've worked for Burnetts in no fewer than 12 international markets!

Know when to say YES

Another experience of selling ourselves in Europe was talking with JWT Milan. They liked our portfolio but wanted to meet us in Milan before making a decision.

We hesitated at first. It would cost us time and money with no guarantee of success.

Well, if you're growing your business and there's an opportunity with a large client, take the chance. You've got to be brave to succeed. We got the Milan workshop, then worked for more JWT offices in Europe and the Middle East.

As the client later told us: "If you hadn't come to Milan, you wouldn't have got this job or any others from us."

A salutary lesson.

Know when to say NO

We've often been asked to do workshops outside our primary skill set. For example, Negotiating, Time Management, Leadership. Naturally enough we know quite a lot about all those three and so we once did a day's workshop for a client who wanted the day equally split between them.

Our feedback was good, but in our heart of hearts we knew that the workshop was not really up to the standard that we aim to

achieve and deliver. It was a lesson we learnt and we've never taken on a workshop again which we aren't convinced we can be proud of.

Interestingly, during the Time Management session one of the delegates a director who had just returned to work after having a baby, delivered the best advice and insight into Time Management we've ever heard.

Her account of how she now managed her time, her team's time and her contact time with her client made us all re-evaluate how we could become better time managers!

Keep the conversation going

We created our first newsletter in April 2001 because we wanted to keep the conversation going with past delegates. We also wanted to have something to show new prospects. It was our way of offering an after-sales service, to stay in touch and let people know what we were doing and thinking on a regular basis.

It's been highly successful judging by the quality of the feedback. Readers value good content and want to be kept up-to-date.

That's our mission. We believe in providing genuinely useful materials and so our newsletters, yearly quote book and last year's Storybook are just some of the ways we do this.

For all past newsletters, quote books, blogs, downloads visit www.speakersco.co.uk.

The value of Feedback

The two things which our delegates tell us are the most important parts of our workshops are videoing and feedback. We have filmed delegates for many years and it forms a key part of our feedback because the delegates can see themselves as their audience will see them! People learn more from this "seeing" than anything else.

We can see the look on their faces as their strengths - and their weaknesses - dawn on them. We try to put their performance into perspective by giving them honest feedback and recommendations for future development. We now send videos of delegates to their e-mails post-workshop so they can review and learn.

A funny aside:

We were asked once, in the early days, to send to a delegate a recording of his creative sell. He seemed extremely enthusiastic about receiving it. When we asked him why, he said: "I want to send it to the Comedy Store - I want to be a stand-up comic." We were happy to oblige but couldn't understand how it would help his career - it really wasn't that funny!

Individual Coaching

We have had our greatest challenges in working one-to-one with delegates. It isn't always the top performers we coach. We often coach people who have real presentation difficulties.

We were once training a senior manager who was calling on major new business prospects. He used a walking stick, even though he was a young man. One day to simulate the situation he would be in entering an office, we got him to knock on the door, enter and cross the room to meet his prospect.

His walking was wobbly and it affected his ability to connect. Sensing he could probably do better without the stick, we invited him to put his stick down and enter.

We took a chance but intuitively felt he was hiding behind the stick. He thanked us afterwards as he walked in perfectly. Strange but true.

Everyone can benefit from coaching. If the presentation is important enough get your colleagues to listen, video yourself, rehearse three times. Call us if you've have a problem.



Topics change but being remembered is vital

Training follows market trends, fashions and technological innovations.

Our path has equally been directed by client demand. From Presentation Skills, Selling Ideas, Conference Speaking, One-to-one coaching to Storytelling.

In the end we know that being able to tell a story so you can engage, inspire, illuminate is what will get you liked, followed, promoted, hired.

We have a saying "Every presentation is a story well told". Find your stories and make them yours so you are remembered by them. We have heard many thousands of presentations but can only remember the stories.

Here's one told by a Strategy Director in Moscow which we will never forget. It encapsulates the essence of the client's problem and their solution. It's also a story which we're sure didn't originate in Russia because we had heard it before but it adapted perfectly.

The setting was a pitch to a Japanese car manufacturer who was entering the Russian car market but didn't have a showroom or any plans for one.

The story starts:

"A friend of mine Ivan goes to church every Sunday. One day his neighbour Misha asks Ivan whether he could pray for him. Ivan asks Misha: "What do you want me to ask God for"? Misha says: "Please ask God if he can help me to win the lottery."

So when Ivan goes to church on Sunday he asks God to help Misha win the lottery. But nothing happens.

So after a number of occasions trying, Ivan decides that he will make one big effort after everybody has left the church to ask God to help Misha.

The day comes, the church is empty and Ivan prays to God: "Dear God I have asked many times for you to help Misha win the lottery but you have not answered me."

At that moment a shaft of piercing light shines through the window above the altar and a booming voice says: "Ivan, please tell Misha to meet me half way and buy a lottery ticket."

Ladies and gentleman, if you're not in it, you can't win it so we recommend you open a showroom as a first step.

Interestingly, we would never have remembered this presentation if it hadn't been for this story. Stories make presentations memorable. Stories help people to make your case for you.

Good luck with your stories, your presentations and your pitches.

Barry Graham & Sally Clare

Speakers Corner
Helping people deliver their best stories

Summary of Training & Coaching 2015

The Power of Storytelling

Who will benefit?

The art of storytelling is an important weapon in anyone's communication arsenal so any managers who have made a number of presentations and are competent at delivering.

Workshop outcomes:

To understand the different ways to use stories in business presentations.

A step guide to crafting stories.

To develop the confidence to use stories to make more impact.

To release imaginations to communicate more creatively.

To observe themselves in action as a storyteller and receive feedback.

Maximising Business Presentations

Advanced Business Presentations

Conference Speaking

Who will benefit?

We offer a range of workshops which are tailored to the needs of the delegates from graduate through to MD. We design the workshop for each client's particular requirements and include learnings and exercises on the message, medium and messenger.

Workshop Outcomes:

A new approach to writing a memorable presentation.

Ways to make stronger connections with audiences.

Developing greater personal confidence to step outside the norm.

Seeing themselves in action and getting extensive feedback.

Understanding of their personal responsibility to improve the standard.

Selling Creative Ideas

Who will Benefit?

Anyone who has to sell ideas – whether the original creator or account management. Typically, a prospective delegate may lack confidence or feel unable to put together a logical argument or find it difficult to bring an idea alive. They may have only just started in the business or have years of experience.

Workshop outcomes:

A better understanding of the 'client's viewpoint.'

What is the most 'persuasive case for buying'.

The skills to sell the logic behind the idea.

The confidence to bring an 'idea alive', helping the client get into the right 'mind frame' for creativity and the right 'visual frame' to understand.

A step-by-step plan of action for selling their ideas.

One-to-one Coaching

The areas we cover include:

1. Preparing for a major industry or company conference – speech writing and delivery.
2. Working on a particular aspect of delivery - voice, presence, body language, emotional connection.
3. Building greater self-belief and confidence in front of an audience.
4. Building greater connection and engagement through message and delivery.
5. Working on speaking fears/ being unable to rise to the presentation opportunity.
6. Working on assertiveness /building greater credibility /developing greater personal presence.
7. Helping prepare for MC'ing a major event.

All workshops are one day and normally run 09.30 - 17.30 for a maximum of 8 delegates.

Speakers' Corner

Helping people deliver their best stories

28 Gloucester Road Richmond Surrey TW9 3BU UK

w: speakersco.co.uk t: 00 44 (0)208 605 3782

e: barry@speakersco.co.uk m: 07973 313187

e: sally@speakersco.co.uk m: 07976 919037