



S P E A K E R S ' C O R N E R N E W S L E T T E R



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'Why uncomfortable is good.'

One of the most common questions asked by our delegates is: "How can they make more of an impact on their audience?"

Our answer? We say they need to make their audiences feel 'uncomfortable' and no we're not suggesting anything untoward or unpleasant here!

However, to make an impact on someone you need to make an impression that stays around for a while. You need to make them think and then think again. You need a reaction.

Making someone look again and question their viewpoint can often cause that person some unease – but no pain, no gain!

Try 'the unexpected' and aim to do this from the very start. In the way a newspaper sets the tone with their front page headline you can influence the expectations of your audience with your opening remarks.

So think again as you welcome your audience - are you giving out the right signals? And before you open up with an agenda slide just take a step back and see things from their standpoint. Doesn't look like they're in for much fun does it!

So go on, next time you make a presentation, cause a reaction – make them uncomfortable!

Barry Graham and Sally Clare

'If in the last few years you haven't discarded a major opinion or acquired a new one - check your pulse. You may be dead.' Sellitt Burgess

'Pitching to Win'

Here are some great tips on 'how to maximise your chance of success when pitching'.

David Gilgrist, MD of a new business presentations consultancy recently spoke about research he'd carried out with leading companies who are regularly 'pitched to'.

He said that pitching first in a 'beauty parade' meant you were more likely of success than pitching in any other position. Apparently, 40% succeed when they go first.

After 10 -15 minutes of a presentation you've reached your audience's threshold to absorb, so don't look to fill your allotted time talking at your audience. 75% of the final decision over who wins is based on your Q&A session and so 75% of the meeting time should be set aside for this. Questions should be taken at the end with answers short and concise.

On the message he said it was vital to leave everyone with a consistent one - so don't overload them with too many points as on average they'll remember only two and everyone will remember different ones!

However they are more likely to remember the first two points so in your opening it is key you highlight the main issues from the start.

Importantly, including company credentials info in the pitch needs very careful handling.

Overall, keenness for the work, the personality of the presenter[s] and the 'chemistry / feel good factor' were the three most common deciding issues.

'If you say three things you don't say anything.' Chip and Dan Heath

“The most precious things in a speech are pauses.” Sir Ralph Richardson

Is your message sticky?

Abstract facts don't stick. Lists don't stick. Sadly good ideas don't always stick. How can you make your presentation messages more memorable and make them stick?

Chip and Dan Heath have written a great book called, 'Made to Stick', [*Random House ISBN 978-1-905-21157-9*]. It's an entertaining read and gives you great advice on how to put across your ideas so people remember them.

Their book shows how you can create your own legendary messages by telling stories. They show you how to make details concrete and thoughts vivid; how to say the unexpected and make the complicated simple; how to make your message credible and emotional.

They say if you want your message to stick with your audience you must get them to:

1. Pay attention to you
2. Understand and remember
3. Agree / believe
4. Care
5. Be able to act on it.

So instead of delivering a set of unassociated facts and insights, work out your core message and use every trick in Chip and Dan's book to make it stick!

“Thoughts come back, beliefs persist, facts pass by - never to return.” Goethe

Presentations, causing office rage?

Opinion Research USA conducted a phone survey with 1,000 workers on the subject of 'Presentations' and highlighted that attendees resented them because many were 'dull, disorganised and directionless.' Worryingly, they were happy if the presenter was late as matters would be cut short!

Overall, workers thought presentations should be fun and offer some 'corporate showtime'.

Presenters who look on a presentation as their chance to 'put on a show' are often the ones who've taken the time and care to craft a strong message and rehearse their delivery – just what you'd expect from the leading performer in any show.

“Talk low, talk slow and don't say too much” John Wayne's advice to Michael Caine

Powerpoint is fundamentally flawed

New South Wales University has published a research report which draws attention to the problems with powerpoint .

Humans can't take in visual and verbal messages simultaneously when the visual is a 'long text message'. Trying to follow what someone is saying while watching the same words on a screen is like riding a bike on a crowded train. You think you're making extra progress but it's actually impractical.

Most audiences look to the slide unless the presenter grabs their attention. And if the slides are overcomplicated, with graphs and data, the audience can give up and switch off.

As we say in our 'Maximising Business Presentations' workshops, you are the messenger and not a voice over for a reading lesson. So take charge, stay in the spotlight - provide some 'corporate showtime' - give your audience a reason to watch and listen to you.

Bring in visual aids, not just powerpoint, when you want to make a point that needs illustrating. Use powerpoint sparingly, for clarity and impact. It's your aid not hindrance.

“Powerpoint has a pharmaceutical effect and should be FDA regulated.” Elliott Masie

You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

We were visiting a prospective client recently and found ourselves on the receiving end of a disinterested receptionist and the person we were meeting didn't show either, so our impression of the company has been seriously damaged. Is this the same for their clients?

What interested us was hearing of a company who has given their receptionist the title of 'Director of 1st Impressions.' Great idea! Not only does she make sure the visitors feel fantastic when they walk in, but she makes sure everything looks, feels and sounds good!

This advice is just as relevant in presentations. So when you open, aim to treat an audience like they're your friends – show your pleasure.

It changes your mind set. You're more welcoming and friendly. You smile and your voice becomes warmer and other things follow. You become more conversational, more interesting and you try harder to really engage with your audience.

Just imagine your audience is made up of a group of long lost friends – you need to show them that you're someone they really should have got round to seeing sooner!

"90% of the friction in daily life is caused by tone of voice." Arnold Bennett

Famous Last Words

We worked with some advertising friends who were putting together '101 Famous Last Words'. Whatever we expect people to say at the end they rarely do. Three we liked were:

"I should never have switched from scotch to martinis." Humphrey Bogart, actor.

"Bless you sister, may all your sons be bishops." Brendan Behan, Irish playwright to the nun taking his pulse.

"Get my swan costume ready." Anna Pavlova, ballerina.

Tony Blair's last words as Prime Minister in Parliament, earned him a 2 minute ovation:

"To everyone, whether friend or foe, I wish you well. That's it. The end."

'Change the changeable, accept the unchangeable and remove yourself from the unacceptable.' Dennis Waitley

Story of the month.

Burying the lead

News reporters are told to start their stories with the important information. So their first sentence, their lead, contains the most essential elements of the story. Afterwards, information is included in descending importance. In this way, whatever the reader's concentration or interest level, they can maximise the information they take away.

If news stories were written like mysteries, with a dramatic payoff at the end, readers who broke off mid article would miss the point. This inverted pyramid approach also helps newspaper editors to steal space for a late story as they can cut paragraphs from the end.

The inverted pyramid approach is alleged to have begun during the 19th century when wartime reporters used military telegraphs to transmit their stories back home. As they could be cut off at anytime and didn't know how much time they would get to send, they always sent the important information first.

This approach makes a lot of sense for writing presentations.

Remember, most people will listen to you at the beginning of your presentation – so give them the reason to listen.

And if you're unexpectedly asked to cut your presentation time down by 50%, if you lead with your core message you'll always make your point.

Good luck!

Barry Graham and Sally Clare

Speakers' Corner **'Helping people deliver their best'**

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Speakers' Corner - Summary of principal workshops and coaching on offer



1. Maximising Business Presentations – 1 day workshop

This programme shows the delegates the difference between 'simply having the confidence to stand up and talk' and 'communicating to convince and influence'.

2. Advanced Presentation Skills – 1 day workshop

This programme shows the delegates that as with any skill, it's good to have some presentation skills coaching from time to time so you're always at your best.

3. Conference Speaking – 1 day workshop

This programme asks the delegates: "Don't think what you have to do for the conference but rather what the conference can for you?"

4. Selling Creative Work 'Your Ideas – 1 day workshop

This programme shows the delegates how to help others 'to see and believe in' their ideas.

5. Writing presentations – 1 day workshop

This programme shows the delegates how to write a presentation message that's worth hearing and produce a document that's worth reading.

6. Assertiveness – 1 day workshop

This programme helps delegates to build greater personal credibility to help them take the next step from team member to team leader.

7. Helping Business Win Business

We put the kind of thinking and creativity into your presentations that you put into developing your business.

8. One to one training

We work on specific needs, eg on a major industry presentation, helping to build greater self belief and much more.

9. Consultancy

We work with a group of managers acting as facilitators and trainers to help them resolve issues – such as an agreed new business approach, best practice for working with clients, best face to put forward to the wider business audience or the media and much more.