



SPEAKERS' CORNER NEWSLETTER



April 2011

10 years on

This is our 10th anniversary issue. We launched our newsletter originally because there were very few communication newsletters which gave presentation tips, quotes and stories. This remains true today.

Over the last 10 years the number of presentations has continued to increase and whether delivered face-to-face or over the web, audiences have become more demanding. Our continued aim in publishing this quarterly newsletter is to offer you help to self-assess your presentations to decide if you are delivering the best possible presentations for your audiences.

Some of you may well have been making presentations over these 10 years – some of you may have only a few years of experience but we ask you all the same question - have you become more demanding of yourself? Whatever becomes possible through technology, human connection still counts the most. Evidence points to the best communicators being the most successful, the most respected by their peers and the most accomplished lovers. Now that's a thought!

“High expectations are the key to everything.” Sam Walton

The art of conversation

How good are you at conversation? Do you get a rush of adrenalin in anticipation of some mental stimulation or do you go into panic mode? Are you confident that you can think on your feet and open your mouth and NOT put your foot in it!

When we relax with people we tend to discover more about each other. We can deliver stock answers to the most insightful of questions but until we're put on the spot we don't let others know what really makes us tick – and sometimes we may even surprise ourselves! It's when we respond to the unexpected that we start to disclose our true selves and it is this disclosure that helps to build a relationship.

Recently we spoke with Ben, a Business Director of a major media agency on this subject. He had a heavily structured slide-deck to present - he needed to inform and illustrate in order to move the client onto the next phase - nothing unusual in those objectives. He had a tricky client [who doesn't we hear!]. After a number of 'insightful' questions from his client and many 'stock' answers, Ben decided to speak off script and more from the heart and he reported that afterwards, the client's attitude changed. There were fewer questions and instead there was more of a conversation.

In developing a long term relationship in business and personal life there needs to be more honesty shown up front and a sure way of achieving this is to have a conversation. Search out an adrenalin rush each day – spark up a conversation

“All lasting business is built on friendship.” Alfred A Montapert

Six word stories.

Twice in the last month we've heard speakers refer to "Six word stories" The first speaker mentioned the novelist Ernest Hemingway who was challenged for a \$10 bet to write a full story in six words. Legend has it that he responded: "For Sale: baby shoes, never worn" Hemingway thought it was one of his best stories.

The second speaker, the author William Fiennes, told us about his work in schools where they teach students the power of writing stories to release their voices so they can be heard. One exercise he uses is the six word story and William was particularly impressed by this humorous example: "Went to shops, won lottery, sorted".

Why not try to write your own six word story – about your life, your job, what you can offer somebody? It could be your most important story you'll ever write.

"Good enough never is." Debbie Fields

After you've eaten....

For those who are lost for an opening story in a speech....

This story takes place in the time of Nero. It was common for Christians to be thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. One day a strange thing happened, the lions wouldn't eat the Christians. Word got back to Nero and he rushed to the coliseum.

"What is happening?" he demanded to his guards. "We don't know but one Christian walked up to the lions and whispered in their ears and after that they slinked away". "Right" said Nero "bring him to me".

The Christian was brought up and Nero demanded: "What have you done to my lions? What spell have you cast over them?" The Christian who was a modest man said: "My Emperor, I haven't passed any spell. I've simply told them that after they've eaten, they've got to make a speech."

"The ideal attitude is to be physically loose and mentally tight." Arthur Ashe

News

1. We are running our one day "Storytelling in Business" workshop at the IPA on Wednesday, June 1. For further details contact Jon Goss on 020 7235 7020 or jong@ipa.co.uk
2. Visit our new website if you want to get any back number of our newsletter or quote book. There's also two downloads on "How to write a speech/presentation" and "10 tips on Storytelling".

“About all you can do in life is be who you are. Some people will love you for you. Most will love you for what you can do for them, and some won't like you at all.” Rita Mae Brown

Is it the right story?

To tell the right story in a business presentation, the presenter must have a clear understanding of the point they want to make. They can't hide behind theories, diagrams and tables.

If I said: “Let me explain to you in detail and depth how each one of the 16 dimensions of change management work.” Most people would become concerned about how complicated things were about to become and probably switch off. If I said: “Let's look at this chart” and it was highly detailed, I would be struggling to keep everyone in my audience together. They'd all have different levels of knowledge and understanding not to mention interest in the information shown on the chart. If I showed a well-chosen picture, surely a picture is worth a thousand words, I would have to argue how one picture could possibly do what a complicated chart was struggling to achieve. But if I said “I'd like to tell you a story...” I could be confident I had your attention. People relax on hearing those words and are more open and interested in what is about to be said – they're engaged.

Now I could tell a good story bad, or a bad story well, so I could still lose them. So the key is to tell the right story well. And the right story must help you make your point. So what point do you want to make? A good story delivers only one point. The same point you want to make.

A storyteller knows how to make the complicated simple.

“All things are difficult before they become easy.” Thomas Fuller

Talent is overrated?

We heard Matthew Syed talk recently about his new book “Bounce”. Matthew is the Sports Columnist of the Year writing for The Times. If you've always believed some people have talent which puts them above the rest read his book to see this myth exploded. He has done an exhaustive study of famous performers as well as everyday people in sport, arts, music and science to prove his premise. His conclusions: All successful achievement is based on purposeful practice, you need to practise for 10,000 hours or 10 years to reach your peak. Praise for effort not talent is also a key mantra. Sounds heavy stuff but it makes an absorbing read and one you may want to relate to your own life. ISBN 978-0-00-735052-0 Fourth Estate £12.99

“What distinguishes winners is the will to win.” Tony Jeary

Good luck!

Barry Graham and Sally Clare

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