

## SPEAKING ON SPEAKING

In our world of 24/7 media and breaking news reports, you may suddenly find yourself speaking into a microphone or facing a camera, being asked to expound as a topic expert or eye witness to a newsworthy event. Thanks to the never-ending exposure to news reports, Youtube clips, and web site videos, if you're a manager or executive, you need to know that audiences will compare you to the people they see on TV so you need to present yourself and your ideas well.

If your company has a speakers bureau and you're on the list, your credibility and reputation (and that of your employer) are at stake. The following tips from my public speaking skills program and book, *The Instant Trainer*, can help you look and sound credible even if your knees are knocking and you're secretly searching for the nearest exit.

Breathing is the first step. We tend to hold our breath when we feel "under siege" so before you begin, take a deep, extended breath (through your nose). As you inhale, be aware of your breath all the way down to your belly. Expand your belly as you inhale. Exaggerate the motion without being too obvious. Congratulations! You are breathing from your diaphragm. As you exhale, contract your stomach muscles.

On your next breath, fully engage your belly once more. Hold your breath for just a few seconds, and then slowly exhale through your nose as you push the air out of your lungs by contracting your stomach muscles once again. Relax. Repeat this breathing process three times and let your energy settle into your center (an inch or so below your belly button), NOT your chest. Breathing in this manner will help ease your tension and settle your energy lower in your body, where it needs to be. It will also strengthen your voice.

Stand straight with your feet several inches apart with slightly flexed knees for balance, breathing room, and relaxation. Don't sway from side to side, rock from toe to heel, or

bounce when you make a point. To avoid “ums” or “ahs,” simply pause for a moment before speaking. Don’t try to memorize your material: focus on major points and use brief anecdotes or examples to illustrate what you’re talking about.

If you appear on TV, sit on the front half of the chair and lean slightly forward. Face the program host, speak in a normal tone, and smile occasionally so you look relaxed. If you’re interviewed “on the spot,” outside of a studio, look at the reporter as you speak, not the camera. Keep your statements as complete, clear, and concise as possible.

Again, remember to smile if the subject is light. If you are discussing a serious topic, avoid frowning. If you need to emphasize a point, raise your eyebrows slightly rather than dropping them into a frown. You’ll look more credible.

If you happen to be the one who knows the ins and outs of a system that everyone in your organization must learn and you are asked (or told) to teach your peers, relax. The Instant Trainers (my coauthor and myself) know that you’ve been selected to do this because you know more about the subject than the people in front of you, you’re willing to stretch yourself, and you can be counted on. We like people like you! Take great comfort in knowing that you are seen as a topic expert or leader. Your ability and willingness to step up to the plate can set you apart from the faint-hearted who head for the nearest restroom when asked to deliver a speech.

For job or promotion selection, when skills and qualifications are comparable, the ability to get up before a group and speak with confidence puts you as a candidate ahead of the others. If you feel that communicating before a group is a weak area in your skill set you can remedy the situation by joining Toastmasters. Or, if you have a small group of managers or sales people who want to improve their presentation skills, hire a professional speaker to help you learn what you need to know.

In this competitive marketplace, it makes sense that you’d want to stand out from the crowd and you can do it. Take charge of what you say and how you say it, to ensure

that the message you send is the one you intend!

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