

Speak up with confidence

Get the winning edge in public speaking and presentation with these tips
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Absolute terror is what viewers see on the face of Colin Firth in his Oscar-winning performance as Prince Albert, the Duke of York in the opening minutes of the movie *The King's Speech*.

It is the year 1925 as Prince Albert struggles to address thousands of athletes, nobles and society elite at the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley Stadium, Brent, England. It is excruciating to watch his attempts to speak and then listen to the difficult delivery of words from a wounded soul.

Prince Albert, later known as King George VI, stammered, and this led to major confidence issues. He engaged the help of an unorthodox speech therapist who taught him to overcome his fears of public speaking.

Along this journey, the King gains self-respect, the confidence of his cabinet and church officials and instils a pride and spirit in his country to claim victory over Germany.

Most of us will never need to talk to a nation or be in a situation that demands exceptional speaking skills to ignite the will of a people to fight an enemy in war time.

Yet you may be asked to address your peers, talk in front of colleagues at a company meeting or speak on behalf of an organisation to bring clarity to proceedings on occasion.

The following tips can help improve your skills and find new confidence for a successful outcome.

Content

Like an actor, if you know your lines (or the content) to be delivered, your effectiveness to share that content and speak will be exceptionally high.

Mindset

Sportsmen often talk about being in "the zone" when they were in peak form. Mental rehearsal and a positive visualisation of your performance at your best is an important area often overlooked, yet it is a skill of top-level presenters.

Emotional state

Having emotional energy and a high vibrancy level is fundamental. Learn to balance IQ and EQ within the content and flow of your presentation or speech.

Passion

We hear about it, we see it at times, yet how often are we really engaged at a top level of passion and enthusiasm in a project, topic, event, client meeting or family gathering? There is a bit of truth to the old saying, "Wherever you are — be there".

Oxygen

The brain needs it and your body and mind will demand it while on your feet. Take in numerous deep breaths a few minutes before a speech or presentation to help reduce nerves and get the butterflies moving in the same direction. This can slow your heart rate, enhance your voice and allow you to gain more control over your tempo.

Rest

Sleep, spa visits, massages, steam rooms, saunas, swims and brisk walks on the day of or night before are under-rated. Their benefits to you are a restful body and a sharp mind.

Attire

Look sharp and chances are you will be. Audiences, clients and peers can sense if a person's body language is congruent with his words. The proper suit, shirt, tie and belt for men or suit, skirt, blouse and accessories for women can make a big impact and lift your confidence at the right moment.

Footwear

Proper business shoes with a suit for men or heels with a suit or flats with a skirt / blouse combination for women are critical when in front of people. Like a beautiful frame on a picture, great shoes will enhance an overall look.

Venue

Having a sense of the place and feel of the environment is an industry secret of excellent presenters. Make time to visit the hotel or conference room or, if distance is an issue, do a Google search for the room layouts, which are normally viewable online.

Audience

The more you understand the demographics, cultures, issues, challenges or celebrations of your audience, the more confidence you will have to present your content to lift the spirits and minds of those before you.

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