

# TALK YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

Don't be scared of talking in public — here are some tips to help you become a confident speaker

**T**HE number one fear in the world is speaking in public. Dying is number 6. That's right — people would rather die than speak in public!

Often, the reason why someone doesn't get a job or is not promoted is not that they don't have the qualifications, it is simply that they can't express themselves. Don't be the world's best-kept secret. Learn to speak your way to success.

As a full-time professional speaker, trainer, facilitator and consultant, I've made my living with my mouth for over 25 years. If there is one thing I've learned how to do, it's how to speak in public.

While there is no substitute for years of experience, here are a few simple steps for you to practise your speaking skills to get you on the road to success.

## JOIN TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL (TMI)

Join a Toastmasters club. At every meeting, you will either be given a chance to speak impromptu for two minutes, evaluate another speaker, lead the meeting or evaluate a speaker.

With weekly or bi-monthly exposure to the lessons taught by toastmasters, you cannot help but improve.

## RELAX AND PAUSE

An old Pepsi soft drink advert used to go: "The pause that



Join a Toastmasters club to learn to speak impromptu for two minutes. - *Filepic*

group, first capture the attention of the group with a gesture or comment and then pause while you collect your thoughts.

For example, say, "Excuse me" or "Just one moment, please." Then pause while you collect your thoughts and then say what you wanted to say. You'll generally

"Imagine the audience in their underwear" or "Look over their heads and not into their eyes so you won't get nervous."

Instead, look at an individual in the audience and speak just to that one person for a time. Then look for another friendly face and talk to that person.

as opposed to speaking to a group of 10, 100 or 1,000.

## BREATHE CORRECTLY

A short, choppy breath pattern can add to your nervousness and make your words come out in stutters and spurts.

Practise slow, rhythmic breathing. Take a deep breath with your pauses and speak up with confidence. This will also lower your heart rate and calm your entire being.

## SMILE

Unless your subject matter is someone's death, smile and show you are enjoying the experience. A smile reduces your tension, helps you think by releasing endorphins into the brain and relaxes your audience as well. Even if you are dealing with a serious matter, a smile can really make a difference and lighten the mood.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

This is a simple model that will never let you down. Tell your audience what you are going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you told them.

This simple formula gives you a framework for public speaking and helps people remember your point(s). Telling them the outline or key topics you will cover prepares them mentally to absorb the information and may prevent them from interrupting you.

Then sharing the information in a simple and straightforward

emphasis and helps to remind them of your most salient points.

## OPEN WITH PIZZAZZ AND CLOSE WITH PUNCH

Make sure you memorise your opening and closing to ensure your success.

Knowing your opening and closing verbatim lets you relax as you know exactly how you will start and gives you the confidence that at least you'll end it right.

If you can't memorise the start and end of the talk because it is impromptu, then make sure you capture your audience's attention with a quip, quote, comment or joke at the beginning. Master speaker Dottie Walters always says: "Open with a laugh and close with a tear."

An alternative is to finish with a call to action, a quote, a dramatic gesture like having them stand and pledge to do something or even finish with a gimmick.

## TALK THE WALK YOU WALK

Talk about what you know. Share your ideas based not only on your opinions, but about what you've researched or lived through. Don't tell other people's stories, tell your own. Be the original article when you speak and you will have not only people's attention, but their respect when you are finished. - *Source: ST/ANN*