



SPEAKERS' CORNER NEWSLETTER



April 2012

15 years old

We started Speakers' Corner in April 1997 – a partnership of an agency guy and an ex-client lady. We were passionate about creative communication in presentations and still are.

We've worked with 30 of the world's top creative, media, research and communications agencies. We've travelled to 25 different countries, had some wonderful times and seen and heard the extraordinary and the mundane.

But what do we remember? The stories! Forget about the pictures, the bar charts and data dump on powerpoint or the well-crafted script, it's the stories we can remember and which help us to bring our memories back to life.

We encourage all of you to find "your stories" which become your trademark and leave an indelible impression on your audience.

Barry Graham and Sally Clare



"If they don't like our proposal I'll show them the kittens. Everybody likes kittens."

Tips on Presenting

We're often asked for tips on presenting so here are our top 15.

1. Give your brain a 'de-fluff'. Try doing something differently each day. Use the opposite hand to brush your teeth or start your working day differently. It will help to slow down ageing, keep your brain alert and inspire ideas.

2. The presenter's Highway Code. Stop [don't rush in] Breathe [to diaphragm] Look [at audience] Listen [silence is power] Feel [smile].

3. 5 lessons for effective speech-writing.

1. Begin strongly. 2. Have one theme. 3. Use simple language. 4. Create a 'mind picture'. 5. End dramatically.

4. Think like an Economist journalist, write like a Sun journalist. If your average character count per word is 6 or more, you're using less easy to understand vocabulary and jargon. Use short words – an average of 5 characters - they're more concrete and convey meaning quickly.

5. "10 minute rule". John Medina author of "Brain Rules" says audiences check out after 10 minutes. You can keep grabbing them back by telling stories, creating events rich in emotion.

6. It's all about the start. 3 things to do at the start of any presentation: 1. Be different – open with a bang. 2. Be a great host – make them feel comfortable and get to know you. 3. Start with you - not a slide – use a story which highlights your core message.

7. Build personal credibility. Be authentic, be real, be reliable. Show care, show knowledge, show passion.

8. “Give ‘em a show.” As Paul Arden said of a presentation: “In a song, we remember first the melody and then we learn the words.” So give your audiences a theme to help their memories.

9. Power of the pause. Pause every 8 words or so. Barack Obama does and he’s recognised as one of the best speakers of our time. It also allows your audience to reflect on what you say.

10. Tell a story - don’t deliver a reading lesson. If you overload your powerpoint with copy and data your audience [and you] may end up reading it all. They won’t be listening to you. So drop the weighty slides and tell them the story.

11. Pursue the relationship, not the deal. Don’t look on your audiences as the ‘opposition’ - find the common ground. Work out where you need to cross over, meet in the middle or walk away.

12. Smile more. A smile opens doors – people think you’re someone worth spending time with. A smile will also help you feel more positive - things are going to be OK.

13. Language – it’s more than words. Language is so much more than ‘the what’ and how you say it. Of course you need good vocal variety and a clear diction but good physical and emotional body language too.

14. Eye contact. Not only are you showing your audience you’re interested in them, but you need to really look at them to see how you’re coming across.

15. Edit your message until everyone understands it. A French mathematician once said: “A theory is not a theory until you can explain it to the first person you meet on the street.” Can you articulate your core message?

Stories – it’s all about the stories!

We’ve gathered together a few stories from past newsletters. We hope you enjoy re-reading them and that they will inspire your own storybooks.

“There have been great societies who did not use the wheel but there have been none that did not tell stories.” Ursula K Le Guin, author

“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.

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, they sent the important information first.

This approach makes a lot of sense for writing your presentations. Most people will listen to you at the beginning of your presentation – so give them the reason to listen - tell them your core message. Then if you’re unexpectedly asked to cut your presentation time down by 50%, your opening will have covered your key message so editing will be easier and quicker.

‘Emphasise everything and you emphasise nothing.’ H. Gordon Lewis, copywriter

“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 slunk 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.”

“I remind myself every morning: nothing I say this day will teach me anything. So if I’m going to learn I must do it by listening”.
Larry King, broadcaster

“Passion beats logic.”

Roger Mavity had set up a successful ad business with the philosophy of working with large international companies. However, this is a story about a pitch he was reluctantly involved in to the Mauritius Tourist Board, a ‘small client.’

After 4 weeks of pitch-work, they were due to present at 2pm that day. Instead the client called to ask them to go over to their offices as they were running late. On arrival, they were greeted by the client who said: “It’s a hot day, we’re tired and we’ve seen seven presentations already. Don’t waste our time with the slides and strategy. Just show us the adverts so we can finish in ten minutes.”

Remember, Roger had not wanted to pitch in the first place, he was already in a bad mood and now the client was changing the rules to suit themselves. Roger handed his card to the client saying: “You clearly don’t have time to see our presentation today. When you’re next in London, call me and we’d be happy to show the work to you.” As they walked away the client offered half an hour instead of the original 10 minutes. Roger said: “We’ve worked on this - free – for a month and we show it on our terms or not at all. Goodbye.”

Roger’s team left. Just as they were getting into the taxi, the client rushed out and said: “You can have as long as you want.” So they went back in and pitched.

The next morning, the client arrived unannounced at their offices. “I came to tell you that you’ve won the business. We’re a small country and we can behave small-time on occasions. We need partners who will be strong with us.” [from “Life’s a Pitch” by Roger Mavity]

“Selling ideas: 1% inspiration, 9% perspiration, 90% justification”
George Lois 60s US Creative Chief

“How markets work.”

The chief of a Native American tribe was asked in the autumn by his people if the winter was going to be cold or mild. Being a 21st century chief he had no more idea than anyone else, but in order to look knowledgeable he said that it was going to be cold and told the people in his village to collect wood.

A few days later he rang the National Weather service. “Yes, it is going to be cold” they told him, so he asked his people to collect more wood. A week later he called again, “Is it going to be a cold winter?” he asked. “Yes very cold”. So he told his people to go back and collect every bit of wood they could.

Two weeks later he called again. “Yes” he was told, “it’s going to be one of the coldest winters ever”. “How can you be so sure?” the chief asked. The weatherman replied “The Native Americans are collecting wood like crazy”.

“Don’t wait for the light at the end of the tunnel. Stride down there and light the bloody thing yourself.” Sara Henderson, author

“Stories fuel imaginations.”

In Mozambique during the 1980’s civil war, the author Henning Mankel met a young man whose clothes were in tatters, who was very skinny and obviously hungry. “But this young man had used his imagination and the colours of roots and herbs to paint shoes on his feet, to keep and defend his dignity in some way.”

As Mankel said, “it’s important to tell his story because it could happen to all of us and it reminds us that we have many more ways of surviving than we may think. Human beings are very rationally made. If we didn’t need imagination to survive we wouldn’t have it.”

Tell stories so you can fill the imaginations of others and open their minds to what is possible.

“We’ll make them think it’s their idea. That’s how all great leaders fool people.”
Laura Preble, ‘Queen Geek Social Club’ author

Summary of Training & Coaching 2012

The Power of Storytelling

Who will benefit?

The art of storytelling is an important weapon in anyone's communication arsenal so any managers who have made a number of presentations and are competent at delivering.

Workshop outcomes:

- To understand the different ways to use stories in business presentations.
- A step guide to crafting stories.
- To develop the confidence to use stories to make more impact.
- To release imaginations to communicate more creatively.
- To observe themselves in action as a storyteller and receive feedback.

Maximising Business Presentations

Who will benefit?

Anyone who is making or going to be making business presentations.

Workshop outcomes:

- What makes a good presentation and how this impacts on their ability to close business.
- How to write a focused message that meets their audience's needs and showcases their talent.
- Confidence to bring their message alive by delivering a memorable presentation story.
- A framework for creating slides which support the presenter, not smother them.
- Personal insights of how to develop their presentation style to make stronger connections with feedback.

Advanced Business Presentations

Who will benefit?

For managers who make regular presentations to clients and would like to review their current methods and improve their effectiveness.

Workshop outcomes:

- A new approach to writing a memorable presentation.
- Ways to make stronger connections with audiences.
- Developing greater personal confidence to step outside the norm.
- Seeing themselves in action and getting extensive feedback.
- Understanding of their personal responsibility to improve the standard.

Conference Speaking

Who will benefit?

Anyone who is already or will be delivering conference speeches.

Workshop outcomes:

- A desire to 'deliver' for their conference provider, their audience, their company and themselves.
- A new approach to writing a memorable speech/presentation.
- An understanding of what they need to do to improve their performance and memorability.
- Seeing themselves in action and getting extensive feedback.

Selling Creative Ideas

Who will Benefit?

Anyone who has to sell ideas – whether the original creator or account management. Typically, a prospective delegate may lack confidence or feel unable to put together a logical argument or find it difficult to bring an idea alive. They may have only just started in the business or have years of experience.

Workshop outcomes:

- A better understanding of the 'client's viewpoint.'
- What is the most 'persuasive case for buying'.
- The skills to sell the logic behind the idea.
- The confidence to bring an 'idea alive', helping the client get into the right 'mind frame' for creativity and the right 'visual frame' to understand.
- A step-by-step plan of action for selling their ideas.

One-to-one Coaching

The areas we cover include:

1. Preparing for a major industry or company conference – speech writing and delivery.
2. Working on a particular aspect of delivery - voice, presence, body language, emotional connection.
3. Building greater self-belief and confidence in front of an audience.
4. Building greater connection and engagement through message and delivery.
5. Working on speaking fears/ being unable to rise to the presentation opportunity.
6. Working on assertiveness /building greater credibility /developing greater personal presence.
7. Helping prepare for MC'ing a major event.

Speakers' Corner

Helping people deliver their best stories

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