

How to Become a More Entertaining Speaker

If you look up the word entertaining in the dictionary you will find that it means amusing, interesting and pleasing. So, to become a more entertaining speaker you must become more amusing, interesting and pleasing to the audience you are addressing.

Here are a few practical suggestions to help you improve your entertainment quotient as a speaker.

1. Focus on the needs and wants of your audience. Remember that a bore is ME deep in conversation. To avoid being boring be audience centred not ME centred. Speak in terms of their desire to be recognized, to belong, to feel important and to enjoy pleasure and laughter. People need attention. There is nothing more affirming than the undivided attention and appreciation of another. If you want your audience to give you there undivided attention give them yours.
 2. Put a smile on your face the moment you enter the building and keep it there until you leave. I recall hearing a speaker who was very good when speaking but before he began and the moment he finished his smile was nowhere to be seen. Be conscious of the importance of your smile in meeting the needs and wants of your audience.
 3. Be enthusiastic about your life and your message. Enthusiasm is contagious and does get attention. Ask yourself if you were a member of your audience would you be listening attentively to what you were saying?
 4. Tell stories. A study was done at an American university to observe the factors that impacted positively on student attention and their retention of course content. It was found that when the professor used humor and storytelling in a lecture retention of material and attention to what was being taught increased significantly. There is a good message here for us as speakers.
 5. Laugh at yourself during your presentation. There is nothing people enjoy more than hearing and seeing a speaker laughing at his/her weaknesses and human foibles. It gives the audience permission to laugh at themselves when they see their own shortcomings and weaknesses reflected in yours. It promotes a "we're all in this together" attitude. I tell a story about the time I had parked my car outside our local post office. I got out to find a beautiful middle aged woman on the step of the post office. I sucked in my stomach, smiled as I bounded up the steps like a young gazelle and gave the woman an enthusiastic "HELLO!!" When I came out after doing my business she was still there so once again I gave her the time of day and got into my car looking and feeling quite suave. When I took out my keys and tried to insert them into the ignition they wouldn't fit.. I looked in the rearview mirror only to see my automobile two cars behind me. In my exuberance to impress and look suave I had entered the wrong car. All I could do is get out, look at the object of my attention and say, "OOOPS WRONG CAR" She just stood there looking very amused by my antics. Whenever I tell this story the audience roars and when I finish my presentation I usually have three or four people come up to share similar experiences with me. We are all in this together.
- If you don't laugh at yourself you leave the job to someone else.
6. Use your voice as an instrument. Show emotion, joy, intensity, amusement, frustration with your voice. Whatever you do, don't be a monotonic speaker. They are deadly.
 7. Have fun with your audience. Near the end of every presentation on humor and fun in the workplace I provide a rhythm band experience for members of my audience. I usually select 8 willing people to participate in this musical experience. I give each member of the group a rhythm band instrument similar to the instruments we all remember from primary school. With the instrument comes a brief instruction on how to play it. I don't teach them too much as the fun comes from watching them become creative in playing their instrument. I play and sing a song on the guitar and my band goes wild. If you can't play the guitar don't worry about it. Just select a song from a CD and play it for the band to accompany. The song isn't that important but the fun is. I have had CEOs from large companies in the band having a great time. After the concert I have had members of the audience say "I've never seen him/her like that before. They were actually having fun." Such is the liberating power of play.
 8. Tell your audience stories. We all love to be told stories whether we are six or sixty years old. In my audio CD "How to Use Storytelling in Public Speaking" I talk about the importance of storytelling and show you how to use them effectively in your presentations.. Stories amuse, inform, and entertain your audience so use them frequently.
 9. Be yourself. Get rid of the masks you hide behind and let your audience see and enjoy the real you.

10. Relax and enjoy the speaking experience. The audience is not your enemy. They want you to be good so their needs can be met and their time investment can be rewarded.

These are the basic elements involved in being a more entertaining speaker. Take one at a time and try to incorporate it into your presentations. You will be pleased with the results.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

About the Author

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