

3 THINGS GREAT SPEAKERS DO AND INTROVERTS CAN, TOO

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3 Things Great Speakers Do, and Introverts Can, too!

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Professional development for introverts By Merri Bame

Have you been asked to speak?

If you are an expert, are known to be the authority on a topic, or come top of mind regarding a specific field of focus, **you will be**, if not already. Perhaps your role as an attorney, your invitation to train, your pursuit of business or your leadership position puts you in a natural trajectory for speaking. If any one of these is a part of your current or future circumstances, you will be asked to speak.

For any of these reasons you need to sharpen your public speaking abilities.

Introverts commonly see themselves as *thinkers*, not speakers. Then when asked to speak, they struggle in all aspects of the speaking process, from planning to presentation. What they don't realize is they have so much to offer listeners based on their introvert skill set.

Experts commonly are introverts, and although they may not think of themselves as great speakers, they may soon see they have many things going for them that great speakers have. Once they break down their limitations on what makes for a great speaker, they become open to acting on a few key things great speakers act on. And soon they find public speaking is something they are cut out for.

If you are someone who has felt this way, I want to break down a few public speaking barriers so you, too, are motivated to be a great speaker and do what great speakers do.

MY GUARANTEE

I promise you 3 ways to make the most of your introvert strengths, so that with practice you, too, will be a great speaker, rounding out the strengths and value of your career focus.

Merri



3 Things Great Speakers Do, and Introverts Can, too!

#1

Speakers who speak well plan well

Those of us who enjoy planning are typically introverts. But just because we like the process does not mean we do it well. When most introverts are first assigned a message to deliver, at a conference, within a group meeting or in some other public format, they ask themselves, “What do I know?”

If they do it well, they don't speak too long or bore their listeners.

Speakers who *plan well* focus in 4 areas so their message is worth listening to and makes them feel good about what they have to say.

Area 1 – Speakers who plan well make ideas novel. They don't just address the usual. They break down this boredom barrier.

You no doubt plan, already. **Plan as great speakers do and plan to make your ideas novel.**

No matter your listening audience, one who needs to be informed, persuaded or motivated, you lead-by-speech when your ideas are presented with novelty.

A few years ago I was called on to motivate an audience of job seekers. They wanted to hear more about confidence. As I thought about this, I realized it is such a commonly used topic for job seekers so I felt the need to do something that would make it not only memorable but useful. **Here is how I was able to make my message novel.** I tapped into a part of my life experiences that could allow me to present the topic in a novel way – theatre. And I used this as **a theme** in the common subject of motivation.

My presentation title was Be the Star of Your Show. From the beginning, I pulled listeners into my message, because they not only wanted to be seen as stars, they wanted to feel that way. And most days on the job search they don't.

I helped them develop their *character* and *lines* for the “show”. I gave them *rehearsal* techniques. I discussed *costumes*. And I helped them understand the *curtain was up* from the moment they pulled into the parking lot. Rather than share experiences from my life with what they were going through, I built in audience engagement by helping them reflect on and learn from their own life experiences.

Most of them who spoke to me afterward told me they had never thought about confidence in terms of producing their own show but they also would never forget that theme or the elements of it. The day of my presentation, they left the venue with a lift.



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It seems hard to believe that we can still, today, find ways to bring an old idea to life. Yet that is the case. And I say that not because of my example above, but because I know that **many thoughtful introverts (probably extroverts, too) compare their personal experiences to common ideas by using themes.** I have been in many audiences where I listened to novel approaches to old ideas and came away with renewed appreciation for the thoughtful individuals who took the time to make that comparison for me.

To put novelty in your messages, plan the following:

First, share personal experiences. I know how hard it is to share personal experiences, especially when it puts you in a vulnerable position. But the fact is, we have all been there and can relate. Whether sharing from your own life or lives of those you know, this unique approach to building your message generates listener engagement with real-life examples.

So when you share lessons you have learned, or why you feel as you do, you open your listeners' willingness to hear more.

Secondly, address your ideas under the umbrella of a theme, using a metaphor from something common to your experiences to help us understand what is usually complex. That theme may be based on your experiences as an athlete, as a nature lover, or any other role that speaks to you, personally.

What speaks to you is what will speak to us. Find a theme that allows you to authentically address your topic.

Area 2: Speakers who plan well keep it simple - Speakers who plan well know *they must hone their message.* Many introverts struggle with this because of the volumes of information they have at their disposal. But if you are the public speaker, you will want to keep things simple so you and your listeners can focus. If you overwhelm listeners with volumes of information, you create a barrier between yourself and them. Break it down.

You have no doubt been in meetings and presentations when the person speaking did not simplify their message by focusing on only one or two key points. "And another thing..." tends to roll off their tongue frequently when speakers have such vast experience and knowledge and haven't learned the skill of being selective and keeping it simple.

In your case, as you plan to speak to others, keep it simple by asking yourself, **"If I don't have time to share anything else, what's the most important idea my listeners need to know?"**

This question helps you hone your focus and also gives you relief in *how* to plan your message. Your message needn't command more of your time than necessary, nor drain your energy.



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With a simple focus, you can remember your key points, and so will your listeners. With a simple focus you rest assured that you have the time to delve into stories, give specific examples, etc. You have the time to be both clear and comprehensive.

Distilling themes for messages you create helps with simplicity. It helps you remove the extra, unrelated material. Consequently, what you share is all meaningful –nothing is extraneous. Like in my example above, I tied everything to the theatre theme – character, script and costume.

Also, prioritize your content with no more than 3 points to continue simplicity. Listeners can only absorb this much information, so speakers should not try to pack their content beyond this limit.

In speaking, sharing two points helps you make a comparison, three points create completion. That's all you need! Keep your points simple. If you need to share lots of detail, put the details into categories (no more than 3!) for listeners' ease of understanding.

Area 3 - Develop your points - This is the foundation of speaker planning. Without thorough development you create the barrier of sharing nothing more than fluff. Introverts usually do this well. But because they feel natural at content development, they may not see there is a structure or system to it. **Review this system to be intentional about your content development.**

By developing the points of the message, speakers help their audience comprehend the information. To develop your points, **share** examples, stories, and/or illustrate with statistics. Since you have only 3 or fewer points to focus on, you have time to share development. **Just keep the examples and stories simple.**

Give listeners a few things to consider and then take the time to get them to *feel something* about it by providing story and example that back it up. This planning ensures you develop your points.

Finally, **use repetition** techniques. The old adage, “tell'em what you'll tell'em, tell'em, then tell'em what you've told'em” never gets old, especially with audiences. They need to *hear* where you're at in your message. Don't keep them in the dark!

Specifically, state your topic AND categories of focus while introducing your message (“I am here to share 3 tips in...”). Repeat the categories as you focus on them (“that concludes tip 1. Tip 2 is...”) and then conclude your message by restating or summarizing the nuggets you want listeners to remember.

Area 4 - Share organization or structure of content – Speakers who plan well know the power structure gives their listeners. Without structure, listeners ask themselves, “where is this going?” putting a barrier between speaker and credibility.



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Although you may be very structured, don't assume your listeners are. *Audiences are not as smart as they seem.* Be upfront. **Give them a roadmap to follow.**

"Today I will address 3 things for you to focus on so you can be the star in your show. The first thing you should focus on is..."

Select an organizational structure that allows your message to flow from point to point (maybe chronological order **past, present, future** or one based on a commonly known event relevant to the topic – in the job-seeker audience example this could be *pre-interview and post-interview*). As already mentioned in point 3 above (develop your points), once speakers determine their organizational structure, they should also state it in the introduction of their speech.

Speakers who *plan well* focus in 4 areas so their message is worth listening to and makes them feel good about what they have to say. Introverts and other speakers who take the time to plan for clarity, understanding and structure appeal to audiences and get personally enthused about the meaningful way they have created their message.

PLANNING TIP:

Complete your planning in time to test it out. (This takes us to the 2nd great thing speakers do)

If you plan, plan, plan, up until the day of your speech, you do yourself a disservice. Get clear about your focus, your novel ideas, your development and structure in advance. This leaves you time for the other things great speakers do.

In summary, plan well doing these things:

- Use novelty that grabs audience attention with a theme
- Hone your content focus to a few simple yet meaningful and relevant points
- Make sure listeners comprehend and feel what is intended by using various stories and examples
- Announce up front your focus and organizational structure so listeners can expect the flow as it happens



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#2

Speakers who speak well rehearse well

They ask themselves, “How will this message work?” You probably want to know this, too. Break down the barrier between knowing what works and what doesn’t. Rehearse as a great speaker would.

If you are an introvert, you want time in advance of the presentation not only to plan well, but to rehearse. Maybe this includes feedback from others, maybe not.

Rehearsing is a crucial step for introverts to take because it gives them practice expressing themselves. If they are more natural at writing than speaking, and many introverts are, it takes practice mentally converting written language into simple, concise spoken language. Additionally, if introverts only plan their message and don’t have the courage to uncover the weak spots, they may not develop the confidence and enthusiasm to follow through with the actual presentation.

Many attorneys and professional trainers take time to draft their message, get the words right, the transitions clear and the points made. But until they test it on their feet, out loud, they haven’t experienced what they need to do for the flow and the emotional engagement to happen. Great speakers include a rehearsal strategy in their preparation for several reasons. Introverts want to make their message great and therefore will want to rehearse it. Leaders want to know what tone they set by their words and whether they will be able to have the tough conversations.

Rehearsal in itself takes courage. Why does this rehearsal take courage? Because so often we learn of a need to make changes. Sometimes this feels like we have been wrong and we don’t like getting things wrong. But the introvert understands it is better to be wrong in rehearsal than to be wrong in front of the intended audience.

If a section of our message is boring, what we need is to mentally reconnect to its importance, add story or simplify the facts. When our message is muddy, we need to provide more clarity. When we forget what comes next in our message, we need to strengthen the organizational flow.

Introverts generally want to know they don’t look or sound stupid or disrespectful. How about you? Those who speak well rehearse in front of trusted colleagues, a neutral observer and even to a webcam. They ask for feedback from others. They want to see and hear how they come across.

This is how great speakers rehearse.

Great speakers not only **test all the technical elements** of their message (supportive material use, props, etc.), but also they **test their ability to recall the points** of their message, **to voice it** with clear language, **to emphasize** key ideas or phrases, **to gesture** meaningfully, **to pause** effectively and **to use their voice** with courage.



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When you take time to rehearse you have the chance to work things out – enthusiasm, message flow, body language and dynamics. These are the things that influence listeners. So rehearse because speaking to audiences is such an energy drain that we need to do what it takes to minimize the pain and magnify the value – audience responsiveness and receptiveness.

Make public speaking a worthwhile. Test your content and presentation delivery in advance. Get excited about the impact your message makes.

Rehearse the following to a webcam or live test audience:

- Test and correct your message for clarity and comprehension (vocal and printed elements)
- Test and correct your voice for appropriate tone
- Test and correct your body language for meaningfulness vs. distraction
- Discover what questions and what take a ways listeners have



#3

Speakers who speak well say YES to speaking

The great speakers know their last speech does not their next speech make. In other words, to keep speaking well, they must keep speaking. Speaking is not like riding a bike – we don't easily get back into the groove. Just like with leadership, speaking well requires us to keep doing it.

Every speaking circumstance is a chance to work on honing our message, building and displaying confidence and connecting to our audience. When we say no, we build a barrier between ourselves and these abilities.

When should we say yes to speaking?

When people request our feedback after we had the chance to observe what they want. Maybe this comes up at a practice group meeting or one on one. Get used to sharing your opinions and informed decisions aloud.

When we are invited to speak on a topic that makes sense for us to give enlightenment on. This could come after a project we worked on ends, after we have accomplished something, when we are considered an expert on a new development, etc. Plan, rehearse and show appreciation for the opportunity to speak.

When we are given the chance to suggest or recommend ideas. We are wired differently from those around us, and when we respond to the request to share “other” things, this is a time to stretch the boundaries. Maybe it's a request for agenda items for the next practice group meeting, a request for new perspective on professional development opportunities or means for marketing or rethinking our mission.

We can often predict these opportunities and plan/rehearse our message in advance, like a great speaker would do. Planned or not, like a great speaker we will say “yes” to speaking up.

Saying yes to speaking is the opposite of saying no because of self-doubt or fear. When *introverts* who speak well say yes to speaking, they demonstrate willingness to share, to connect with listeners and to relate.

Speakers who speak well, say yes to speaking whether they know in advance or not.

They take a moment to focus. Instead of listening to voices of alarm in their head when called on at the last minute, they shift from their emotional brain to their thinking brain by telling themselves, “Here's what I know.”

They get out of their head and turn to their audience. Instead of burying their eyes and nose in their notes or on their shoes, they look at one listener at a time and talk to them. They focus their attention on someone in the center for a moment or two, then to someone on their left, then to someone on their right. They actively



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focus on the entire audience while looking only 3 places! This calms them and helps their pitch stay in a comfortable range.

They shift from “fighting” (drawing a *line in the sand* by not looking at anyone) **or “fleeing”** (making eye contact through tennis match movements but *not really looking at* them, or worse, not agreeing to speak).

Even introverts can speak well off-the-cuff. Actually, they usually appear the most poised when under pressure, even though they may not feel it.

Say yes to speaking, which is your opportunity to connecting with your audience, one at a time.

In summary, say “yes” to speaking

- Get out of your head
- Connect to your audience
- Share your value

Introverts all have the potential to speak well. Speaking well relates to who they are.

Do the three things great speakers do. I challenge you to begin.



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Speak well, NOW.

Use your computer's webcam during this 3-part assignment.

PART ONE: Flesh out a 3-minute speech: Why I am here.

Focus on *why* you are working on your speaking skills.

1. Be real about an *issue* you have faced in the past
2. Take about 20 seconds to refer to an event that happened
3. Identify which of the three things great speakers do could have helped you resolve the issue
4. Share what your value as a speaker/individual is
5. Finally, share what you hope to accomplish from speaking well

Is your message clear? Complete? Tie it to a theme for further novelty.

PART TWO: Turn on your webcam and deliver the speech from Part ONE

Practice it a time or two and then press RECORD as you deliver the speech.

After you have recorded yourself, play it back and ask these questions of yourself:

How do you *feel* about your speaking issues? If you haven't done so, re-record and express that tone when sharing.

How do you *feel* about what you could have done to resolve the issue? Again, if needed, re-record and express that tone when sharing.

How do you *feel* about what you wish to accomplishment? Express that tone when sharing.

The goal is not only to share information clearly, but express it with the tone appropriate to your intent.

Have you captured the tones that fully express your message? Is your language simple and fluid?

Speak to the webcam while recording and watch the results. Delete as needed and re-record. You are the only one who needs to see the recordings.

PART THREE: Move to a space that helps you focus on the audience

If you are speaking to an audience, say yes to speaking again and practice focusing on them in the space around you.

Review your message one more time, then deliver your rehearsed message to an open space instead of your webcam.

Speak to three areas of the space as you would to an audience. (left, right, center)

Do you feel you are connecting to listeners? As you speak, take your time to look at listeners, individually. You will pull them in to you and make a connection.



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Practicing these things may not feel easy at first, but continue anyway. **Remember – audiences need you and you will gain peace of mind and possibly even pleasure from breaking down public speaking barriers!**

Learn the joys of sharing ideas and experiences that listeners appreciate as you develop the 3 things great speakers do to speak well.