

If Dogs Could Teach

If a dog were the teacher you would learn stuff like:

- ♦ When it's in your best interest, practice obedience.
- ♦ Let others know when they've invaded your territory.
- ♦ Run, romp, and play daily.
- ♦ Thrive on attention and let people touch you.
- ♦ Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.
- ♦ No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout...run right back and make friends.
- ♦ Eat with gusto and enthusiasm. Stop when you have had enough.
- ♦ Be Loyal. Never pretend to be something you're not.
- ♦ When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

— Author Unknown



Is public speaking your greatest fear?

We're Number One!

While back, I heard about a survey regarding people's greatest fears. Amazingly enough, death came in sixth. What was not surprising, however, was that the fear of speaking in front of audiences was at the top of the list.

When I speak to groups on presentation skills, I enjoy asking why the audience members think people are scared speechless. The answers usually fall into a short list:

- People are scared to be on display, in the spotlight.
- People are fearful of failure – failure in their presentation, and its spillover effect on their professional reputation. Speaking is not what people are “good” at, although they're good at what they're speaking about.
- People are scared to be up in front of strangers.
- Conversely, people are afraid of embarrassing themselves in front of those who *do* know them.
- Finally, folks are scared of what they can't know or control. Murphy's Law is lurking before each syllable and in every piece of A/V equipment in use, just waiting for the one moment where it will throw the presenter totally off-balance.

So, what can the amateur speaker do to net the stomach butterflies?

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Business Boost

— Twenty Questions —

"The secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his opportunity when it comes."

— Benjamin Disraeli

Are you, and your business, ready for each opportunity as it arises? Do you know where you are going and how you will get there?

Here is a list of questions to help you prepare for future opportunities and today's success.

Answer these questions to the best of your abilities and keep this as a working document for your business...and life.

1. What will your company look like 3, 5, 10, and 20 years from today?
2. Who is your competition?
3. Are they better in any areas than your company? (If so, what areas and how?)
4. Who will be your competition? Do you see any new competitors coming in to your industry?
5. Can someone put you out of business today? (How and why?)
6. What do you do better than anyone else? (How do you know?)
7. What are the weakest areas of your company? (Staffing, billing, marketing, etc...)
8. What are the biggest challenges you are facing in your business and your industry?
9. Do you have specific goals, outcomes, and results outlined for your business?
10. What is keeping you from achieving these goals?
11. Are all of your employees "on board" with where you want to take the company? (Do they know the direction you are headed?)
12. Do you measure your customer satisfaction on a regular basis? (If yes, what do you do with the results? If no, why not?)
13. What qualities and traits do you look for in business leaders?
14. Do you possess these qualities/traits?
15. Do your employees and key associates possess these qualities/traits?
16. What would happen to your business if everyone possessed these qualities and traits?
17. When faced with a challenge, problem, or dilemma would key employees make the same decision for correcting the problem?
18. Do you have a value system in place that will help direct the decisions for your company? (You only need 4-8 values that can guide you and your staff in the decision making process. Employees must have a detailed explanation for each one)
19. Have you evaluated the current conditions externally and internally for the direction you want to take your business?
20. Do you have a detailed marketing plan for your company?

These are just a few of the areas in which you will need specific answers in order to be prepared for opportunities, the future, and success. We will have additional questions and information in future articles to help you **"Boost Business"**

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Did You Know —

It was the accepted practice in Babylon 4,000 years ago that for a month after the wedding, the bride's father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead he could drink.



Mead is a honey beer and because their calendar was lunar based, this period was called the honey month; we now know it as the honeymoon.

Continued on next column —

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Well, first off, he or she can remember that audiences assume that the speaker is an expert. This “halo effect” that the speaker inherits can cover an awful lot of sins. And, you know what? If the speaker does goof – unless it’s at a National Speakers Association convention – the audience is likely to be very sympathetic. There, but for the grace of God, go I...

If that assumption of expertise doesn’t settle your nerves enough, try these ideas:

- Be prepared. Have a speech outline. Practice until you can just about recite your remarks by heart. You may not be a speaker, but you can be the expert the audience expects you to be.
- Be really prepared. Check your A/V equipment, handouts, microphone, meeting space logistics, etc. Make sure you have a glass of water (if your throat gets dry, or you need to stall for time).
- Distract yourself. Read a book. Crank up the tunes on your iPod. Take a short walk.

Here’s one more activity that will make your talk more effective and successful, as well as get your mind off your nerves. Go out into the meeting room or auditorium that you’ll be speaking in and meet your audience as they come in. Ask them what they’re hoping to get out of your talk. Find out if they have any specific areas they’d like you to focus on. Smile and shake hands.

The reason you want to do this, whether or not you’re nervous, stems from a basic tenet you’ll probably tire of my writing about. Simply put, everything you do is a customer service activity. You are trying to give your customers the best possible experience. By asking the audience what they want to hear about, you give yourself an opportunity to change the focus of your talk in order to better meet the customers’ needs. In addition, the presumed expert coming down from the stage or podium to mingle with the audience sends one more very powerful message: “Hey, the speaker is one of us” – not some unapproachable icon. While you’re not appearing to make friends, people buy from people they like. Closing the status gap between expert and audience goes a long way to making the speaker someone that people can relate to or empathize with.

Nerves are perfectly normal, you know. The good thing, though, is that they’re invisible. No one has to know that you’re nervous, but your body and your voice can betray your inner demons. That, however, is a topic for another day and another issue of the paper.

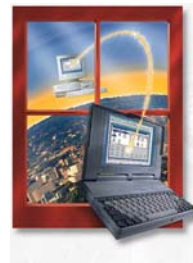
Eric A. Sohn is the Chief Idea Officer of IdeaFountain Business Resources (www.Idea-Fountain.com), Thinking Successfully™. Email any questions or comments to Eric at CoachEric@Idea-Fountain.com.



ONE MINUTE IDEAS

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Tips To Make You A Better Listener



You can become a better listener if you want. You can stop some of the main roadblocks to listening before they begin. Changing your environment and approach to listening will result in better listening and better communications.

Control Distractions. One of the biggest distractions is the telephone. You are giving the speaker your full attention and then the phone rings. When you answer the call you are sending the message that you are not listening and it interrupts the discussion and train of thought. You can avoid this by directing all calls to voice mail or have an assistant answer the incoming calls.

Be Organized. If your desk is cluttered with paper, notes, books, etc., then your eyes will probably skim the material and you will find that you end up reading some of it instead of listening.

File or put the stuff in a drawer so that you won't be distracted. If you go to a meeting room, take only material related to the topic of discussion.

Be An Active Listener. Participate in the discussion by asking questions and clarifying what is being said. This will show the other person that you are understand and are interested in what they are saying.

Take Notes. It is virtually impossible to remember everything said in a lengthy conversation. Jot down notes and key phrases to jog your memory for future reference. Immediately after the meeting write the details and a summary of the discussion.



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