

# Three Myths of Public Speaking

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## 1) Avoid Getting Emotional

There is a widely peddled myth that emotion has no place in the business world. This is patently untrue to anyone who has ever worked in any business. Businesses are all about emotion. In fact they are driven by them - ambition, fear, passion, greed, powerlust, altruism, even love. Feelings are what get us out of bed in the morning and into the office, and feelings, positive or negative, shape our entire experience of the working world.

Anyone who thinks that presenting to a business audience is about giving them the bare facts with no emotional content is a speaker guaranteed to have their audience asleep within the first 30 seconds. Audiences need an emotional context - they need to know not only what the facts are, but how you want them to feel about the facts. If there is no emotional hook, they will not pay attention, and will not remember a thing.

Think about a speaker who has made an impact on you - were they carefully "neutral" - not a chance! Once you realise this, you understand that your job as a passionate speaker is to let your audience know how you feel about your material, and they in turn will know how to feel about it. Then, and only then, will it be memorable.

## 2) You can't go wrong with PowerPoint©

Every one of us has sat through "Death by PowerPoint". And yet as soon as we are asked to talk to any group of people bigger than 3, we reach for the company Corporate Style Bullet Point Template. Why inflict this on fellow humans?

The key question to ask yourself is where do you want your audience to look - at you, or at the screen?. And 90% of the time the answer must be "at you". Remember point 1 above – the emotional content is paramount. Nobody's going to get that from a series of bullet points, no matter how beautifully indented! So use slides for the moments when you specifically want your audience to look at a piece of visual information - but the rest of the time you should be their focus.

Slides must support you, not the other way round. Slides are great to show complex data that are hard to describe in words - graphs, grids, charts. Slides are also fantastic for showing visual images - photos, diagrams, mind-maps. And PowerPoint can also allow you to show video, play music, build pictures.

The rest of the time, your audience should be looking at you.

### 3) Speakers Are Born, Not Made

It's easy to believe that some people just never get nervous, while others (like you!) are always going to be terror-struck.

Everyone gets nervous. Yes, everyone. Lawrence Olivier, star of stage and screen without peer, used to throw up in the wings before going on stage. Enrico Caruso, Peter O'Toole, Barbara Steisand, Iggy Pop, Donny Osmond, Kate Hudson, Daryl Hannah, Courtney Cox Arquette - the list of famous performers who suffered bouts of stage fright is endless.

And there are a number of things you can do about your nerves:-

- use breathing and other exercises to lessen the symptoms.
- use visualisations and affirmations to boost your confidence
- rehearse, rehearse, rehearse, until you feel more confident
- watch yourself on video to see how less nervous you look compared to how you feel
- decide to enjoy the buzz of adrenaline, rather than dread it!

And the good news is, the more you speak in public, the easier it will get.