

Lesson 3:

Subject line: Third Lesson – Public Speaking Know How

Hello once again,

It's time for your third lesson in the Public Speaking Know How Crash Course. Today lesson is all about what to do when your presentation doesn't go as planned.

Public speaking is a totally live event which means anything can happen while you're on stage. So, what do you do when things go off script? It's one of the biggest fears most public speakers have when they're in front of a crowd. It can also one of its greatest rewards.

The answer is to be prepared for the unexpected. I know that sounds strange but it is important to learn how to handle mishaps and interruptions so that you can keep the talk going even when things go wrong. As you're planning your speech try to think ahead.

- What you will do if something unexpected happens?
- What will you do if your slides get mixed up?
- What if your microphone stops working?
- How will you get back on track and keep the attention of your audience?
- How will you handle a heckler?

Questions or objections from the audience have the potential to ruin your presentation if you aren't prepared for them. The next thing you know you're confused, tongue-tied and the whole talk goes down the toilet while you stand there feeling mortified. It's not a good feeling.

The best thing you can do to avoid this is plan ahead. If you set out to do your talk as a speech, not a discussion and someone interrupts, the first thing to do is recognize the disrupter to assure the crowd you can handle the situation. Your audience comes to your talk assuming you're in control of the room and its important you maintain that control. So, do your best to address the unruly spectator in a way that keeps the audience focused on you and not them.

If someone is being extremely difficult and clearly wants to disrupt the entire presentation that's when the organizers should step in and remove that person. But many times, the interruption could be a logical and politely asked question or need for clarification.

Chances are that if one person asks a question, four or five others in the crowd had that question but didn't have the courage to interrupt you. Sometimes the disruption may not even be verbal. It might be a hand in the air or a facial expression that is clearly communicating the need to interact with you.

Again, the more you can maintain composure and recognize the question and either answer it or divert from it, the more confidence the crowd will have in you. Often, the question can easily be answered without throwing you off track.

A good tip is to say something like; "That is an outstanding question which is right here on my notes" or "I will be answering that in a moment". When you do that, it gets a positive reaction from the questioner and the crowd. Then you can continue with your talk just making sure you address the question as promised before you conclude the presentation.

To help maintain a feeling of control and calm by thinking through how you will handle the unexpected before you even step on stage. If you do that, it will work to your advantage and the result can be an even better presentation.

Here is an interesting article that shares some tips for handling an unruly heckler:
<https://drmichellemazur.com/2013/06/how-to-handle-hecklers-in-3-easy-steps.html>

That's it for today's lesson. In your next lesson, we will be talking about how to use stories to enhance your presentation.

Until then,

Take care,



Paul Henderson

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