



The Genard Method

PERFORMANCE-BASED
PUBLIC SPEAKING TRAINING

INSIGHTS

Gary Genard's

Six Rules of Effective Public Speaking

Great speakers don't just speak—they *perform*. As an actor and speech coach, I understand that intuitively and always communicate it to clients.

And here's the interesting thing: you should understand it the same way yourself. Whatever type of speaking you do—in business, socially, or for personal pleasure—you're performing. The sociologist Erving Goffman wrote a book entitled *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* that makes that very point: we all perform roles day in and day out, every day of our lives. Public speaking is no different.

To be effective in your speeches and presentations, then, accept this strong relationship between performance and success. In fact, the more you can connect with audiences rather than remaining in the comfort zone of your content, the more successful you'll be.

Here are my Six Rules of Effective Public Speaking that embody my philosophy that great speaking means great performing:

Rule #1: Make the Audience the Center of Your Universe. You're not the focus of the speaking engagement! No matter how many times you may tell yourself this obvious truth, you'll have a hard time until you get it into your presentation DNA. Ultimately, every good speaker cares more about the audience than themselves. This can be a tough prescription to fill if you have speech anxiety, which tends to wrap you in a cocoon of anxiety and self-consciousness. But the good news is this: focusing fully on the audience lifts a tremendous burden from your shoulders in terms of worrying about your performance. To disappear into getting your message across to listeners is the most wonderful thing that can happen to you as a speaker.

Rule #2: Focus on Relationships. If the audience is the center of your universe, you're already pointed in the right direction concerning what you're there to do: establish a relationship and maintain it throughout your talk. If your content could live on its own, it would—there would be no need for anyone to gather to hear you, and you could make your information an email attachment. Instead, three relationships exist within the presentation dynamic: your relationship to your audience; your relationship to the content; and the audience's relationship to the content. In the first, you engage, interest and activate your listeners; in the second, you interpret your content for those listeners; and in the third, the audience relates to your content because you've pointed out why it matters to them. What's the outcome of this method of proceeding as a speaker? — Success!

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Rule #3: Give Your Purpose Most of Your Attention. Too many speakers confuse topic and purpose. For instance, I'll ask a client, "What's your purpose with this presentation?" And the response will be, "Well, I'm going to talk about--" "No," I say, "that's your topic . . . what's your purpose?" And then it becomes clear what I mean. Yes, your information is what you're there to talk about. But it definitely isn't what you're there to make happen. Audiences hope to be better for the experience of listening to you—and that's exactly what you must try to make happen. Being clear on your purpose will help you gather exactly the right information to make it so.

Rule #4: Use Your Body. Your body is a natural tool of communication—and a powerful one at that. After all, there's a reason you're not a brain in a bell jar communicating telepathically. Audiences need you to give physical expression to the things you're saying. So, some suggestions: Always stand rather than sit if you have a choice (and so avoid eliminating 50% of your communication instrument). If you're using a lectern, come out from behind it from time to time. Make your gestures spare, few in number, and strong enough to emphasize the point you're making. And by all means use space effectively, taking a different position for each main point, for instance, and reducing the distance between you and your audience wherever possible.

Rule #5: Color Your Vocal Delivery. Your voice is the most flexible communication tool you own, apart from the brain itself. It's capable of a wide range of coloration and effects, from astonishment and incredulity to mockery and seduction and a hundred other intentions. To speak without vocal variation means using a "mono" or single tone; and from the combined word monotone derives the derogatory monotonous. If you're limited vocally, work with a speech coach to unlock your presentation voice so you can deliver fully to your listeners. The chances are good that you incorporate a lively vocal dynamic when you're angry, passionately arguing a point with friends, or sharing the excitement of a movie, sporting event, or important milestone in your life. Why not share that excellent performer with your audience in formal speaking situations?

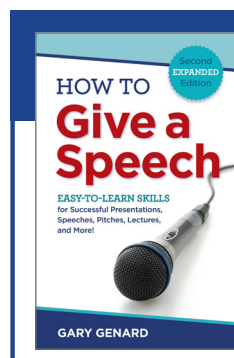
Rule #6: Get Good at Q & A—Really Good. I call Q & A "the forgotten avenue of audience persuasion," for a very good reason. Virtually anyone can give a reasonable presentation if they prepare and practice enough. During the presentation itself, that is, all should go well. But what happens when the presentation ends and the questions, challenges, and push back begin? We all understand that a presenter can't know what's coming his or her way once Q & A begins. The speaker who can handle the situation with style, expertise, a level head, patience, and a bit of self-deprecating humor, is the person who will embody rock-solid credibility and authority on the topic. So learn to think on your feet. Improv classes, impromptu topics, and "murder panels" are all excellent ways to become calm and convincing in the whirlwind of Q & A.

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