

CHAPTER 1

The Presenter Who Speaks with Poise and Confidence Is Always Seen as the Expert

“What makes a king out of a slave? Courage!”

—The Cowardly Lion, *The Wizard of Oz*

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After the German surrender in World War I, the Treaty of Versailles was signed, giving a number of German territories to surrounding countries. When Hitler came to power, one of his main goals was to reunite the lost cities with the “fatherland.” By August 1939, he had succeeded in reacquiring each of the lost German cities, except for one. The Treaty of Versailles gave the city of Danzig to Poland, which gave the Polish people a land route to the Baltic Sea, referred to as the Polish Corridor. The corridor made this tiny city vitally important to the Polish economy but this last city was also symbolic to the German people, because with Danzig added back into Germany, the Treaty of Versailles was entirely void. So when Hitler requested access to this corridor and Poland refused, war between Poland and Germany was imminent.

In September, Poland turned to Great Britain for help and the two countries signed an Agreement of Mutual Assistance. This assured Poland that if Germany tried to take Danzig, Great Britain and her ally France would likely go to war with Germany. Although the agreement with England gave Hitler pause, the goal to reunite the fallen Germany was too tempting, and Germany and their new ally, the Soviet Union, invaded.

As the new head of state for England, King George VI was responsible for announcing that Great Britain would again be going to war with Germany, but King George had a big problem. King George suffered from a chronic stammer, making simple words almost impossible for him to pronounce. He had particular trouble with the letter *k* (which had the potential for great embarrassment for a *king*). Prior to the speech, he had spent years working with a speech

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therapist, Lionel Logue, who helped him reduce this stammer, but King George was on the verge of the biggest, most important speech of his life. The pressure was mounting.

On September 3, 1939, King George VI had to address his subjects to inform them that “for the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war.” For a little less than 6 minutes, the king spoke without stuttering or stammering. His poise and confidence were an inspiration to the British people. For literally the first time in his young reign, England saw King George as a real leader and a powerful statesman.

The British people needed a calming voice to relieve their fear of the imminent war “that would not be on the battlefield, but on their doorsteps.” What would have happened if King George had addressed the people with the hesitation and the nervousness that had plagued him for most of his life? This one successful presentation changed King George and changed the future of Europe.



The Person Who Speaks with Confidence Is Always Seen as the Expert

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People judge our competence by the confidence that we show when we stand up and speak, and the person who can stand up and say what he or she wants to say with poise will always be seen as an expert in his or her field. Conversely, the person who can't speak confidently will have a hard time convincing others that he or she is a leader.

Let's say, God forbid, that you get appendicitis, and you have to have your appendix removed. Prior to the operation, the surgeon enters your room and describes the procedure to you. However, just before he speaks, you see a quiver in his lip and notice his hands trembling slightly. As he begins to tell you about the operation, he speaks in choppy sentences and even loses his place for a moment and seems confused.

There is a good chance that no matter how much pain you are in, you will be clamoring to get a second opinion immediately. This surgeon may have graduated at the top of his class and may have even written a number of books on the subject, but that initial perception that he is generating is one of insecurity and incompetence. It would be even worse if he rolled in the PowerPoint slide show so that he wouldn't forget anything.

The point is that the confidence that a person shows when standing up to speak is often perceived by others to be competence in what he or she does. Stand and speak with poise and confidence about a subject that you know thoroughly, and your audience will always see you as being the expert in that field. In fact, if all other things are equal between two people, the one who speaks well will always be seen as more competent than the one who speaks poorly (or not at all).

Early in my career, I volunteered to speak at local business events in my hometown, and I began to build for myself a reputation of being a pretty good speaker. One of the vice presidents of a national financial planning firm saw me speak at a couple of events, and he pulled me aside after one of my presentations to discuss a problem

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that he was having. He told me that his company used local seminars as a way to attract potential new clients to their firm, and he had been looking for a person to lead their seminars.

“All my guys are thoroughly trained in securities, trading, financial planning, and even insurance, but when we invite potential customers to our meetings, we need someone who can really build that trust with the people in the audience,” he explained. “We are one of the, if not *the*, most successful financial planning companies in the world, but we really need someone who can portray that to an audience.” His idea was to hire me on a contract basis and have me “wow” the audience and build a rapport with them. Then we would let his financial planners follow up with the investors after the presentation.

I understood his thought process, but his plan would have a tough time succeeding. One of the main benefits of being a good presenter is that your words carry a lot of weight with the audience, and if you do a great job, you can really build trust and rapport with them. So if I, someone outside of his company, were his speaker, his audiences might like and even trust me, but when I left the room, that trust would evaporate—especially if immediately after I left, the folks who were having trouble speaking to groups in the first place took over. The trade-off would have been awkward and clumsy.

What I suggested to him instead was to train his financial planners to present more confidently. Public speaking is just like any other skill and can be learned. In fact, it can be learned very quickly and easily if you use a step-by-step process. Once that confidence is gained, the presenters have a strategic advantage in the marketplace. It took us about six months, but by the end of the process, each of his financial planners were leading their own seminars and building their client list significantly month after month. The words that they spoke in their seminars and the way that they carried themselves portrayed their expertise in their industry. Keep in mind that they were always

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the experts, but before they improved their presentations, the audiences who they spoke to just didn't see it.

This company's situation was like having a Lamborghini and keeping it in the garage under a protective cover. They knew what they had, but the world never got to see it. If you have one of the fastest and coolest cars on the planet, then you have to drive it. Once they started "driving," their revenue and client base increased exponentially.

If you have an expertise that the business world or consumers need, then you have to let the world know about it. Public speaking is one of the fastest and easiest ways to let the world know that you are an expert. (Incidentally, it is often a form of free publicity. Or in some of cases, people will actually pay you to do it. Literally—customers will actually pay you to market to them!)

Look for places where your prospective customers gather and volunteer to share your expertise with them. For instance, if you are an insurance agent, offer to speak at the local multiple listing service (MLS) meeting or Realtor Association meeting, because if someone buys a new house, they will also need insurance for it. You could let these realtors know about trends in insurance rates that might cause a sale to stall or how to help their clients combine policies to save and lower their monthly escrow payments, which lowers the amount due each month for their mortgage.

Or if you are a banker, you might volunteer to speak at a local small-business association meeting or small-business breakfast and teach the attendees how to write a business plan that is likely to help them get a small-business loan. Or a banker might speak at colleges or universities to help young people avoid falling into the trap of incurring too much debt. This same banker might even partner with a financial planner and do a seminar for clients on how to lower their mortgage payments so that they can invest more in their retirement.

YOU ARE THE EXPERT

Regardless of what industry you are in or what expertise you have, you first have to realize that you are the expert at something and the knowledge that you have is valuable to someone. When I was 14 years old, my dad owned a home remodeling company, and every winter, I crawled under houses to help him repair frozen pipes that had burst. After a couple of winters, I had so much experience doing this, that I could do it in my sleep. By the time I was a teenager, I was an expert at repairing ruptured PVC pipes. After I graduated college, my first real job was working for an oil company doing title work for mineral rights. After a couple of years, not only had I gotten pretty good at it, but I had also trained a number of new people. My third year in the training industry, I generated a half-million dollars' worth of sales for the first time, and that same year, I also received a couple of awards for outstanding instruction. It took me five years as an entrepreneur to attain my first million dollars, but it took only about eight more months to generate my second million. With each of these accomplishments, I became the expert, because I had information that the general public didn't have (even when my expertise was repairing frozen pipes).

Don't underestimate your knowledge. Your experience has made you the expert.

One of my friends in college was going to school to be an elementary schoolteacher, and she absolutely hated math. However, once she graduated, she found out that in the state of Texas, math and science teachers were in high demand and were therefore paid an extra fee. Knowing this, she decided to become a fourth grade math teacher. Those of us who knew her pretty well were laughing when we asked her about her career choice, because for the three or four years that we had known her, she complained repeatedly about the basic math, algebra, and trigonometry classes that she had to take in

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school. These classes were her nemeses. After a little teasing from us, she replied by saying, “In order to teach fourth grade math, I just have to be an expert at fifth grade math,” and I learned a prophetic life lesson. To be an expert at something, you just need to have a little more knowledge than your audience.

For instance, let’s say that you are a restaurant manager who turned around a struggling location. How many other managers in the world would want to hear how you did it? You’d be the expert at restaurant turnarounds (especially if you were able to do it a second or third time). Or say you are a dentist who excels at getting your patients to show up for every six-month checkup. Other dentists would pay dearly to figure out how you do it. Whatever you do on a day-to-day basis makes you the expert at that activity.

Because you are the expert, you have credibility in the marketplace.

After teaching presentation skills classes for about 10 years, I received a contract to teach presentation skills and leadership for members of the Associated General Contractors of America. After teaching classes for these member companies for a couple of years, the participants began to think of me as being an expert in the commercial construction industry. Keep in mind that I had never once built a big skyscraper. In fact, I knew very little about the day-to-day operations of general contractors. However, because I had worked with so many general contractors in that first couple of years, I had more expertise in the industry than other leadership and presentation coaches. I had developed a specialty.

A friend of mine did the same. He decided that every sales trainer targets car dealerships as potential customers, so instead, he decided to specialize in conducting sales training for salespeople who sell trailer houses. He had very little competition in this industry and quickly became the go-to expert.

One of my clients hired me to coach a few of his employees who were preparing for what he called a short list presentation, which was

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a presentation where a short list of qualified vendors were competing for a very large contract. Although everyone in the room knew more about building skyscrapers than I did, I knew way more about designing and delivering presentations than any of them did. With my coaching, they were able to borrow my expertise to deliver their presentation in a much more fluid and effective way.

After doing this kind of training a few times with some pretty remarkable success, I quickly became known as the short list presentation coach, and I had developed a brand-new expertise.

Ask yourself, “What am I really, really good at?” and you will quickly find out what your expertise is. Once you realize that you are the expert, the rest is relatively easy.

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