

Public speaking for dummies who agree to give speeches

Written by Julie Desmond

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Public Speaking

Public Speaking:

The process of speaking to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence, or entertain the listeners.

(Wikipedia)



In business, people occasionally have to talk with other people. Sometimes, they address groups of people. Sometimes, those groups are rather large. On Saturday, I will be representing my family at the Walk to End Alzheimer's disease.

Maybe you'll be there. If you are, you will hear me present information to you and 5000 other people. 5000 people. That's a big group. Someone close to me asked me today, "How are you going to do that?" Here's how.

I am going to talk about something I know about. If you are ever invited to speak on a topic you know little or nothing about, you have two choices. Either, you should say, "No," or... actually, you only have that one choice. And if you do know a little something about the topic, and you agree to speak, you must do what even the experts do: research. Investigate your topic with your audience in mind. The more expert you are, the more important it is to consider what other people might want to know.

I am going to bring personal stories. Bringing personality and personal stories to a presentation makes the talk far more interesting to listeners. "Tell me something I don't know," people say. Personal stories are a little like gossip; they reveal insights that the general public doesn't have access to.

I am going to practice. In fact, I am going to use parts of a presentation I have made before. The last time I gave this talk, it was in front of a mirror. The time before that, it was in front of 200 people. That's almost 5000, but not quite. So I will practice in front of the mirror again, as a favor to the 4800 people who have not heard this presentation yet.

I am going to speak slowly. More people means more distraction. It's unlikely that, in a wide open stadium on a Saturday morning, the audience will be silently attentive. But some will be interested, and for them, I will speak slowly and deliberately, so the message comes across as intended.

I am going to stay at the podium until the next speaker steps up. This is the rule according to Toastmasters; good enough for me.

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And I am going to thank my hosts, my fellow presenters and, especially, my audience. Because I am grateful for the opportunity to step up and do this. Maybe you'll be in the crowd on Saturday. And if you are, then, Thank you!

Julie Desmond is IT Recruiting Manager with George Konik Associates, Inc. Send your career and job search questions to Julie at jdesmond@georgekonik.com .