



5 Simple Steps To Improve Your Public Speaking Skills In 1 Hour

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From IT to Inspiration: My Path to Public Speaking Success

Congratulations on taking this first and most important step toward improving your public speaking skills.

For majority of the people public speaking stands as one of the biggest fears of their life. The rest just think that they are already good speakers and presenters. The latter was certainly true for me! I thought of myself as a good presenter and speaker who didn't need to work or improve this skill set. Wrong I was.

This is where my journey in public speaking started, and before I started embarking on this journey, I had no intention of even thinking of a career change or doing what I am doing now.



My Journey to Public Speaking

Between 1997 and 2002 I was working as an IT consultant in Iran. The job required that I deliver many seminars, workshops, and some keynote speeches. While I had learnt to control my immense fear of stepping on stage, nevertheless, each time I had to start a session my heart would pound as if it was going to explode in my mouth.

For bigger events, my anxiety level would reach an all high and I would even end up with a cold sore at times from the sheer stress that it caused.

In early 2001 I moved back to Spain, where I started a new IT company. Soon after the only public speaking I would do would be related to my work and the services I offered. During the same time, a friend of mine setup a local Toastmasters Club (The Achievers Marbella Toastmasters). I turned down the offer of joining thinking that I had already mastered this skill and there was little I could learn or improve. I ignored the fear factor thinking it was normal and ignoring the learning experience that came with it, while thinking there was nothing more I needed to learn or improve in my communication or presentation skills.

Between 2001 and 2014, I spoke at many events, and in particular, I found myself pitching to investors and clients regularly, as I had founded a new Startup. The pounding heart was a regular issue which I fixed with a glass of Baileys or a shot of vodka. The rest, I just thought I knew what I was doing.

Then in 2015, I found myself going through my mid-life crisis. I was looking to get back into academia, doing an MBA or anything that involved learning and growing. That's when my path crossed again with the club I had refused to join in early 2000. It took only one session for me to realise what I had been missing, how much I had to learn, and how this could be a game-changer for me.

So my journey in public speaking really started in 2015, when I learnt how to convert my fear to joy and to energise the crowd. It was the journey where I learnt how to motivate rather than persuade. It was when I learnt to speak to my partner and children. All those basic communication skills that I thought I possessed and yet I had no clue.

Improving my public speaking has transformed my life. Over the past 5 years, I have presented numerous public speaking boot camps for startups, companies, and CEOs.

Regardless of your decision or intention, here are five simple tips on how you can improve your public speaking and presentation skills, and in the process learn to deliver lasting messages that resonate with your audience.



1) Controlling the fear & anxiety

Some people love the stage, but not all people are born that way, otherwise I would say that most speakers and people have to work on this skill set and on getting over the fear of public speaking.

I will never forget my first speech presentation at school. I was 17 years old. We were asked to do a presentation at school. I had prepared for it, but I froze as soon as I stepped on the stage. I stood there for a few minutes and then started shaking. It was so bad, I had to be helped off the stage. The trauma was so immense that for the next 10 years, every time I had to deliver a speech, I would get cold soars from the stress and anxiety! Years later I ended up presenting seminars, and workshops while working for a leadership organization. The nervousness and anxiety never died and I would carry on controlling it with a glass of vodka or Baileys to calm my nerves.

Many people suggest that you should take a deep breath, practice mindfulness, stretch, or jump. The list is endless. And yes, all of those techniques are very useful, but what really helped me was becoming aware of what caused this feeling of fear:



1. The feeling of being attacked

2. The feeling of being judged

The feeling of being attacked is primal reaction from our animal brain and instinct. Our brain is still geared to continuously scan the horizon for any predators that might attack us. It looks for eyes and shapes that resemble faces. This is also why you see faces and eyes in the most abstract paintings, fields, clouds in the sky, and mountain formations.

You can eliminate this fear by simply becoming aware and preventing this message from being converted into an "attack alert message" while it is being processed in the brain. When you look at eyes, whether it is tens, hundreds, or thousands, turn the story around to the fact that they are admiring you, they are looking up to you, they love you. Those eyes are not attacking, but loving you.

Then establish connections with as many people as you can, by smiling back at them. Start with people you know and move on to people whom you don't know. Smile and greet them in low volume and see how they reciprocate. Once you have this in motion, you will feel at ease and you will also put the audience at ease. It is the simplest technique you can use to release the anxiety and fear factor.

The feeling of being judged is heightened by our anticipation of making mistakes, being embarrassed, or facing criticism. Being judged can be debilitating, however, you can eliminate this feeling altogether when you speak on subjects where you have domain expertise. This is why I always tell people *"If you want to become a public speaker or pick it up as a profession, make sure you do it by focusing on one of your areas of expertise"*. If you are an expert in a subject then you can answer almost any question and if anyone suggests anything different or contrary, you can make it a matter of opinion and open to discussion. It is no longer judgment, or lack of knowledge.

In order to get over these fears, first make sure you speak about what you know, and if you don't know enough, then this is your opportunity to research and learn more about it. This is part of our learning and growing journey as well. Once you are confident that you have gathered enough knowledge and can answer most questions then practice those breathing and mindfulness exercises suggested in popular blogs and books.

You are now ready to step on the stage. Take a deep breath and walk onto the stage thinking that everyone admires you. Start by smiling and greeting the people you know. Let them smile at you and then move your eyes from one person to the next; smile, greet, and repeat.

2) Practice

You may think that actors, singers, and speakers are great just like that, and that they can step on stage and perform. NOPE. They are amazing because they practice, practice, and practice.

Don't expect to be able to write a presentation on paper and then simply be able to deliver. All professionals practice. They write a draft version, then practice! Rewrite and then practice. They practice it out loud. They present it as if they were on stage. They imitate asking questions and being answered. They play scenarios. Public Speaking is a job and like every job, it requires a lot of practice and preparation. Of course, as with everything, the more you practice, the better you become at it. I still practice for every keynote speech. I practice and test and check to see that everything I have written flows seamlessly. If I stumble and feel anything that does not flow while I am practicing, I change it, rewrite it, and practice by starting all over again.

Don't underestimate the power of practicing and testing. Testing the stage on the day of the presentation. Testing how it feels to be dressed up and speak. Testing to hold the microphone. Testing to hold a microphone and a pointer or clicker.

One more piece of advice. Once you have practiced and internalized it, sleep on it and then practice again.

3) Filler words and Body language

Now that you have started practicing you need to bring your awareness to two important issues that affect the quality of your speaking.

A) Filler words

B) Body Language

Filler words are sounds like “umms” and “emms” which we tend to make when we are thinking and haven’t fully gathered our thoughts to build the next sentence. Listen to any amateur speaker or even just your friends. In any general chat, the conversation is filled with these sounds, as well as additional repeat words such as “you know”, “you see”, “so”, “like” and ...

Once you become aware of these and aware that you are also using them, the next step is to pause and replace them with a moment of silence.

This simple technique will make your speech or presentation much more comprehensible and nicer to listen to.

Body Language

Our words are not detached from our body and surely you have heard the expression “your body talks”. As much as you need to control your filler words, you also need to control your body movements. Your body movement should be a mirror of your message and support your message along the way.

By becoming aware of your body movement and moving with purpose, you stop distracting the audience and bring their attention to your words. Your gestures such as; facial expressions, hand movements, and walking should all support your sentence, words, or the situation you are explaining.

During this awareness process, you might become disheartened thinking that you are unable to stop using these filler words or controlling your body language.

It might seem difficult at first. But believe me, this is the part that most people master faster than anything else. It only requires observation, awareness, and replacement practice.



4) Presentation Material

In most presentations I listen to and watch, the presenter is usually reading from the PowerPoint presentation which is full of text. The audience cannot read everything and tries their best and in most cases, like subtitles in movies, they find themselves hooked to reading the text rather than listening to the speaker.

Try it for yourself. Put a movie on with subtitles and observe what you do. Your brain automatically reads the subtitles even if you speak the language.

When creating your next presentation try the following simple suggestions.

1. Remove all text. You have the text because you think you may forget something but you won't. All you need is a visual cue for you to remember what you want to speak about. To be able to speak, remove the text and replace it with an image that helps you remember the general concept of that paragraph, headline or bullet point.

You can have many images. Images are easy to grasp and understand. Each image or icon is a visual cue for you to speak about a topic, point, or subject.

Imagine you want to speak about the difference between taxis and buses. All you need is a simple icon or image of a taxi, and an icon for a bus.

2. Next you need to stage the appearance of these two items. Don't display them both at once. First, show the image or the icon of the Taxi. Speak about the benefits and cons, and then display the icon/image for buses.

By staging them, you allow your audience to only focus on what you are saying. The image is your cue for speaking and a visual aid reminder for the audience so even if they forget or drift away momentarily, the image reconnects them to your voice and they can follow the conversation.

It is a simple process.

1. Remove all text and replace them with images
2. Shorten headers and titles to basic words
3. Stage the appearance of images, icons or subtitles. Show one image at a time.



5) Never end with a thank you

Have you ever read a book that ends with Thank you?

Have you ever watched a movie that ends with Thank you?

Then why is it that you think ending your speech with a ***Thank you*** will have a great impact?

When you are building and delivering a message you need to open and close with a strong message or slogan. This is your Call To Action in most cases. This is the part most people remember from any speech or presentation.

This way, you will have delivered a cohesive and unified message, making the speech more memorable and impactful. It gives the audience a sense of closure and completeness. It also emphasizes the central theme or main takeaway of the speech, driving home the most important point you want your audience to remember.

A strong opening grabs the audience's attention, and a related closing ensures that attention is maintained and leaves a lasting impression.

Here you go. I have just shared with you five very simple steps for you to work on and learn and improve your public speaking skills in less than 1 hour.

I have helped hundreds of entrepreneurs and CEOs deliver memorable messages and rock the stage. The above 5 simple tips are the starting steps for all. They have helped many people in improving their public speaking skills, and I hope they can do the same wonders for you.

Start your journey to powerful public speaking today!

Do you want to Rock the Stage like a Pro?

Whether it is presenting to your team or in front of a crowd of a thousand and more people, the fear of public speaking is the same.

Learn the scientific reason behind the fear, and conquer the stage in less than 60 minutes. I will provide you with tools and tricks, to understand why you feel the fear and how to rock the stage in just 48 hours.

Contact me