

# How to act on the stage

Roger Akelius, 2010-09-15

## Conclusion

- Relax some seconds. Look at your friends.
- The opening phrase may be something to create a good mood or a question or something controversial.
- Continue with a quick overview.
  
- Use flash cards to help your memory.
- Ask a lot of questions. Some questions you may answer yourself.
  
- Let your friends have a chance to figure out what you are saying by making a pause at all commas and full stops.
- Pronounce important words, slowly and clear.
  
- Make more gestures than normal.
- Look at your friends. Have they got your messages?
  
- You may sum up with: The important issue was ...

## Why to learn this

You will present your work, your ideas, your results for the Board, for a group of other employees in a meeting, for people from other companies, to the staff at the bank or you have to perform the "Thanks for the dinner" or the "Congratulations" or to give lectures.

## Mistakes made by beginners

The speaker starts with:

- Excuse me, I am a little bit late but ...
  
- Sorry, I have forgotten the documents...
  
- How does this projector works? Normally it works.

- One, two, three, do you hear me, one, one?

We have all been forced to listen to annoying speeches where competent persons, with good knowledge, but too afraid losing their memory, stands in front of you with the back towards you, reading line after line of small letters from Power Point. He or she shows a balance sheet or a budget and says; "This might be difficult for you to see, but I will read for you."

Disaster! Skip Power Point. Have you ever seen a professional speaker like a politician using Power Point? Power Point indicates a nervous beginner.

You may remember your first speech in school. You were nervous some days before. You did not concentrate on the speeches made by your classmates. You rushed up in front of all and started immediately to read very quickly, line after line, from your written text. Without any regards to comma, full stop, new paragraph or any look at the audience, you made the speech in eight minutes. Not even the teacher reacted on your embedded jokes.

You will never see such a performance of students, who have passed the Akelius MBA.

### **The art of speaking**

In the last century a good speaker was similar to an agitator or a demagogue. He could perform a one man show on a stage in evangelical churches. In the world of politicians we had the best prepared improvisations done by Churchill, or rhetorical tricks like a lot of dreams

I had a dream ....

I had a dream ..

I had a dream ...

delivered by Martin Luther King,

or the forerunner for extremely well organized American political events namely Adolf Hitler

or speech writers inventing slogans or new words such as for Kennedy: "I am a Hamburger."

Here, we will not focus on big political events, or a show with a pop star or the Pope.

### **Relaxed ambiance**

Today, messages making headlines are delivered in interviews with a background of relaxed ambiance with the speaker sitting in the sofa in a homelike styled studio. The best result will be given if the journalist forces hard questions and your answers are well prepared, with brilliant, logical words without any trace of anger.

In this decade no one has the patience to listen to a one man show on the TV. Some presidents or royalties try to speak half an hour to their nation via TV at New Years Eve, but who cares. Fidel Castro amused himself by five hours talks.

Consequently, try to create a relaxed ambiance including interactions with your audience similar to a chat with your friends.

As a listener it is really boring if the speaker may not deviate from his synopsis. Try to pick up some points from your audience. You may change the sequence of your points in your synopsis and thus obtain a lively discussion rather than giving a monolog.

## Preparation

### Essential facts

As usual with all work within Akelius, the first question to ask oneself is;

*What is important?*

The essential for a speech to your colleagues at the university is that your colleagues will learn your subject. That is essential for their future work.

*Go for essential facts.* Repeat facts.

Which is the main message?

Which other messages are important?

Which facts have to be mentioned in this context?

### Questions

You will never impress a nice person of the opposite sex by giving him or her a brilliant speech how well educated, tall, handsome looking, well trained and prosperous you are or will be. The result will be similar as when the CEO s in the nineties delivered a lot of beautiful visions. Your listeners will be attracted and engaged by their own actions such as answering relevant questions. When selling an idea, such as to sell a real estate or to make a proposal to the Board, the most important is to understand which argument are the main argument for the presumptive buyer. Ask them.

Be ready to skip a part of your arguments or your speech as soon as you understand that your audience is not impressed.

Normally you present the problem, that means the question, before you present your nice solutions.

Questions is number one in science of rhetoric.

You will get your audience listening by questions.

*Prepare questions.*

### Three

“We have three important issues,  
number one ...  
number two ...  
number three ...

Your audience will remember three arguments, much better than two or four.

### **Professionals use flash cards**

You know how an excellent teacher performs. How does he perform?

Get your knowledge from studying reporters on the TV.

Very often an entertainer or a reporter use *flash cards* with keywords.

### **Your documentation as an instrument to activate**

You will keep your audience awake by letting them perform something.

Suppose that you will teach your students the key statistics used in the Income Statements. You may prepare twenty questions or rather definitions on the document which you hand over to the students. One typical question is

“What is the acronym for Earnings before Income, Tax, Depreciation and Amortization?”

You discuss why and where these figures are helpful, tell the name and keep silent when you write on the White Board “EBITDA”.

One advantage with this method is that you do not need other notes.

You may do the same with Multiple Choices questions.

### **First words**

Choose your first words

*to create a friendly ambiance,*

*To get the listeners to react by a question or a provocative thesis,*

*To prepare for your disposition of the subject.*

A rock star may ask its audience if they are happy and the crowd will shout their approval with a loudly cry; YEEESS. The same approach works at a football stadium but not for a lecturer or from the sofa in the TV studio. Try to create the ambiance with a relaxed and natural flatter.

I was visiting some twenty towns a year as a lecturer. There were some two hundred auditors in the audience. I generally opened the seminars with the words:

- This morning I used half an hour for a lovely walk in the fresh air along the river. Now I understand while people are living here. I was of course also thinking of your famous history with.....

I had to change the river to the center or to the green parks depending where I was. In the same way I changed history to your sport athlete..... or your manufacturing of.. or something

else.

You demonstrate that you like the audience by showing knowledge with details of their home town.

Another method to open your speech is direct action with your first question:

- Do you know why certain rich real estate companies have had to file a chapter eleven because of not understanding the Cash flow?

-

Prompt for an answer by pointing at someone or give a name. You have started the interaction. People will be afraid of not listening.

Continue with a provocative phrase:

- Today, I will prove that Cash flow is more important than long term profit.

### **Head directly for the main message**

Board Members and CEO s do not like to wait for your main issue. They want your proposal immediately. They know what information they want.

The main message might be; “A proposal to sell the Altona 38 in Hamburg for 4.4 percent.”

In this case they know where this real estate is situated, so do not bother to describe the situation. Go directly for main facts like the need for extra maintenance or bad liquidity. They will ask.

### **Surprise and acting**

Action. Due to TV and cinemas the listener is used to action. Prepare something, which is short in time. You may use gadgets, pictures or extreme gestures.

Use your hands and your mimic. Make it extreme. Do not worry. Your big gesture looks small from a distance.

Whenever something is big, use both your arms.

When something should leave, show with a kick or walk. You will find out.

### **Avoid**

Do not try jokes.

When you have listeners who have paid to hear you, you may not market your products. .

Avoid mention your own company too often.

Talk or write, but never simultaneously.

### **Rehearsal**

Before big events there are mandatory rehearsals. Make your own rehearsal at home.

Emphasize on the pronunciation of important words and make sure that you make a small pause where there is a comma, or a full stop.

Probably I do not need to mention that you have to measure the time.

## **On the stage**

### **Check equipment**

Before entering the stage

- Test the microphone and the projectors.
- Hand out the documentation.
- Check available time and your watch.

### **Start with a pause and smile**

To get silence in the auditorium and to relax, *count to ten* on the stage before talking. If any person still talks just look at him until he stops talking. You take the control of the audience by *silence* and showing a *happy face*.

You have to show what a nice and friendly person you are. *Smile and give a sign* to somebody in the audience.

### **First words**

You are there to entertain like an artist, use your hands and your body.

Try to get an eye contact with the people far back in the room. Address your prepared first sentences to them.

### **Has someone received what you have delivered**

*Pronounce important words slowly and clearly.* Take your time to pronounce the r and the s.

*Write essential words* on the white board.

Try to communicate. *Use interaction.* You are not an old fashion priest having a one way communication.

Check up that your listeners have understood. Look directly into someone's eyes asking

- Have you understood this?

Explain with other words if someone does not understand.

### **The main argument was**

Repeat very shortly, just a few sentences.

And then you have to thank your audience.

“Thank you very much for your attention”