

Public Speaking

Speaking in public can provide you with innumerable benefits – IF you do it right. And I'm not talking about being prepared, making eye contact, and all the other terrific things Toastmasters teaches you.

I'm talking about the THREE ABSOLUTE MUSTS. I've been a public speaker and instructor for 12 years. I've been professionally trained and, even so, certainly make my share of gaffes. I have learned, however, that if you worship at the altar of the THREE MUSTS, you're a shoo-in for a return invitation.

#1: Speak only about topics you both know and feel passionately about. This is where your confidence comes from. Even if you're nervous about your audience, or how you look or sound, what you say will be packed with credibility and emotion, thus garnering the attention of those faces peering up at you.

#2: Have a sense of humor. Brain injuries, believe it or not, can be funny. I have a friend who's a professional motivational speaker and she suffered a brain injury over 15 years ago. Many of her presentations center on her injury and how overcoming it has benefitted her. She bills herself as a *humorist*! (Check her out at www.lessonsfromlois.com.)

#3: Choose your topic based on the interests of your audience/client NOT on your own personal needs or areas of expertise. You can have a great sense of humor, and you can be an expert in a field about which you are passionately engaged, and still be a dud as a speaker.

I've been chosen as a speaker at an annual businesswomen's symposium each year since its inception. None of my topics has ever been related to either of my two businesses. It's a

good thing too, because they're both insurance-related and, as you already know, there's nothing more boring than the topic of insurance. Unless you're interested in it, of course.

Know anyone who is? Me either.

Which is why I don't use it as a topic unless I'm specifically invited to speak about it (those invites only come from other insurance people—never the general public). So how have I been able to market myself to the point that I'm always chosen as a speaker at this businesswomen's event—and at the local University to present career development workshops, and by the local Chamber of Commerce, etc.? Because I talk about stuff people want to listen to: *Reading People, How to Remain Positive When your Day (Life) is in the Toilet, Marketing Yourself, and What Your Handwriting Says About You.*

So, if you have the opportunity to speak in public, or at a business or community function, grab that opportunity with both hands. And remember the THREE ABSOLUTE MUSTS. You'll be glad you did.