

# Romancing Your Audience When You Speak

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A speaker was giving a talk to a group of participants. Shortly into his talk, he noticed a man nodding off to sleep. The speaker turned to the woman sitting beside the sleeping man and said: "Excuse me madam, but he's not supposed to sleep. Can you please wake him up?" The woman looked at the man, turned to the speaker and replied: "You're the one who put him to sleep. You wake him up!"

Have you come across speakers who simply turn the lights off in you when they speak?

Why do so many speakers have the uncanny ability to turn a presentation into a mass siesta for resting souls? How do you avoid the embarrassing situation of someone (or worse, everyone) falling asleep on you while you speak?

## **Why you need presentation skills**

First, the top three reasons for speaking are: to inform, inspire or influence the audience. Communication only takes place when you are listened to and understood by your audience. Anytime they switch off, they miss your point and you miss the chance of informing, inspiring or influencing them. Despite living in a highly digitized world, the ability to speak in public remains an extremely important life skill. Companies make important decisions in the boardroom when executives stand up to speak. Leaders inspire organizations and countries into action through speeches. In the world we live in, public speaking skills are highly essential for influence and success.

## **Why you must romance your audience**

However, many untrained public speakers have trouble connecting with their audience. Many speakers assume they only need to say what is on their script to accomplish their mission. But this can only be summarized as a "data dump". With little or no interaction between speaker and audience, the relationship is transactional rather than partnership-like. The speaker's role is like a suitor serenading the audience with his message. When all you do is dump facts on your audience, your audience dumps you in return. Devoid of interesting involvement, they stray to doodle, day dream or simply doze off.

To communicate well as public speakers, we must "romance" our audience by actively engaging them.

## **How to romance your audience**

Have you ever invited a lady to the dance floor only to have her watched while you danced away on your own? Would any lady enjoy that? Don't turn public speaking into a spectator sport. Involve your audience early, and involve them throughout. Make them part of the act. Their participation will ensure they are fully present. Only when the audience is mentally and emotionally present will they be in the right state to receive your communication. To romance your audience effectively requires public speaking skills. Most people are more comfortable romancing

with pen and paper through writing than romancing a live audience through speaking. But these two activities require distinctly different skills. You write for eyes. The reader is in control of the pace and has the power to fast forward the reading, slow down to reflect or simply retrace to revisit a point. In a speaking situation, you, the speaker, is in control. If you raced forward at a pace that disconnects with the audience, you lose them. You lead without followers. If you belaboured a point, the audience races ahead of you. When you speak unilaterally without interaction, it is a public monologue. Similarly, as a guy, if you come on too quickly on a date, the lady gets frightened away. But if you are too lethargic, you are not interesting enough. When you talk only about yourself, you're too self-centred. The audience may eavesdrop on what you say, but will never be part of the act because you did not invite them to be. So engage them by allowing them to feel, reflect, speak, applaud, laugh, cry, take action or simply have fun.

### **How to acquire romancing skills**

To win the lady's heart, you want to look great, sound great and speak well. It is exactly the same with public speaking. In other words, use body language, gestures, imagery, tonality and sound bites to appeal to both the hearts and minds of your audience. The way you move, varying your volume and tempo all have different effects in influencing your audience to buy in to your message. Having access to this body of knowledge will reap tremendous dividends for you in distinguishing yourself in personal and business life. It is a skill that all charismatic leaders take time to learn and master.

While this body of knowledge used to reside in the secret domains of masters in the past, everyone today can have access to highly effective learning systems such as Toastmasters International's Communication and Leadership Program. With a track record of more than 80 years in training public speakers world-wide, this is a highly recommended path to accelerate your learning and mastery of public speaking.

With the right skills and training, romancing your audience will be a breeze. And no one will ever shut their eyes again on you the next time you open your mouth to speak!