



Speaking Like a Pro

E-book

My Personal Story

“I need answers—I need them now!” Her voice grew louder with frustration. Her pale face reddened. As she clinched her jaw, I could smell the scent of mint candy she had just eaten. But that was no match to the stench of fear oozing from my body! I froze like a deer in the headlights. My heart raced about 100 mph, my palms were sweaty. She scared me to death! What do I do?

What made matters worse is that she was not the only one demanding answers. Her son was with her and he demanded answers. Her attorney was with her, and he demanded answers. All three of them stood before me demanding answers, about what happened to the benefits she was no longer eligible for. I did the same thing that many people in my situation would have done. I panicked! I started stuttering and sweating profusely. Thankfully a coworker came by to save the day. And I slipped away from the situation.

I had an epiphany at that moment. I realized that this job wasn't for me. I had to get out! I sought my mentor's guidance and thankfully, she managed to help me find a more suitable job. A job that was far less stressful and demanding. I no longer had to deal with angry people who demanded answers. I was no longer nervous.

Until one day my boss at my new job came to me and said, “Eric, you know that project you've been working on? Well our executives would like a briefing on it and I need you to present it to them in two weeks! At that moment I realized something. This job wasn't for me either! I had to get out. When I explained this to my mentor, how once again I needed a career change, she looked at me in disbelief and said “Again?! You know jobs don't grow on trees!” I told her the job was not for me. At first she seemed annoyed but then she said, “Eric, I think I can help you. Come with me to a meeting and I will introduce you to some people who can help you.”

I had no idea what to expect from this meeting but I could tell it was not your average meeting. When I arrived, I found out that it was a Toastmasters meeting! Toastmasters is an environment where people improve their public speaking and leadership skills through speaking and taking on leadership roles during a meeting. And I was asked to speak and introduce myself to a bunch of strangers—all looking and waiting for words to come out of my mouth. My heart raced 100 mph, my palms were sweaty. I did the only natural thing at that moment. The only thing that made sense---I got up, and left the meeting without saying a word.

My mentor followed behind me and asked, “why are you leaving?” I explained that the job was not for me. She replied, “do you realize you tend to avoid situations when you have to speak in public? I told her that was ridiculous. She asked, “well why do you want to leave another job when you’re doing so well at it?”

I thought about what she said. I thought about some of the times I had an opportunity to speak and *didn’t* take it. During meetings at work, I would make excuses to go to the bathroom just so I wouldn’t have to speak. Heck, one time I attended a training workshop and there must have been 30 to 40 people in attendance. The instructor asked a question and looked in my direction for a response. I quickly looked away, stood up, gathered my things, and quietly left the room without saying a word. And I did not return! Even when I attended school I recalled working with classmates on group projects, and when it was time to present to the class, I would defer to my teammates to present.

Even worse I recalled a time when I actually *had* to speak in public. I was the best man in my friend’s wedding and had to deliver a speech. My five-minute speech lasted 10 minutes because I was so nervous and afraid that I stuttered and stumbled my way through. And I was reading my speech from a sheet of paper! During a typical speech at a wedding, you usually hear laughter and applause. But not during my speech. My speech was met with an awkward silence, and a few yawns, although I did hear a clap---but that was to kill a fly. I completely sucked the life out of that reception. The DJ had to play one of those line dancing songs just to bring back the energy in the room. These instances helped me realize I had a problem. I was afraid to speak, and most of my life I avoided it.

Have you ever been afraid to speak in public? Have you ever avoided it? The truth is, three out of four people suffer from speech anxiety. Whether it’s briefing your boss or colleagues, presenting information in front of 1 or 100 people, or maybe responding to someone who is extremely frustrated. Most of us can relate.

Why is this such a challenge? Do we not like being judged? Do we lack confidence? Does it make us feel uncomfortable? If you answered yes to any of those questions, you won’t have to feel that way anymore!

I know how it feels to be afraid to speak in public. Before I finally began getting comfortable speaking, eventually becoming an expert speaking coach and motivational speaker, my fear of public speaking consumed me. It cost me professionally and personally. Managers wouldn’t promote me, my work suffered, and it was difficult to network with others. That’s why I am so passionate about helping others who have similar fears of public speaking. As such I will provide you with some of the tools and strategies that will help you speak with confidence in any situation. You will learn some tips that will help you articulate your message in a clear and

concise way so that your audience will understand you. These tools will set yourself up for immediate success professionally and personally.



Remember this! When speaking to others it is important to know that people listen to your words—from peers to executives. They pay attention to your body language, they rely on the information that you share to make informed decisions and take action. Speaking with confidence, managing your nerves, and delivering a clear and concise message is paramount to your audience’s ability to understand you.

Speaking Like a Pro is not about using long complex words and sounding like politicians, lawyers, or people on TV. Speaking Like a Pro isn’t about speaking like anybody but yourself. It’s about doing what’s uncomfortable—stepping outside of your comfort zone. It’s about speaking with confidence to deliver a clear and concise message. It’s about gaining influence from your peers and colleagues, and the respect and support of your upper management. It’s about making a connection with your audience. This means to make your topic relevant to your audience and knowing your audience.

Often times people attempt to represent someone else when they speak, or aim for perfection. Part of the reason for this is because people believe they have to sound or be like someone else to sound competent. This couldn’t be further from the truth. Speaking Like a Pro is about being authentic. In order to be authentic, you must find your voice. When you speak to someone, you are doing more than just sharing information, you are sending signals about who you are. You are sharing your perspective and you are showing your personality.

The Benefits

There are many benefits to Speaking Like a Pro. One of the most obvious benefits is that it leads to improved communication. How many times can you recall something that went wrong due to poor communication? Think about situations where a plan or project failed due to poor communication.

Spend a few moments right now thinking of a time at work or in your personal life where a situation has gone wrong due to poor communication, and had there been more effective communication, that bad situation could have been averted.



1. Think about a situation at work where a project did not go well due to poor communication.

2. Think about a situation where your expectations were changed due to poor or ineffective communication.

“Miscommunication can cost an organization 25% to 40% of its annual budget”

-Manchester Companies

Now that you have had some time to think, I’m sure you will agree that we all face communication issues either at work or in our personal lives. It's estimated that 14% of each workweek is wasted as a result of poor communication

Why is this so? In an age of limited resources and austerity, how can we afford to suffer from poor communication?



View a clip of the Toastmasters International movie [Speak](#)

People who are able to Speak like a Pro find it exhilarating and consider it a personal accomplishment. In the beginning of the Toastmasters International movie, [Speak](#), there were images of people struggling to speak to an audience. But there were also images of people who found the confidence to speak in public and succeeded. Those people considered it a personal accomplishment to speak to an audience with confidence. As a result, it improved their self-esteem. Before I managed to speak with confidence, I was afraid to speak in public. In fact, I avoided situations where I had to speak.

For example, earlier I talked about how I struggled to talk to the lady who demanded answers about what happened to her benefits, and when the training instructor tried to call on me to answer a question, I left the room because I could not handle being in that uncomfortable situation.

Speaking like a Pro also improves your financial success. You have a better chance of getting hired and promoted. Once I improved my public speaking, I was amazed at the many doors that were opened to me. People began to take me more seriously. For example, I received promotions from my employer, and when I started my own business, it quickly improved due to my ability to present information in a clear and organized manner. In a subscriber study done by Harvard Business Review, the "ability to communicate" was rated as the most important factor in making a manager "promotable."

Manage your nerves

Have you ever heard anyone say, *“In order to speak to an audience you have to overcome your nervousness?”* People used to say that to me all the time. However, my friend, and mentor, Michael Davis, the Storyteller MD shared a different perspective. He says that nervousness is a natural human emotion. Can you really overcome a natural human emotion? Overcoming nervousness is unrealistic. As a human being, we will get nervous one way or another. The sooner we accept this fact and embrace it, we will be more likely to manage the nerves rather than overcome them.

Have you ever asked yourself why you get nervous when speaking in public? When I conducted the January 2016 Speaking like a Pro workshop, members of the audience were asked what makes them nervous when speaking in public. Some responded that they are afraid of making a mistake, they are afraid of not being liked, and they are afraid of how they will sound. All of these responses are example of how the *speaker* feels, not the audience. It is important to change the focus from how you feel to the content and benefit you will provide to your audience. Michael Davis says *“the audience is interested in your perspective to a common issue they are dealing with”*.

That has no chance of happening if you continue to focus on you: how you look, how you sound, etc. The audience does not care about that. They are only concerned about how the information you are sharing will benefit them and how it will change their life.

Many people also fear being judged when speaking to an audience. One thing you should keep in mind is that people *want* you to succeed when you speak. They want you to succeed because they are relying on the information you have to share to make an informed decision or take an action.

Resources

- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-you-want-nervous-before-speak-part-2-the-storytelling-md-> by Michael Davis
- <http://speakingcpr.com/2015/12/why-you-want-to-be-nervous-before-you-speak/> by Michael Davis
- <http://blog.visme.co/how-to-change-your-voice/> - by Nayomi Chibana

Preparation

Benjamin Franklin once said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” This message continues to resonate today, especially when gaining the confidence to deliver a briefing or presentation. To help you speak with confidence, it is essential to prepare. Preparation breeds confidence as well as success. If you are presenting to an audience or briefing a group of people, you should know your content backwards, forwards, and sideways. When you prepare you should present your material as often as possible in front of live audiences. Some people prefer to prepare in front of a mirror. According to the World Champion of Public Speaking, Craig Valentine, he says that you should never practice in front of a mirror. When you practice in front of a mirror, you are speaking to yourself. Rather you should simulate the real experience as close as possible which means speaking to a live audience.

You should also record your speech. That way, you can observe your content, your body language and make appropriate adjustments. I recommend focusing on the following when preparing for your presentation:

- **Who- who is your audience?** The foundation of your message begins with your audience. You must tailor your message to suit your audience. The context of your message will change depending on who you are speaking to. For example, if you are briefing an executive on the status of a project or a situation, your approach will be more formal and your information will focus more on high level details. They are more interested in the bottom line of the situation- not the granular details. If you are briefing a colleague or co-worker on a situation or project your information will focus on the more granular, specific details. Your briefing will also be less formal.
- **What- what information will you present?** You must determine what information you will present depending on your audience. You need to determine what information is relevant to suit their needs.
- **When and Where?-Plan the logistics.** Logistics is often overlooked but something that is never undervalued. Logistics focuses on the location and the room layout. Do you plan on using a computer or other visual aids for your presentation? Not factoring in logistics can ruin or weaken your presentation.
- **Why?-What is your purpose?** The audience should know the purpose for the presentation immediately--within the first few seconds of your presentation.
- **How?** Decide the best method for presenting your material. Will you use charts and graphs, one page documents, or other visual aids?

Structuring your message

If you are sharing information to a group of people, or briefing your peers or executives, it is important to practice the **KISS** method. Keep it Simple, Short. Time is the most valued commodity, your audience has a limited amount of time to retain and analyze what you have said. Therefore, it is important to keep your message concise.

Equally important is sticking to the point of your message. How many times have you attended a meeting expecting to discuss one thing but found yourself going down the rabbit hole discussing something completely different? When this happens, people feel like their time has been completely wasted. Others get confused and are unsure about the objective of the meeting. This causes you to repeat your message or the need to hold subsequent meetings and obtain written follow ups after the meeting. These are time wasters and your audience may lose confidence in you.



I recommend the following outline when structuring your briefing to your audience:

- **Introduction:**
 - Greetings-Hi, my name is-----
 - Purpose-remember, your audience needs to know why they are listening to you within the first few seconds. For example *"I am here to provide an update on my project."*
- **Background**-this provides context. Your audience needs to have a brief understanding of the situation. For example *"During our last meeting I told you about problems affecting the project."*
- **Body**-this is the meat and potatoes of your message. Highlight the main points. For example, *"we have worked with our colleagues to address the problems affecting the project and have identified short term and long term solutions"*
- **Provide supporting facts**-identify short term and long term resolutions.
- **Provide next steps**-How will these resolutions be implemented? What will you do to ensure these resolutions take place? How will you keep the stakeholders informed?
- **Conclusion**-Ask for questions-remember, your responsibility as the speaker is to provide information to your audience. They will use that information to make informed decisions. Some people may ask questions during your presentation. Keep in mind that your responsibility as the speaker is to maintain control over the message. If you

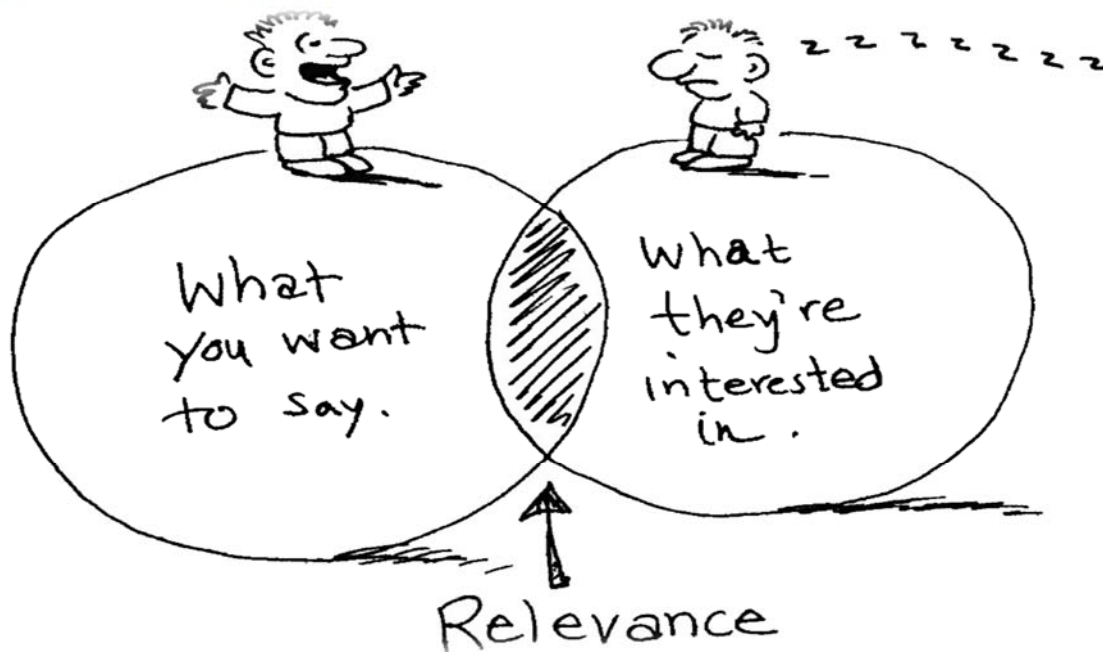
continue to field questions during your presentation, you may never get your point across. You may never be able to deliver your message. As a result, you may have to give another presentation or follow up in writing.

- Be tactful when fielding questions. If the questions are off topic, consider informing your audience that you will address those questions at another time. The same is true when fielding questions from your upper management. Although people may feel intimidated and may feel pressured to answer their boss's questions, as the speaker, you still have an obligation to deliver your message.
- **Restate main points**-restating the main points ensures that your audience understands your message.
- **Make concluding statement**- For example "we will continue to monitor the progress of this project and will inform all stakeholders of any issues that may impact the schedule." This gives your audience the warm and fuzzies and assures them that the situation is under control and that you will inform them if there are any problems.



Be tactful in your message: Determine what to say and when. For example, when to deliver good news vs. bad news, how to deliver bad news.

Make your topic relevant



People often have difficulty making their topic relevant and it is important to focus on how to make your topic relevant. Identifying the relevance is determining what you want to say vs what your audience is interested in hearing. Somewhere in the middle is what they want and need to hear. One way to determine how to make your topic relevant is to ask yourself this question: If I am a member of the audience listening to my briefing/ presentation, **WIIFM** (What's In It for Me?), why do I care? You can also determine the relevance of your message by knowing your audience. If you are presenting to someone who is unfamiliar with what you are presenting, consider pulling examples of what you are talking about from real experiences and projects everyone can relate to. Research their experiences ahead of time, consider what they already know.

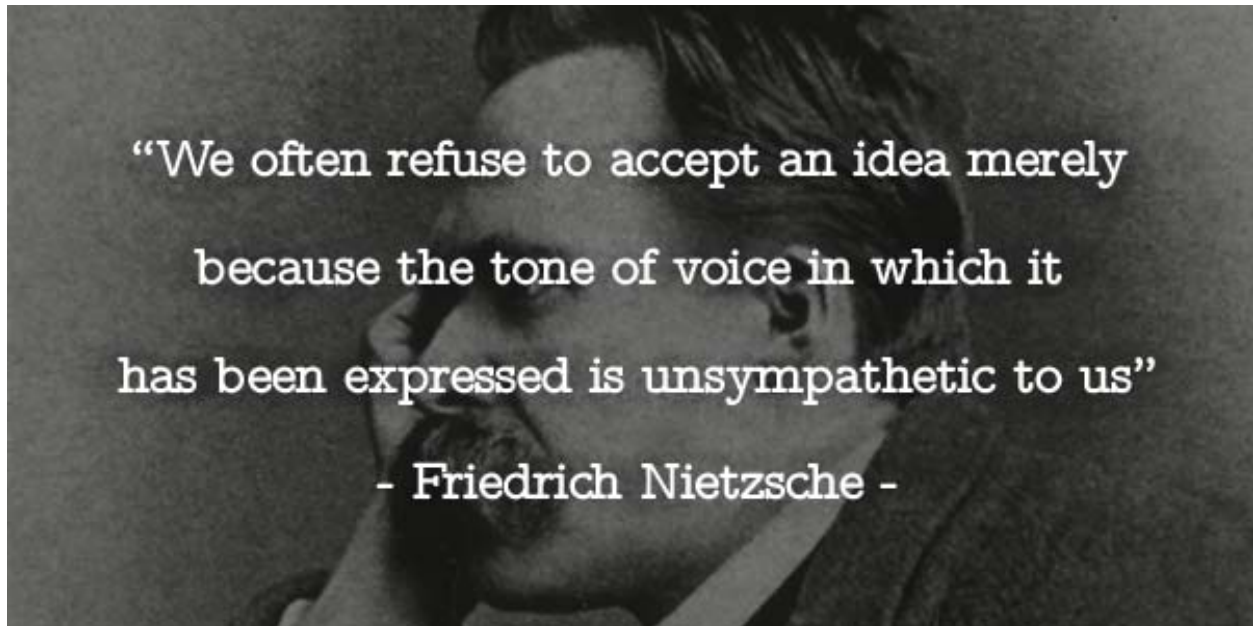
Delivering your message

When you deliver your message, your responsibility goes beyond knowing your content very well. You need to be able to articulate your message clearly and concisely, sounding strong and competent when delivering your message.

- **Avoid jargon**- people are more likely to trust you and understand you if your message is free of jargon.
- **Avoid crutch words**-such as ah's, um's or errs, "you knows". These are very common crutch words and people use them all the time. Using these crutch words weakens your credibility and makes you sound incompetent. The best way to avoid the crutch words is to be aware each time you use them. When I was a manager in the public sector, I used to jot down each time one of my team members would use crutch words. I would share it with them after they spoke so they knew each time they used crutch words. They reduced their crutch words every time they delivered a future presentation.
- **Use correct grammar**-use proper verb tenses, correct words, plain language and use a dictionary or thesaurus to make sure you use the correct words.
- **Watch the pitch, pace/ rate of speed**-Sometimes when sharing information, you need to emphasize your point. It requires hitting high and low notes with your voice. For example, when you ask a question, end your sentence on a higher note; when affirming a statement, end on a slightly lower note. If you use it incorrectly, ending on a higher note can lead people to think that you are insecure or that you have doubts about your statement. When conveying a sense of excitement or urgency, you can accelerate the pace of your voice. To draw attention to specific points, you can slow down and let your audience process what you just said.
- **Don't forget to pause**-effectively pause to drive your point home. It creates suspense and an expectation for what will come next. It emphasizes the point you just made by allowing your words to sink in.
- **Amplify your voice**-especially during a teleconference to ensure everyone can hear you.

- **Be prepared**-questions may come at any time during your presentation, so always be prepared for interruptions while controlling the flow of your message. Sometimes your audience may interrupt you to ask a question. Be prepared to provide a response at all times.

Find your voice



In a study conducted by the universities of Glasgow and Princeton, research concluded that it actually takes less than 500 milliseconds (the time it takes to say “hello”) for people to judge your character. After playing recordings of people saying “hello,” the study’s participants were asked to rate people on a range of personality traits. Most of the participants came to the same conclusions regarding character. This suggests that regardless of the accuracy of our perceptions of others, we have demonstrated the ability to quickly judge someone’s personality and tone of voice *before* we listen to the content of their message.

In today’s society, image is everything. The way people perceive you can affect your professional career and your social life. That’s why becoming aware of what your tone of voice is saying to other people is so crucial to your success.

Non-Verbal Communication

Famous researcher Albert Mehrabian is responsible for the 55/38/7 rule:

- 7% of meaning of is understood in the words that are spoken;

- 38% of meaning is understood in the way in which the words are said or tone of voice used;
- 55% is understood in the facial expression.

What this means is that people pay attention more to what you *don't* say vs. what you *do* say. It is important to make sure that your body language matches the content of your message.

Below are five tips to help you improve your non-verbal communication to help you become more confident.

1. **Use upright posture**-avoid slouching and leaning. Standing upright with your shoulders square, feet planted, chest out, shoulders relaxed, rolled back and head high demonstrates confidence and competence.
2. **Project your voice**-project your voice speaking from your diaphragm and not your throat. This ensures that your voice is grounded and does not sound shallow and weak. A well-grounded voice allows you to project without straining or becoming hoarse.
3. **Don't forget to 😊**-smiling makes your voice more pleasant to listen to and portrays confidence making you seem friendly, approachable, and composed.
4. **Pause**-there is nothing more powerful than a pause. It keeps you from using word fillers-ah's um's you knows, etc. It also builds suspense and allows your point to sink in to your audience.
5. **Make eye contact**-making eye contact with your audience is essential. It shows that you are speaking to your audience and that they should trust you. Don't scan the room but focus on a person, build rapport, and be engaged with them.
6. **Be aware of body gestures**-if you are shaking or fidgeting, your audience will think you are nervous. If you have your hands in your pockets, your audience may think you are hiding something. While it is important to be aware of your body language, you should also be aware of your audience's body language. If they are watching the clock, yawning, have puzzled expressions, checking their cell phones, you will have to adjust your message to ensure you have their attention and that they are engaged.



Be aware of individual differences. People from different countries and cultures tend to use different nonverbal communication gestures, so it's important to take age, culture, religion, gender, and emotional state into account when reading body language signals. An American teen, a grieving widow, and an Asian businessman, for example, are likely to use nonverbal signals differently.

Logistics

Logistics are often an overlooked part of your presentation. Imagine that you have prepared, structured, and practiced your briefing and are confident about delivering it to your audience. Unfortunately when the time comes:

- You are unfamiliar with the room set up/ location
- You forget to provide a hand out
- You forget meeting etiquette-roll call, introducing participants, etc.



Forgetting these items will weaken your briefing

Consider the following before your briefing:

- Did you reserve enough time for you to get to the room ahead of the presentation to set up?
- Do you know how many copies of handouts to bring?
- Did you send material in advance for the audience to review?
- Decide which type of handout works best for your presentation
- PowerPoint Presentation- focus on the material, not how fancy you can make the presentation. Be conscious of the use of colors and font size.
 - Will the audience be able to see the presentation?
 - Never read verbatim from the presentation, you should always know your content
- Charts-make sure the charts are clear and easy to read. People would prefer to understand the chart rather than how sophisticated your charts and graphs appear.
- Handouts-Send in advance and make sure you provide enough handouts at the presentation. This will ensure your audience has enough time to review the material prior to the meeting. This will make the meeting more fruitful because they will have already seen the material in advance of the meeting.

Flexibility

What happens if you were promised 30 minutes to speak but are only given five minutes? How do you condense your 30 minute presentation into five minutes? Consider focusing on only the most important information. What if you have to deliver information to a different audience or need a decision on a situation and the decision maker is not in the room? You may have to alter

your information or be prepared to deliver it again. If you receive a last minute update on the information you planned to deliver, it is ok to be candid with your audience and explain to them that you received an update and may not be in a position to share all the details until you share it with your management team.

Conclusion

Public speaking is an important trait to have in your professional career and personal life. If you are unable to communicate effectively, you will not be taken seriously and it can cost you personally and professionally. You will not be able to present information in a clear and organized manner, and you will not be successful. Most of the time people struggle with public speaking out of fear. Public speaking is one of the biggest fears facing humans today. Think about that in comparison to all the other things that cause fear such as insects, and fear of heights!

People would rather play with insects or go face to face with a lion rather than speak in public. It is a very hard thing to do for many. I avoided it all my life. However, focusing on these tips provided will help you speak with confidence in any situation and articulate your message clearly and concisely.



Remember that your audience *wants* you to succeed when speaking because they are relying on the information you have to share so that they can make an informed decision. One of the best ways to gain confidence is to speak whenever possible. You may not be able to overcome your nervousness but by being aware of this natural human emotion, you can manage your nerves more effectively. Focus on the content and benefit of your material vs. how you feel about presenting.

People prefer authenticity over perfection.....Be Yourself!



About the author

Like you, Eric has seen the word “success” defined in numerous ways. Does it take good grades and education, high IQ scores and standardized tests, climbing the corporate ladder, playing politics, is it about good timing, is it only meant for a select few? Or is there a different story?

With almost two decades of leadership training, professional speaking, and most importantly, real-life, hands-on in-the-trenches leadership experience, his view is inherently different. He appreciates, and shares with his listeners, that success is about stepping outside of your comfort zone and not about privilege, circumstance, or upbringing. Success is deliberate, does not discriminate, is not accidental, and cannot be measured based on someone else.

As the president and CEO of Tailored Training Solutions, Eric's unique coaching style not only brings out the best in people, but he also brings an authentic, engaging, street-savvy style; blending real-life stories with conversational techniques to connect with his audience at an intimate, intense and individual level. He tailors his training to meet the needs of the ever-evolving business environment and culture.

He is excited about publishing his upcoming book about how to apply emotional intelligence in today's ever-changing business environment. Now that Millennial's are in the workforce, it is paramount that they understand how to use it. Nowadays, technology and social media make it easier than ever for people to express themselves. This also makes us more vulnerable to saying things we end up regretting, hurting our personal lives, and professional careers.