

Timely Information for Personal Success

Becoming a More Engaging Speaker

By Mike Jacquart

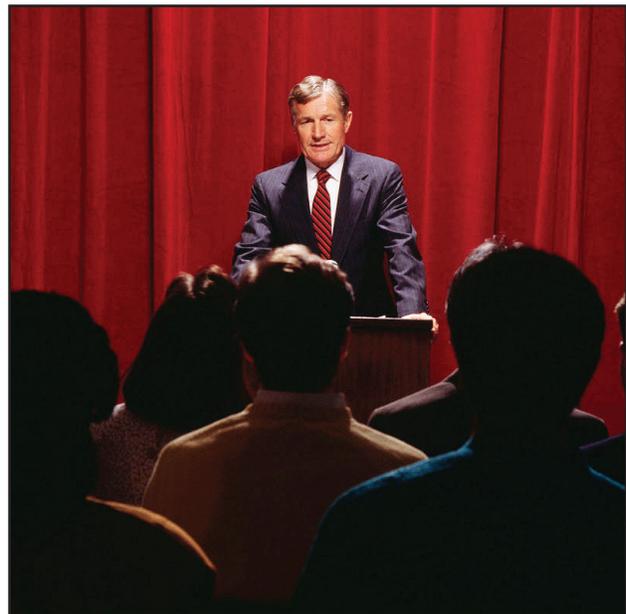
As an EAP practitioner, you will likely be attending at least one professional development seminar or conference this year. But there is no getting around the fact that not all speakers are engaging, and not all presentations are particularly noteworthy. That being said, I still believe that even if presentations aren't an individual's particular strong suit, it IS possible to get better at it. After all, we all know that a boring speaker is about as much fun as watching paint dry on the wall, and who needs that?

❖ **Focus on a single idea.** Many speakers make the mistake of overwhelming their audiences with too much information. Audiences simply don't remember a lot of what we hear. Many studies suggest that we only remember, at most, 30 percent of a given message. Nick Morgan, author of *Targeted Leadership – Building a Team that Hits the Mark* recommends focusing a presentation on a single idea. "Write that one idea down in one sentence, and paste it up on your computer," he suggests. "Then eliminate everything else, no matter how beautiful a PowerPoint slide it's on, that doesn't support that idea."

❖ **Practice, practice, practice.** Public speaking doesn't come easily for many of us, but there

are scores of ways of gaining experience. I've been a lector at our church for a number of years, and I served as secretary and president of a local Lions club. Each of these endeavors helped me gain confidence in speaking before an audience. Like anything else, the more you do it, the better you get at it. Another possibility is to join the Toastmasters, a nonprofit organization that develops public speaking and leadership skills through practice and feedback. It's a great way of finding out what other people think about your speaking skills.

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Healthy Recipe: Chipotle & Orange Chicken

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 tbsps orange juice concentrate, thawed
- 1 tbsps finely chopped chipotle peppers
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons unsulfured molasses
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 150
- Carbohydrates: 7 g.
- Protein: 23 g.
- Sodium: 227 mg.
- Fat: 3 g.
- Saturated fat: 1 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- ➊ Preheat grill or broiler.
- ➋ Whisk together orange juice concentrate, chipotle pepper, vinegar, molasses, and mustard in small bowl.
- ➌ Lightly oil grill or broiler rack. Season chicken with salt and grill or broil for 2 minutes. Turn, brush with the glaze and cook for 4 minutes, brushing occasionally with the glaze. Turn again, brush with glaze, and cook until center is no longer pink, 1 to 2 minutes longer.

LifestyleTIPS®
 2017© Impact Publications, Inc.
 PO Box 322, Waupaca, WI 54981
 Phone: 715-258-2448
 Fax: 715-258-9048
 Website: www.impact-publications.com
 Email: info@impacttrainingcenter.net

Publisher: Scott Kolpien
Managing Editor: Mike Jacquart

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Questions and Answers

Does Legalizing Pot Affect the Workplace?

Q: Many states are legalizing using small amounts of marijuana for medical or other uses. Why are some people against smoking a little pot at work?

A: This is certainly a contentious issue that has its share of proponents. The following are some facts issued by the Institute for a Drug-Free Workplace. The impact of employee marijuana is seen in the workplace in lower productivity, increased workplace accidents and injuries, increased absenteeism, and lower morale. This can and does seriously impact the bottom line.

Second, years of research indicate substantial concern for marijuana's impact on health, more specifically a person's lungs, heart, and liver. Finally, surveys show that the majority of Americans don't want pot use to become commonplace. Educational campaigns have stated that cigarettes and alcohol are harmful, and their use is declining. Marijuana is an increasingly dangerous and addictive drug. Its effects on society are frequently misstated, misunderstood, and underestimated. ■

... *Engaging Speaker*

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❖ **Look in the mirror.** Ask yourself honestly, if YOU were attending the training session, would the information interest you, or bore you? At a previous training, were participants listening intently – or half-heartedly while multi-tasking on other things at the same time? If the latter is the case, obviously you have some improving to do.

❖ **Don't be afraid of showing that you have a sense of humor.** Many presenters make the mistake of being a bit too serious, when interjecting a little levity into a discussion can engage the audience and get them to see you as an honest-to-goodness person, and not a talking head that goes on and on. I recall one World EAP presentation I attended in which the subject matter could have, and probably would have been, quite dry with many speakers. But that wasn't the case! In discussing the work that went into a big grant proposal, the presenter showed a picture of Brad Pitt, representing the young, bushy-eyed worker eager to launch into the proposal. Then, he showed an after photo of Albert Einstein, whose disheveled appearance lent one to think how worn out this same person was afterward! Talk about an ice-breaker!

I hope these ideas help. Good luck! ■

Mike Jacquart is the editor of 'Employee Assistance Report' and a frequent blogger and LinkedIn contributor.