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EXPERT ROUND-UP: WHAT ARE YOUR ON-STAGE/ON-CAMERA TIPS FOR AUTHORS TO DEVELOP OR IMPROVE THEIR SPEAKING PRESENCE?

Posted by Guest Post | May 25, 2022 | Interviews - Authors, Members, Experts, Professional Speaking | 0

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Expert Round-Up Topic: *What are your on-stage/on-camera tips for authors to develop or improve their speaking presence?*

EMILIA FLORES

Going on stage and standing in front of a large audience can be a little scary at first, but with all the dedication I put into my writing, I should be able to apply that passion and commitment to my on-camera presence as well. To be a



great on-camera or on-stage speaker, I need to work on my eye contact, speaking loud enough for people to hear, and projecting my voice and energy. When I'm presenting, it's also important to have a strong stance and stand tall. I'll have more energy and confidence!

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ADITI PAUL

Presence is created by cultivating **immediacy** with the audience. This can primarily be achieved by being mindful of our non-verbal cues in terms of eye contact, paralanguage, and navigating physical space. Before expanding on this, I should clarify that non-verbals are essential in augmenting an author's verbal message. Hence, the first order of business is for the author to rehearse and perfect their verbal message and then focus on the non-verbal strategies described below.

On-camera:

- Look into the camera instead of the screen on Zoom calls
- Place the camera at an **Intimate** (close up headshot with indiscernible shoulders), **close personal** (close-up shot with visible head and shoulders), or **far personal** (model's body visible from the waist up) distance
- Smile/emote
- Use hand gestures, facial expressions, and vocal variation to complement your verbal message. This includes inflection, taking pauses, and giving the audience time to respond.
- Manage vocal fillers

On-stage:

- In addition to all the above, utilize the space on the stage—move around. This serves two purposes: (a) physical movement sustains the audience's attention, and (b) it gives authors an opportunity to create a sort of "closeness" with different segments of the audience as they pace the stage. It is also a great way to flush out anxiety.

Lastly, authors should not be hesitant to improvise. The best speech is one that feels conversational. I'd encourage authors to invite their audience into their talk. In doing so, their original plan may be altered. Be flexible enough to do so.

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AARON GRAY

To improve your speaking presence, just slow down. As a new or inexperienced speaker, you may notice a learning curve between authoring a book and speaking on stage. Though you may be great with words, these two skills are markedly different. As such, you might find it difficult to articulate yourself vocally the way that you'd like. This is due to performance anxiety. When we get nervous, one of the

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first things that happens is that we speak very quickly in an attempt to speed up the process. This tends to make it harder for people to understand you.

To exude confidence, be slow and deliberate whilst talking. Slowing down your speech rate tends to convey more trust to people, which makes them more likely to listen and engage with what you're saying. In particular, it helps to enunciate each word and stretch out vowel sounds.

You could even count to three every time you finish a sentence. You'll notice that your speech comes across much clearer, and you'll skip over far fewer words in the process. Most of the time, your audience won't notice that you're making these small changes. But whether they realize it or not, they'll hang on to every word you say.

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CHRISTINA BUTLER

Having a camera in your face with the red "RECORDING" button blazing can be intimidating. It doesn't have to be, though. After two decades working in front of the camera in my previous life as a television anchor and reporter I can tell you this: treat the camera like a person. Pretend it's a third guest at your interview party. Make eye contact briefly, but please do not stare into it. Look at the host when answering questions they asked you. Glance at the camera at the start of an important point or during a particularly impactful statement, but always return your eye contact to the person interviewing you.

Also, know when to stop talking. The awkward interview moments happen when guests continue to speak past the point of making their point. Simply confidently answer the question, then stop talking and smile. The host will take it from there! And speaking of confidently answering questions, you can more than likely predict at least three of the questions you will be asked. Do not memorize your answers, but do memorize the key messages you want to share. Memorizing leads to stumbling and derailing. Trust yourself to be the expert on your work and have fun being in the spotlight!

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SIMON HANSEN

A three-step strategy comprising extensive research, genuineness, and practice is key to mastering public speaking.

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The first step authors should take in preparing their speeches is figuring out who their audience is. Knowing details such as their estimated age range, profession, and the like can help authors craft their message better and interact more effectively with their audience.

After establishing an approach, it's important for authors to remember how important it is to deliver valuable and genuine insight to their audience. A speech that is both valuable and authentic is one of, if not the most important part of public speaking.

Last but not least, authors shouldn't shy away from practicing their public speaking skills. Constantly honing and improving your skills will make it easier for you to really master public speaking.

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DIANNA BOOHER

1. Stand in the ready position: If you've ever played a sport, you recall that your coach had you do drills where you stood on the balls of your feet with your knees slightly bent so you could pivot in any direction and move quickly. The same principle can be applied to speaking. Keep your trunk relaxed (not rigid) but stand alert to convey the impression of energy, openness, and connection with the audience.
 2. Gesture naturally; never choreograph your movements. You want to be authentic, not artificial. Audiences assume that your body language reflects your writing style and message.
 3. Add pizzazz to your voice. That means variation. Vary your voice-volume, pace, inflection, intonation, and speaking rate.
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STEPHANIE SCHELLER

Most important tip is to get out there and practice! Record videos and book gigs, even if you have to speak for free and even if you're speaking to groups of 2-3 people! But get out there and actually DO it. Record yourself whenever possible and evaluate afterwards so you can select one thing at a time to work on improving, but you're never



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going to master the art of public speaking without getting onstage.

Read books on how comedy works and understand that it takes time to fine-tune your personal sense of humor for the stage, but it's also really important to grasp this if you want to be an engaging speaker. Try out various ideas, and don't be afraid to borrow jokes that feel quintessentially you.

As far as content goes, my speaking coach always says, "Never make a point without a story, and never tell a story without making a point." Our brains need the opportunity to bask in storytelling, which is easy for us to follow and requires minimal effort, to help the rest of the speech sink in. But the point that follows the story has to make sense!

Lastly, do not bring a script onstage! I've seen it all...detailed index cards, sheafs of paper, prompters...not only do they regularly fail the performer, but it means that the speaker is more focused on their script than on the audience and, at the end of the day, the audience is the reason you're there! Give them your FULL attention. They are worth it.

<http://www.thestephaniescheller.com/>

SHARON GELTNER

An author is accustomed to writing in silent solitude. Appearing before strangers and rising to the occasion of public speaking takes a whole other set of, usually undeveloped, skills. That can be very intimidating!

My tips are:

Make sure to read from your book. (Many inexperienced authors talk about their book, around their book, describe their book, wave their book around, but never actually READ from their book.)

When you do read from your book, make sure to look up. Directly address the audience and make eye contact. Do not bury your nose in the book and keep your head down and mumble. Say it loud and proud.

This means memorizing a few short phrases at home, before you go to the podium. But that discipline and forethought will make you more of a performer and show off your book to good effect.

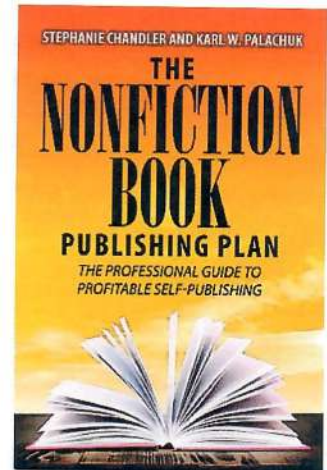
Think of it not as a boring recital, but show biz!

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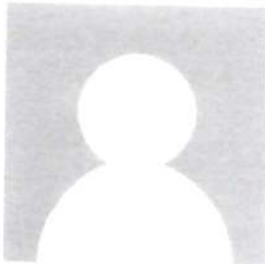
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