



I agreed to speak.

NOW I'M FREAKING OUT

shane.
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Take a breath!

So you agreed to a speaking engagement? Now your starting to second guess if that was the right decision? Did they pick the right person? Do you really have something to say? Would people really want to listen to you speak? What if you get up there and nothing comes out right? Or worse what if nothing comes out at all? What if people laugh at you. What you if make a fool of yourself! Maybe you've spoken before, but not like this? So many questions are probably racing through your head. Stop for a moment, take a breath and relax. 74% of people* experience some type of speech anxiety. Take reassurance knowing you aren't the only person that thinks like that. But getting up in front of a group of people to speak (whether large or small) does not need to be inherently stressful.

Here are 13 easy to apply strategies, techniques or tips that will help you present with more confidence, credibility and connection.

There's a difference between saying something and having something to say.

Every 60 seconds 3.3million posts are added to Facebook, 448,800 people send a tweet and 500 hours of video footage is uploaded to YouTube. There is no information shortage taking place. The key to delivering a great presentation is not just saying something, but discovering something that is worth saying.

ONE

When you discover an idea or message that lights you up, you'll quickly discover that this isn't something you want to share, this is something you NEED to share. That will inject a great amount of confidence in how you present.

Take time to clarify your BIG IDEA. Find your message. This isn't to say you won't have multiple points or ideas in your presentation, but each point and section must support and strengthen the foundation of just ONE clear big idea.

When people walk away from your presentation, your goal is to help them understand this ONE big idea.

- Think of your BIG IDEA like writing a book. What would you call that book? What would the tag line for it be?
- If I asked you to boil your presentation down to an idea and explain it in 15 seconds, what would you say?

There's no shortcuts. Spend the time, do the work.

Two

Just like learning to drive a car, speak a language or play an instrument there are no shortcuts. Delivering a great presentation takes good old fashioned hard work. If you have been given the opportunity to share your BIG IDEA to a group of people then treat that opportunity with the respect it deserves. People will forgive you for being a little nervous, but they will not forgive you for being unprepared.

- Spend the time to get a deep understanding of your topic.
- Know who is in the room and answer the question “what’s in it for them”.
- Practice your presentation aloud not just in your head. We get a better picture of the flow when we hear ourselves speak.
- Practice until you can confidently present on the topic without notes.

Don't believe everything you feel.

You know the feeling as you are about to speak when your mouth dries up, hands and legs begin to shake, stomach rolls in butterflies, heart rate spikes and you begin to tense up. This is the body's natural and instinctive response to threat and completely normal. This is our primary response and one that is triggered by the brain. We cannot choose this response. But we can choose how we respond to that.

The threat may not be one that endangers our life but it may be a perceived threat to our reputation or acceptance. Don't fuel the drama of the brain. Understand what is happening then choose your response.

Our brains threat response is a "fight" or "flight" response. Your body isn't just shaking because of nerves but because there is an increase of adrenalin. Your digestive system shuts down so the body can focus on sending nutrients to vital organs which results in dry mouth and butterflies. You tense up as your neck and back muscles contract forcing you towards the fetal position in a defense mechanism. This is all normal. However, our response is to use those feelings to fuel our insecurities and dysfunctional thoughts. Don't believe everything you feel.

THREE

- Ground yourself in the moment, be present and mindful of what is happening and don't continue to fuel the negative thoughts
- Stand up tall and take five deep breaths, focusing on breathing from your diaphragm.
- Focus less on how you will perform and more on how you can serve the people in the room
- Try vocal warm-ups. This will help you be present and protect your voice.

Take people on a journey.

The goal of effective communication is to take people on a journey. A journey from where they currently are to where you want them to be. This means taking the time to understand the purpose of your presentation. Just like taking a flight from one location to another, every great presentation will have:

FOUR

- Boarding - What will you do to get people on the plane?
- Take Off - How will you create engagement and expectation for what you are going to talk about?
- Flight - How will you construct your presentation to unpack your big idea?
- Landing - What is the one big idea
- Disembarking - What do you want people to take away from this?

Don't answer a question nobody is asking.

You have a great message. You have something valuable to share. You are solving a problem for people. You have an answer. But is your audience asking the question?

Don't spend time answering a question that nobody is asking. Find a way early on in your presentation to cause your audience to ask the question in their head for which you have the solution.

FIVE

One method which I have found personally helpful is creating 'WE ALL' moments. The 'WE ALL' moments are the moments, struggles, tensions WE ALL face. Find a tension that both you and your audience face that your big idea solves. Pose that tension to the people in the audience early on in your presentation.

e.g I've had staff members to lead that just seem to keep dropping the ball on every project I give them despite how much time I spend with them. We have probably ALL had a staff member like that at some point, maybe even right now. I want to give you 2 questions that will help determine if they should keep their place on your team

- What is your WE ALL moment?
- What tension can you create early on in your presentation

Learn the language of the room.

When traveling in another country it is important to learn the language of the people in that country if you want to communicate in a way that connects. If you don't it's a lot of gesturing and frustration and hoping you'll get your message across.

When communicating to a room of people it's important to know who you are speaking to. Are they aware of your content? Are they unaware? Are they experts in your content?

You can only communicate your big idea to your audience using the language they already possess.

- Learn about the people in the room
- Find different ways of explaining your content e.g metaphor or illustration
- Each time you introduce a new piece of language, be sure to give explanation, context and definition

SIX

SEVEN

Look left and right before you cross the road.

Our brains are both analytical and abstract. We are all creative and logical. The left side of our brain connects with the analytical and logical language. The right side will connect with the emotional, abstract and creative language.

For each idea and point we make we need to identify ways to communicate it to the different styles of thinking in the room before we cross over to the next point. If you find yourself standing in front of a group of people and a piece of information isn't connecting, try presenting it in another format. Having these up your sleeve will give you an edge and enable you to expand and contract your presentation depending on time.

- For left brain thinking prepare with statistics, case studies, models and diagrams
- For right brain thinking prepare with stories, analogies, metaphors, illustrations or parables

Embrace the power of stories.

Since the dawn of time stories have been a powerful way in which knowledge has been passed down from generation to generation. We are also emotional creatures. 90% of our decisions are driven by our emotional brain*. Stories have a way of connecting with people at an emotional level. Points and content illustrated by stories are 20 times more likely to be remembered.

When we tell a story, a chemical in the brain called oxytocin is released which helps build trust, meaning, empathy and connection*.

Not only will people in the room feel more relaxed when you tell a story, but you don't need to read stories word for word. They are personal. When was the last time you needed to take notes to tell someone about a recent holiday?

- Tell a personal story
- It's ok to be vulnerable
- Be detailed in the story
- Create a logical flow for the story
- Connect at an emotional level
- Make it practical. What did you learn? What can we learn?
- Make it relevant to your presentation

EIGHT

*Christine Comaford - <https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinecomaford/2015/10/17/how-great-leaders-build-trust-with-4-brain-based-tools/#4023e7577b30>

*Paul Zak - <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-neuroscience-of-trust>

It's not just what you do, it's who are you?

People want to trust you before they will get into the car with you. That is why it is so important to learn how to be authentic. One of the quickest ways to fuel insecurity and increase anxiety is to start comparing yourself with other speakers. The greatest competitive advantage that you possess is that there is nobody else like you.

NINE

Two questions people ask when they hear you speak are 1.) Do you believe this and 2.) Do I believe you?

The moment you try and be somebody you are not, is the moment an audience will pick up the incongruence.

Learn from others, take inspiration but don't try and be others, just be you!

- Comparison starts at the end of contentment. Relax and be yourself.

Ask the question: Who is this serving?

When preparing a keynote, powerpoint, prezi or any other software to deliver a presentation one of the most common questions is “how much information is too much?”. The better question to ask, is who is this serving?

TEN

Most of the time when we load content onto a powerpoint slide it is because we don't feel confident to remember all the content so it serves the presenter. The real use should be to accompany a presenter with a simple image or word to reinforce what you are saying.

- The audience will either watch a screen or listen to you speak. They won't do both at the same time. What do you want them to do when the slide goes up.
- Can the audience get the key message of the slide in a few seconds?
- Is this more about you or your audience?
- People came to hear you speak not hear you read your slides.

ELEVEN

In a Q&A: Paint a big picture when asked small questions

When opening up to Q&A from the audience you will often be asked to clarify content. Be sure that you have put in the work to know your content. People will also ask very narrow questions relating to their own circumstances. Answering with a narrow response is a great way to lose engagement from the rest of the room.

- Find ways to answer narrow questions with big picture principals or ideas
- Think of personal stories
- What happened in the story
- What did YOU learn from that situation
- What can WE learn from that situation going forward

TWELVE

Stick the landing.

It's the popular expression, people may not always remember what you said but they will remember how you made them feel. Take time to think through where you want to land your presentation. Drive home the big idea in a practical way. What would it look like if everybody applied the big idea you are communicating? What in the world would look different?

- Make it personal
- Make it practical
- Inspire action
- Give people a take home action

Get help.

Just like hiring a personal trainer can help you shed that extra weight you've been wanting to lose or tone up, a coach can help take the weight of presenting off by giving new perspective or clarity.

- Enroll in a speaking program
- Connect with a speaking coach
- Read books on presenting
- Volunteer to make speeches and ask for feedback
- Contact me and ask for some advice. I would love to help - shanemhatton.com



About the Author

The best leaders are ones who bring the best out of those around them. That is what I strive to do. I help individuals and teams leverage their influence, take charge and 'Lead the Room' through effective communication. I have worked in organisations across the creative, not-for-profit, government and retail industries for the past 12 years. I am passionate about making a difference by building and strengthening leadership and culture. A journey with me will be along the road less travelled as I bring the creativity and connection of my marketing and counselling background. My programs are flexible in their delivery and core focus areas include:

Lead the Room - Communicating for Change
Lead the Room - Coaching for Progress

To start a conversation about how I can help you or your team 'Lead the Room' email me at shane@shanemhatton.com



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