

AMANDA GORE'S 12 RULES (+6!) OF BEING A GREAT SPEAKER! (Or secrets of a 25 year veteran speaker!)

No matter what business you are in, there will be a time when you have to present some ideas to a group – or maybe you are presenting at a wedding or personal event – these 'rules' apply to any presentation you have to do any where to any number of people!

If you are a CEO or meeting planner or senior manager it's important that you pay attention to some of these rules, as your team may be more inspired with this process approach to a presentation.

Many times a CEO or manager stands up and wants to inspire the team but fails to do anything except TELL the how passionate they are – yet if you were in the audience listening, you would never realize it!

I became a speaker after meeting Ron Tacchi at the first conference I ever presented.

He listened as the MC and when I had finished said "you should be a speaker" and I said "what's a speaker?!" Needless to say he had a lot of coaching to do and bless him – he did! For the next 5 years he taught me so many things I rarely hear now.

On top of that I have been studying with Michael Grinder who is an 'educators educator'; a master of non verbal communication and the process of delivering content so it's memorable and effective. (www.michaelgrinder.com) He is a must to study with if you are serious about being a great speaker.

So here we go with the 'rules'!

1. You must have fun!

Ron drilled into me that if I have fun, they will have fun. No matter how serious your content or how professional you need to be, you can always have fun. Even at a funeral – people love to laugh or have a good time and there are very few occasions where a bit of levity and humor is inappropriate. Find ways to inject a bit of fun into each few minutes of your conversation with the group.

2. It's a conversation NOT a speech or a keynote. The purpose is to connect! You to them and them to each other.

Think about the best speakers you have ever seen. They are the ones who seem to be talking directly to you – that's a conversation – not a speech. Too many times, we focus on our 'speech' and practice it and rehearse and re-craft it so the words are just right.

Although the words must be relevant, they are only one side of the equation! Think about how you have a conversation with another person or a small group. It's interactive – you speak, they listen, they speak, you listen etc. So it is with you on stage.

Think of it as a conversation – you are listening to their non verbals and watching them carefully to make sure they are engaged and listening to your side of the conversation. If they seem distracted – or unconscious! – then you need to do something to re engage them. Probably something like stop speaking! And get them to do something active – so they are part of the conversation.

Some people have such a powerful story (like Charlie Plumb an ex Vietnam prisoner of war) and the story is so compelling that he doesn't need to have a conversation – you are spellbound from the beginning! But few of us have a story so dramatic – Li Cunxin, the Chinese ballet dancer who escaped Mao's China is another amazing spellbinding story – so we have to use conversations!

3. People will remember how you made them feel.

People do not remember facts and figures nor does that make them change their behaviour or thinking. We need to touch their hearts with stories and experiences or memories that will make them feel some positive emotion.

Ron was a master at taking his audiences on an emotional roller coaster – he would take them emotionally up and down and then finish them up a big high – so they left feeling fabulous – and changed.

4. You are an experience creator!

We need to be creating experiences for people – not delivering a 'speech'.

If you can create an environment in which people can feel safe; they are given permission to do things they have never done before; they join in and interact (even if they are reluctant); in which they can learn and remember information that is packaged in a way that is memorable; in which they have fun and laugh, where they have an AH HA moment which inspires them to

change - then you will be a successful speaker! Experiences are living, interactive emotion filled events, which inspire people in some way. We are all in the experience together.

5. It's never about you!

Too many people are so focused on what they are saying and where they are in the 'speech' sequence. If they are distracted in any way, they go blank because they can't remember where they were in the 'speech'.

This sort of internal focus means that we are totally disconnected from the audience who will feel it; AND we forget that people are never thinking about us. They are too busy wondering *what you are thinking about them* to be thinking about you!!

So forget about how you look and how stupid you sound or if you just made a mistake or if you forgot something – just be real! The more authentic you are in this conversation, the more they will relate to you. **Our work is to serve others** and be useful to them; to give them what they need.

6. Have your focus on the audience or group – always

Prepare yourself before you get on stage or in front so that when you stand up in front of a group, you can focus totally on the audience. Watch them carefully to monitor how engaged they are, what topics and issues they relate to most, to how fidgety they are, to what makes them laugh the most and do something to re engage them.

That 'doing something' may be inserting an interactive exercise as simple as 'turn to the person next to you and tell them one thing you have learned so far'; or creating an opportunity to laugh or asking a question or having them stand up and move to a different seat – anything that shakes their state and gets them listening again!

7. Be original.

Too many speakers take jokes or content from other people and make it their own material. This is a no no – you may find something on the internet you wish to use in which case, try to find the source and acknowledge them or say you could not find the source. Taking a joke and adapting it as if it's a real life story of yours is also fraught with danger if someone has heard the joke before!

Life is full of funny incidences and events; look at your life for the humour or lessons. Everything that happens to me is potential material to change a mindset.

Walking down a hotel corridor in Opryland, lost and frustrated, I ran into a family of Mum, Dad and 2 little girls. While all the adults were grumpy and lost, the little girls were excited and jumping up and down with joy!

This became the basis of a story I use to introduce the idea of how as adults we lose our sense of awe and wonder and reverence. People relate to it immediately and then I give them symbols to remember the content.

8. Tell stories to deliver your messages

Lou Gerstner said "facts and figures will not change peoples behaviours", I added touching their hearts will. You can change someone's behaviour in a heartbeat if you give them an "ah ha' moment or touch their hearts.

Steven Covey in 7 Habits of Highly Effective People tells a story of one time he was catching a train at the end of a long day. Tired and wanting to relax, he was frustrated with a young man who had boarded with his 3 small children. After a period of time when the children were running all over the carriage disrupting people, Covey leans over and asks the man to control his children.

The man is startled and comes out of a daze and apologises saying ' we have just come from the hospital where their mother died.' In a heartbeat, Covey changes. He becomes full of compassion rather than irritation and plays with the children rather than glaring angrily at them. That's the power of a story.

Tell stories to illustrate all your main points. Or give people an experience around them. Create characters and act out skits on the stage to make a point or tell a story.

By the way, what stories do you tell your self about your presenting? Are you telling yourself you are terrible at this stuff? That you are probably going to make a fool of yourself? That your mind will go blank? There are all going into your subconscious mind and you will program that behaviour in! Is that what you want?

Do you judge yourself along the way as you are speaking? Which of course immediately disconnects you from the group and you disengage from them which makes them disengage from you! They have no choice.

9. Internalize your message and come from your heart.

I have heard so many young speakers talking about 'rehearsing' their 'keynote' in front of the mirror or other people and while this may be something useful to do a couple of times, it is not the best way to be a great speaker! Ron used to tell me to 'internalize' my messages – to find a way to

have the concept resonate within me, to make sense to me and then I could deliver it to others without notes and with heart.

In the early days of my career, I would wake up the morning of a presentation and MENTALLY rehearse. I would imagine me delivering the content and the audience interacting, and see and *hear* and *feel* the positive outcome. I would picture the sequence of the content and then remember it- looking at my notes if I forgot the next point I was going to make in my imagination.

I would do this for an hour and then get up and exercise to integrate what I had memorized. Here is the key though. I would LET GO of that as soon as I went on stage! I had faith that what emerged from my mouth was in the right sequence for what this group needed – if I didn't follow my 'script' then it would be ok!

I would pray before I went on stage for God to give these people – through me - what they needed and that allowed me to be in my heart connecting with them, trusting that He would put the right words in my mouth!

If you go on stage with a spirit of serving – a desire to help these people in some way, to give them what they needed, they will notice! Remember – it's not about you – not even a tiny, weeny little bit!!

10. Preparation does not equal rehearsal!

Rehearsing in front of a mirror or others, crafting the perfectly worded keynote or attending a course on speaking does not constitute preparation!

In my opinion to prepare for a presentation you need to:

- Consider the objectives/outcomes for the meeting
- Put yourself inside the minds of the people you will be addressing and imagine how life is for them so you can frame the information in a way that is relevant for them
- Find out all about their current situation, stresses and challenges
- Learn the right language and phrases used in this company – eg IBM lives on acronyms and if you don't know a few of them, you are not part of the group! Some people talk about customers; some, clients.
- In other words, know your audience and how they think and feel right now
- Ask yourself what information would help them and how can I deliver it so it's relevant to them and their situation and needs.
- Find stories and exercises that will illustrate the points in the best way for this group
- Sit in on any previous presentations of meetings before you on the day so you can relate to what has been said and modify what you say based on what they have already heard

- Make sure you know your content before you are on stage and then let go of it from the minute you walk on stage
- Pray to give them what they need before you go on stage

11. Room preparation

Where you can, have people sitting theatre style – it makes them connect much more. If you sit people at round tables, you split them into clumps or separate groups of 8 or 10 and the group dynamics is very different.

If you are trying to make people become more of a team – separate tables is the worst thing you can do – you will split them into teams of 10 or how many tables you have! If you must have a table then have them sit classroom style rather than rounds.

In my opinion, it's best to have them sit theatre style and give them clip boards and gather their chairs into circles if you really want people to connect!

Always have bright music playing fairly loudly as they walk in – if you play relaxing soothing music they will be in a coma before you start!! Van Morrison or disco music is always a good way to lift the mood! It sounds bad but it really works well! People will talk much more to each other when there is music playing at a reasonable volume in the background.

The lighting is critical as well – the brighter the lights the more they connect. Make sure you are well lit on the stage – it's very difficult to watch and listen to someone who is in the dark! Do not stand on the stage in a dark patch – this is where checking the room out at least an hour before you speak is an important first step!

And at that time check out the microphone and how it sounds – set up an audio visual check with the AV people during a break where there is plenty of time.

12. Always start with an activity, icebreaker or questions.

I think the most boring way to start a presentation is to say 'thank you' or 'I am glad to be here' or 'it's great to be here' etc. Anything in that genre is so ordinary!! Instead change the energy of the group from the minute you start by engaging them.

Ask them a question – or better still – 3 questions with the third one something that makes them laugh – for example, I sometimes start with this series of questions:

How many people wake up every morning full of energy and vitality? (raise your hand as you ask the question indicating to them that they need to raise their hand – if you don't do it, they won't either!)

How many people go home every night full of energy and vitality?
Pause – laugh at how few people put their hands up and then ask
How many people just want to remember what it was like to have energy and vitality? HAHAHAAAAH (remember to raise your hand each time you ask the question and you want an answer)

Perhaps you can start by asking them to turn to the person next to them and introduce themselves or tell each other one thing they learned from the last presentation...or one thing they would like to learn from yours. And acknowledge them and then start with yours with a transition statement like “if I don't cover what you wanted to learn then feel free to connect with me afterwards so we can cover it then.”

Buy a book on icebreakers and use one of those – there are millions of activities that work really well out there – and they set you apart, wake your audience up and engage them! In fact, you can keep doing icebreakers all the way through if you have very dry content – people will remember it much more!

13. Make your content memorable.

How can we expect people to remember an hours worth of talking?

People, these days, have attention spans of ‘knats on amphetamines’ as the Readers Digest said, so we have to *help them* remember.

I studied with Michael Grinder for 15 consecutive years (and still do) to learn about the *process* behind the presentation, that makes the *content* memorable.

And how to embed it into their bodies. I suggest you consider it as well if you are serious about speaking for impact! <http://www.michaelgrinder.com>

Use symbols, acronyms, things like

- “The 3 rules of ...”
- “The 4 lies /myths of ...”
- Attach concepts to images or stories etc.
- I often make all my concepts start with the same letter – the 4 “L”s of life; or today we are talking about F words! (Family, Fear, Feelings, Fun etc)

There are many ways of making your points memorable – even if you make them turn to each other and repeat what you said!

Use interactive exercises, stories, create characters on stage, attach ideas to gestures, wear silly hats or glasses or headbands like I do - and you will find that years later people will remember great chunks of what you said!

Remember to tell stories that touch the hearts of your audience members.

14. Believe in yourself

Belief in our own ability is a great predictor of success than any level of skill! Did you know that?

Do whatever work you need to do to have the faith that you know your content, your heart is in the right place, you have done your preparation in room setup and process activities and then go forth and have fun – trusting yourself to say the right things at the right moment.

It's often the fear of speaking and fear of how others are judging you that ruins presentations!

Being arrogant and believing in yourself are two different things! Being insecure and appearing arrogant is a terrible thing to do to people in an audience!

If you feel nervous, share it with people – 99% of them will empathize with you!

Be authentic. Be real. Unless you are a professional speaker, no one really expects you to be perfect!!

15. Think about the structure of your presentation

When I prepare a presentation, I draw a series of boxes down the left hand side of a page and in the top one I write 'start', then the next 3 or 4 are the main points I think the audience needs to hear, then 'finish' in the last one!

Off each box, I draw 3 or 4 lines and these are the sub topics and stories and ideas I want to use as example of the main point.

On the right hand side of the page, I list the 'exercises' to go with each sub point I am making.

And the exercise might be just to make people laugh; or turn to the person next to them and do 'x' or say 'x'; or to stand up and go and say something

to someone else – all activities designed to embed the message in their bodies.

But have the audience do SOME interaction at least every 3-5 minutes if you want them engaged the whole time you are speaking.

I make sure that the finish is something that summarises all I said and makes them laugh – you might get them to turn to each other and “tell the person next to you ‘3 things you have learned that you are going to do differently from now on’.”

This is a clever way to have people self select what changes they will make, so they take ownership over it – and also to embed the messages in their memories!

16. Process vs content

Michael Grinder taught me about the power of influence – he said ‘we are in love with the influence of power when we really should be in love with the power of influence’.

He is a master of non verbal communication.

Once you are very familiar with your content, you can pay attention to the process by which you deliver the content.

Some of it is very obvious and some very sophisticated!

For example, we all know that if someone READS their presentation, people are sure to be in a coma in minutes!

Why do that?

Why not just give them the presentation to read themselves and save everyone time.

It's almost impossible to absorb a message if it is just read to us. That's a simple and easy to understand process idea.

So is pacing back and forwards or side to side on a stage!

It usually drives people nuts, and they are so busy wondering if you are going to stop pacing, they don't hear a word you say!

A more sophisticated one is to think about using your face, voice, body and location on stage to anchor messages in different ways- In other words to make them memorable.

When I tell stories, I will often act out the characters in the story but changing my posture and voice style and tone and volume, and where I stand on stage and each time I play that character, I assume the same posture, voice and position!

You can make your own little video in that way!

There are ways to use your voice to be approachable or credible.

So you can build rapport or make a point.

Watch a newsreader for the credible voice, and then listen to how they change to approachable for the last story, which is supposed to touch your heart! Credible voices drop down in the last part of the sentence or word. Approachable – they finish on an up note.

All this is available in Michaels various products – he is also BRILLIANT as a coach or presenter on these topics.

And how you use your hands is critical! Michael has a very funny link on Youtube about this:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59g5alujRSc>

You will learn a lot!

17. Preparation

In your preparation where you are thinking about who will be in your audience and what they will be thinking, try to put yourself in their mindset and *imagine how they will react to what you say*.

Pretend you are an audience member and you hear the speaker (you!) say 'blah blah blah'.

What do you say to yourself about what you just heard?

Once you have an idea of the range of things people might say to themselves about your content, you have to then to watch them carefully. (remember you are now very familiar with your content or you can't do process!)

If you see anyone looking like they might be reacting to what you are saying, you can step off to the side and say something like – “ I know that some of you are probably thinking ‘ oh sure, I have heard this all before’ – but really this time it IS different and allow me to share with you why it will be different.” Or some words like that.

In other words, you step off to the side and repeat what you think they might be thinking! And then address that skeptical or negative or angry thought! It's very effective I promise!

You will really capture their attention and they start listening to you again.

With a controversial topic, you may need to do this a few times!

There are way too many process tips to cover in this newsletter but at least you have now heard of some ways that you can delve deeper into how you present yourself anywhere – even in a one to one situation!

Of course Michael tells us that we can't really focus on process until the content is very very familiar – so I am sharing with you some ideas to work towards as you become more confident about your content!

18. How to sound intelligent!

The easiest way to sound smart is to pause.

Avoid saying 'um' and 'er' in the pause, and use the correct grammar!

I could write a whole article on the power of the pause!

It must be the right length - so you give people time to breathe, but avoid keeping them on hold while you are thinking of what to say next!

Without a pause, people literally cannot breathe listening to you!

With pauses that are too long, people are asleep in between words, or their minds go wandering!

Filling the pause with 'um' and 'er', 'like' or 'you know' - or just interlacing your presentation with them is very distracting.

If you say any of them often enough, you will have the whole audience irritated and listening only for the next time you say it - missing your entire message!!

Last points!

Remember it is never about you!

It is always about them and how they are responding to you.

YOU need to be in a great state. Be in your heart and sincere in your desire to help them in some way. To give them something they need. Something they will value and be able to use.

Make sure that you dress appropriately as people will judge you in the first 30 seconds.

If you want them to accept you, look the part first and then blossom out into how you really are and what you really want to say!

Come from your heart; be sincere and pray beforehand that you give people what they need.

But most of all – have fun - which gives them permission to have fun.

You can be VERY professional and respectful, and still have fun.

Above all – have fun – even with serious subjects. It works.