

## OFF THE CUFF!

I have discovered there is one thing more challenging than giving a prepared speech, and that is giving an unprepared speech.

In Toastmasters we call this Table Topics. In life we call this extemporaneous or impromptu speaking.

I have heard many Toastmasters say that this aspect is more challenging than giving manual speeches. The reason we keep this in the program is to PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.

Your ability to speak off the cuff is a critical component for effective communication. Unless you are a Human Being living in solitude, you will be called upon to give impromptu speeches.

Think about day to day living, during the course of any given day you may be called upon:

Job interview. That famous question, tell me about yourself.

At work. Colleague or Boss asks for your input.

At home. Your spouse asks why don't we have those dynamic spontaneous conversations, that we use to have when we first met??

Social. Room filled with strangers, you know it would be good to introduce yourself but you feel somewhat paralyzed because you don't know what to say.

### MY OBJECTIVE:

To better prepare you to deliver Great Impromptu speeches.

Our Definition of Great Impromptu Speech = Organized, coherent, engaging and entertaining.

Although we cannot anticipate a questions content or predict when we will be asked to say a few words we can prepare ourselves to be confident for show time. The following formula will serve as a helpful tool for successful impromptu speaking:

**Listen**  
**Pause**  
**Confirm**  
**Tell**  
**End**

**Listen.** We sometimes have a tendency to hear words, but how many times do we actually listen to the content? The best speakers know how to listen, realizing that a good response is dependent on an attentive attitude. I notice any time that I am not able to deliver an effective impromptu is when I have spent more time listening to my internal dialogue i.e. "I hope they don't ask me, I wonder who they will pick." Practice being completely present to a situation. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN.

Paying attention is helpful, careful listening can provide part of your response. The people that you have the best relationships with in life are ordinarily the people who really listen to you. Effective listening does so much more than just providing a response.

### **Pause.**

Take a few minutes to pause before you speak will allow time to center yourself and organize your thoughts. Remember that a silent pause is always preferable to using verbal clutches such as "ums" and "ahs"

PAUSE BEFORE YOU SPEAK.

### **Confirm.**

Confirming just like pausing will allow time to get your juices flowing. You may want to repeat the question out loud this will allow your brain cells a better opportunity to absorb the concept... providing you with a clearer idea of how to respond.

### **Tell**

Now you have their attention, dazzle them with your reply! As you express your thoughts, opinions or ideas, remember to stay focused. Only speak of the essentials - but sound as if you know a lot more. This comes from speaking with conviction. Be mindful that you do not need to discuss every minute detail of the topic. Transition to fifth and final step.

### **End**

Have you ever been held hostage by someone who simply cannot stop talking?

Once you have said what you want to say, bring your comments to a close. Emphasize your main point, smile while making that final audience eye contact... Then take your seat. DO NOT HI- JACK YOUR AUDIENCE!!!

## **STRATEGY**

Apart from keeping up with current events, forming opinions about those events, and simply maintaining a lively interest in the world around you, preparing subject material for an impromptu talk is very difficult. A better way to prepare is to be familiar with a number of speaking strategies that will help you to give a smashing talk.

### **Express an Opinion**

Depending on the topic, you may wish to use one of several strategies. You may begin by stating an opinion, then justifying that opinion with a supporting statement. Generally speaking one item of support should be offered if answering a question; two or three supports if giving a brief speech. A variation of this strategy would be to offer reasons why you agree or disagree with a particular idea or concept.

### **Address cause and effect**

Some topics, however, lend themselves best to cause and effect reply. In that case, begin by stating the situation (such as a high rate of lung cancer) then discuss its causes (first and second hand smoke exposure) and the eventual consequences (long term hospitalization, high incidence of death.)

### **Break The Topic Into Components**

Or perhaps you might decide to break the topic into components and discuss them individually. A question asking for a way to reduce crime could be answered in the following manner: "Three areas of concern- legal, social and educational must be reevaluated in order to lower crime rates.

### **Discuss The Past Present And Future**

What if your topic involves assessing a situation over a span of time, such as United States diplomacy regarding the former Soviet Union? The strategy for a past/present/future outline may be

applied by organizing the "tell" of your subject in timeline fashion.

### **Three aspects to stay away from**

***Do not Apologize.*** Embrace the awkwardness and speak.

***Do not ramble.*** One logical way to wrap up your talk is to come full circle and BRIEFLY restate your original points.

***Don't Invent.*** A skilled impromptu speaker knows that to Bluff one's way through a speech is risky at best. Strive for sincerity rather than inventiveness. If you don't know how to respond, say so... then indicate your interest by asking a few questions in return.

### **The Social Scene.**

There are moments in our life that we find ourselves at an event that we feel very uncomfortable because we are unfamiliar with our surroundings. our natural inclination is to shy away from the crowd and try to blend into the background.

There is a more POWERFUL way of BEING in these scenarios.. It is called conquer your fears of speaking with strangers. Remember to be present to the situation, if you are concerned about not being accepted, or don't feel that what you have to say is worthwhile;

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK. KNOW THAT YOU ARE WORTHWHILE AND YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO OVERCOME YOUR FEARS AND LIVE A POWERFUL EXISTENCE.

Acknowledge the feeling, embrace the feeling, take action inspite of the feeling. Make sure you have strong enough reasons for wanting to conquer your fears, this will allow you to force yourself to go beyond your comfort zone. That is the place you truly find yourself.

### **BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE!**

Being able to think on your feet is an excellent mental habit to cultivate. Just like any other habit PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.

## QUOTE

Every Life Form seems To Strive  
To Its Maximum Except Human  
Beings.

How Tall Will A Tree Grow?  
As Tall As It Possibly Can.

Human Beings On The Other  
Hand, Have Been Given  
The Dignity Of Choice.

You Can Choose To Be All.

Or You Can Choose Less.

Why Not Stretch To The  
Full Measure Of The Challenge  
And See What All You Can Do?

Jim Rohn

Most of this material has been taken from the better speaker  
series "Impromptu Speaking"

***Cheers!***

[www.richardageorge.com](http://www.richardageorge.com)