

## Public Speaking: From Trainer to Speaker - A World of Difference

A lot of trainers have aspirations to become professional speakers and are often misled into thinking that because both activities involve speaking to a group of people they are all basically the same activity. The truth is that there are probably more differences than similarities between training and speaking. The most obvious difference of course is with numbers. Trainers tend to deal with smaller numbers from one to one to perhaps fifty. There are exceptions, but most training courses deal with small groups of people. Speakers tend to work with larger groups. Again there are exceptions but audiences from fifty to thousands are more common. Another apparent similarity is that both training and speaking are concerned with changing behaviour, but again each discipline approaches this in a very different way. A trainer usually works to a Training Gap. There is a gap between a person's actual and desired performance and the goal of the trainer is help the individual to correct that gap. That skill development may involve some significant changes in habits, knowledge and attitude. The trainer breaks the process into a number of simple steps – then they Show and Tell, Observe and Correct, Motivate and Supervise, until the new skill is mastered. A speaker has a different challenge. The audience are not usually there because a specific training gap has been identified. The speaker is selected because there is a belief that learning about a specific topic will be of interest and benefit to members to the audience. Once the speech is over it is the responsibility of each member of the audience to decide if they want to change behaviour. Now here is the problem with that. We learn skills that help us to survive and prosper and “if it ain't broke we don't fix it.” No one sets aside the old way to seek the new until they personally feel the need to do so. The audience is only going to take action if the speaker has motivated them to do so. If they want someone to change their behaviour they have got to give them a reason so powerful that it gets them in motion – motivates them. More importantly trying to motive someone to make two changes in behaviour is massively more difficult than to make one... and three changes, almost impossible. We can really only work on one change at a time. All the great keynote speeches I have remembered had one powerful memorable message that was repeated over and over again until I could not forget it. Compelling stories were told to inspire and motivate me to take action – facts and figures were converted into memorable image, jokes or metaphors. The key to success as Professional Speaker is to “Specialise”. Speakers focus on a very small area of change and become the expert in that. And the more successful they become the more they specialise. A trainer on the other hand is often responsible for a wide area of skill development – in fact all the skills needed in an organizations. Sales, marketing, customer care, leadership, computer skills, presentation skills, interviewing, management, supervision, etc. Because of this need to train on almost anything, most trainers rarely use original material. Trainers pick up ideas from other speakers and trainers and import them into their courses. Using other speakers' material without a license is against the code of conduct in speakers associations around the world, but I doubt there is a speaker or trainer alive who has not at one stage in their careers, used material they picked up from another presenter and because trainers tend to work with a finite audience of staff in their organisation, it tends not to be noticed. On the other hand a speaker really must find original material. This is not just because it is unethical to use other speaker's material; it is because the meeting planners demand originality. It is the unique material that makes a speaker special. Consider this – if you speak at an event on the same topic as an earlier speaker, will the audience be entertained or bored by your speech. A professional speaker is an “expert who speaks for a living”. If you have aspirations to be a speaker, ask yourself – “What am I really an expert in?” If you are not yet an expert, then what do you want to be an expert in. What would it take to make you an expert? Start doing it now. Reading for half an hour a day on your chosen topic for 5 years will make you an acknowledged expert. Learn to read five times faster than average and you can do it in one year. By becoming an expert in a field, you begin to have your own story to tell. You find what motivates people and why they resist. You develop a library of stories, jokes, anecdotes, visual images, games, interactive exercises related to your field of expertise. You learn to take material from another area and change and adapt it so that it becomes original material in yours. I don't think it's possible to develop truly great material unless you are really focused and to be a successful speaker you need truly great material. It takes time to develop, but it's worth it because it will give you a good living for years to come. Copyright 2005 Richelle (Rikki) Arundel, UK

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