



MARKETING MICHELLE GAMBLE

Utilising your podium moment

SPEAKING AT EVENTS, whether at a local Rotary meeting or national symposium, is a marketing tool like none other. That's why it's worth getting over your fear of public speaking so you can tap into the many opportunities (brand building, sales leads and conversion etc) that come with being a presenter. But with the opportunities come responsibilities.

Last month I was invited to present at The National Small Business Summit in Melbourne along with fellow *My Business* columnist Tony Gattari (who rocked by the way!). I saw my opportunity to talk to an audience of business owners and representatives of small business in Australia as a real privilege.

Often I go along to events myself where someone is doing a presentation and I wonder whether they see it as a privilege too. Being given a captive audience who have paid to hear what you have to say, or taken time out of their busy lives, is a gift that shouldn't be wasted by boring them to death with tired slides, an unrehearsed ramble or a sales pitch.

As a small business, presenting can be one of the most effective marketing activities you can undertake. Usually you're provided with some promotion around your expertise and your business for weeks or months leading up to the event which also delivers significant marketing value. So how can you maximise your opportunity to impress and generate interest in your business rather than waste it?

Be prepared: Give yourself plenty of time to put together your presentation. Devote at least a week or two just to prepare it and then a few days to rehearse and tweak it. During your preparation, thoroughly analyse who you will be speaking to, their hot buttons and the problems they need help with solving.

Then rehearse your presentation — preferably with an audience so you can get some honest feedback.

Give something of value: Don't use your podium time to sell! Use it to give your audience something that they can take away and put to use. Illustrate a big idea, give tips, ideas, tools and inspiration. You should view your presentation time as "giving" time. Give your audience plenty of useful information, so much so, that they're begging for more by the time you wrap up. That way you'll have them lined up to get your business card afterwards. It's then that you can converse with audience members who are interested in buying or developing a relationship that can lead to other business opportunities.

Leave the verbage for the verbal part: If you choose to use PowerPoint use it for its best use: to back up what you are saying with an image (chart or gorgeous photograph) and maybe a slogan or single statement. Don't use it to show slide after slide of bullet points that are an exact replica of what you are saying. Learn from the pro's, even PM Kevin Rudd who spoke at the Summit's Gala Dinner brought along slides with powerful graphs that backed up his speech about the efforts the Government has taken to stimulate the economy.

For a small investment you can search and download vast online libraries or beautiful images to embed in your slides. Sites like www.shutterstock.com, www.photolibrary.com are a great source. Images can be used to illustrate your point and add impact to your presentation.

A handy trick is to write your presentation and then cut and paste all the bullet points into your presentation notes — then find your image to illustrate what you are saying in your notes and use that for your slide.

Have a laugh: There's nothing an audience appreciates more than being given a presentation that not only informs but entertains (and keeps them awake!) Perhaps start with a story about something funny that happened to you that week or something you heard. If comedy isn't your forte you can always have a hunt through YouTube www.youtube.com.au to see if you can find a funny video that's relevant to your presentation.

Stick to the time: Whatever time you are given to speak — stick to it! Practice running through your slides so that you know you have enough time to make your point. Going over rips off your fellow presenters and your audience of time.

Maximise the opportunity to generate business: Bring along lead generation tools, whether it's a special offer for all attendees, a sheet where people can fill out their details for a follow-up meeting, or a link to download an e-book on your website where they leave behind details. If you've written a book, bring along some copies to sell or give away.

Finally if you're still not sure how to pull all the elements together and need some inspiration, visit www.slideshare.net — a presentation sharing site that has thousands of good presentations loaded on to it. You can also upload your own presentation to it as a way of promoting your expertise beyond the event.

If you're really committed to mastering the art of presenting you could also invest in a copy of *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds — your audience will thank you for it! ●

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