



Putting the fear of God into us — public speaking!

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'The human mind is a wonderful thing — it starts working the minute you are born and never stops until you get up to speak in public.'

The above quote has been attributed to Roscoe Drummond, George Jessel, and also Mark Twain, and although I am unsure of exactly who should be given the credit, it sums up many people's experiences in the public speaking realm.

An episode of the popular television series, *Seinfeld*, also addressed the topic. It was remarked, 'The number one fear of Americans is talking in front of a group of people. The number two fear is death.' Therefore, according to comedian Jerry Seinfeld, at a funeral, most people would rather in be in the casket than giving the eulogy!

So why is it that we are so afraid of standing in front of a group of people and saying a few words? As professionals in an ever-changing workplace, public speaking is a skill that many do not possess, yet it can make a valuable contribution to the overall perception that our clients and customers, as well as our family, friends and colleagues have of us.

Whilst there are countless workshops and seminars that claim to be able to cure all nerves, the only real way to get over those butterflies and goose bumps is to have a go at it — more than once! Practice, practice, practice is the answer. As respected presenter and

trainer Colin James* says, 'being nervous shows you care', so take control of the nerves and use the energy they give you.

Several community groups have dedicated sessions dealing with public speaking, while many community colleges and neighborhood houses also offer courses in various forms, for various prices. As we all have different needs, there is no one group that will suit everyone, but do yourself a favour and check out what is available in your local area. Here are a few starting points:

Rostrum: <http://www.rostrum.asn.au>

Toastmasters: (NSW, ACT) <http://www.d70toastmasters.org>

Toastmasters: (WA, SA, Vic, Tas) <http://www.toastmasters.org.au>

Toastmasters: (NT, Qld) <http://www.toastmastersd69.org>

Workers Educational Association (WEA): type 'WEA' into your search engine to find a local group

The activities and information that you gain from joining one of these groups will not only help you out the next time you are asked to read at a friends wedding, or make a toast at the end of year party, they can also be counted as part of your continuing professional development (CPD) program. Public speaking workshops can be classified under Activity C, informal learning activities, and carry a weighting of 0.5.

If you would like more information on the CPD program, please contact Jacqui Kempton, ALIA professional development services officer on 02 6285 1877 or by e-mail cpd@alia.org.au

*Colin James is known as the 'Trainers' Trainer' and is the founder and principal of Altmore International. He runs intensive, energetic and highly enjoyable workshops on presentation and facilitation techniques. More information can be found at <http://www.colinjames.com.au> or by contacting Polson HR and Training Brokers at <http://www.polson.com.au>. ■

Tips for public speaking

- Don't forget to breathe! Take a few deep, calming breaths before you begin and try to breathe normally as you speak.
- Remember that nobody wants you to fail. The psychology of an audience is to support the speaker, not to oppose.
- Follow the KISS principle — Keep it simple, stupid!
- Know your subject well.
- Tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them.
- Make sure you are alive! Alter your voice and don't be afraid to use gestures.
- Most people speak more quickly when they are nervous. Try to speak clearly and concisely.
- Practice, practice, practice. Run through your speech in front of the kids, the dog, the mirror, or if you're brave, the video camera!
- Record your speech as a CPD activity!