

Not having the impact you hoped for...

What's in your head?

By Stephanie Bickel

Recall some memorable moments in conversations or meetings, perhaps when someone changed your mind. Maybe after this moment, the mood changed or the conversation shifted 180 degrees in a new direction. What made this happen?

In most communication courses, professors discuss the ethics required in public speaking. Public speakers can have enormous power over the public, even the power to change beliefs and values. How did speakers like Martin Luther King have such a great impact on large populations?

You maximize the impact of your message when you feel good about yourself and your message, connect with your audience, and expect change. This is a secret employed by actors, politicians, and religious leaders. Speakers use this set of beliefs to improve their communication skills authentically. Nothing is forced. No acting is involved.

Love your audience.

When you care about your audience, it cares about you. If you are indifferent, your audience will be. Show your audience respect. When the speaker cares about his audience, he uses individual names, smiles, and makes strong eye contact with audience members. When you care about your audience, you get excited when challenged with questions from them. You never get cross or fearful with members of your audience, if you really love them.

Believe this moment is all about you.

Have you observed that when certain people speak, the room falls silent instantly? Audience members are scared to move in fear they might miss a word. Other times the speaker seems to invite interjections and murmuring from his audience. To have maximum impact, you must believe that this moment is all about you, as if you are the star of your very own movie. When you believe it is all about you, you stand

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differently, your voice is louder, your articulation is often sharper, and you act in such a way that tells your audience it needs to be silent.

Believe you are an expert.

Studies show that a speaker’s perceived credibility is directly related to the impact his message has on his audience. If the audience does not think the speaker is important or knowledgeable, it may reject the speaker’s message or stop listening. When you believe you are an expert on your topic, you feel prepared and confident. You are not worried about what you will say or what will come up in discussion.

Believe you are fighting to solve a serious problem.

When the speaker does not believe in the value of a topic, it shows. When you think your message is the most important message of the day, you have more vocal and physical energy, you choose words and phrases that give your message weight, and you automatically emphasize certain words to enhance your meaning. When you believe in what you are fighting for, your intentions are pure and your purpose is clear.

Believe you can solve it today.

People who have been working with the same organization or group of people over a long period of time start to feel that they have lost their impact and that things will never change. Do not be shy about expecting action. Let it impact the tone of your message. No one likes to disappoint someone he respects.

These beliefs will help you connect with your audience, exhibit a high status, and feel confident. All are critical when you need to impact decision making or to change an audience’s beliefs. Many refer to this approach as working inside-out. Change your mindset and observe how it affects your communication style.



Stephanie is the Founder and Director of Speak by Design, an executive coaching firm based out of Chicago. Speak by Design provides private and group trainings for people seeking to become crisp, confident, and credible communicators. Services include executive coaching, presentation skills, vocal image, accent reduction, and other custom training programs. Visit them at www.speakbydesign.com.

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