

INTRODUCTION

A 'DO I WANT TO READ THIS BOOK?'

PRE-READING BITE

We called it the information age not so long ago and already it's become the information *overload* age! Remember life before email? Information overload is said to be one of the key business issues on the planet today. Do you yearn for simplicity at times? The powerful spoken word can offer that simplicity. The live speaker who can truly inspire has always been a rarity. People who can communicate with others, the widest range of others, know human relationships are the key to our ongoing existence. Right now I believe we need a 'recovery programme' for inspiring speakers. I meet so many extra-ordinary people who have such wonderful stories and insights to share, who have CV's made of real life and who quietly stand For The Good. All that stops them sharing their wisdom is self-doubt (this seems especially so for women). No doubt you have felt your own at times, maybe it's a constant companion. Have renewed faith. The inspiring speaker is re-emerging, stronger and clearer and more conscious than ever before in our history. Our ability to make distinctions is astounding and there is plenty of room to move yet. In the coming years we will hear more truth. More plain talk. The Emperor's new clothes are threadbare. We must speak up. The opportunities are under our noses every day. All we need is the guts to take them.

You might ask me "Do you have an agenda in writing this book?" The answer is yes. I want to help. Surely technology cannot replace real human communication. Think what would be lost. We already have courses in basic social skills for young people who are too frightened to walk up to a stranger and introduce themselves at parties while all over the world there are those who are 'speaking' using all the principles of great leaders in history. These people understand what creates rapport. They understand how to influence malleable human minds - it's not that hard. They

are creative and what's more, they are inspired in their struggle by someone else's words! If that doesn't show the power of the spoken word I don't know what does. Is it not time for a new breed of bravery? Is it not time to stop feeding the delusion that we are all enemies underneath it all, that we should splinter into rigid-thinking, rules-ridden groups of self-righteous fanatics - is this the world we want? Or is it time to learn how to understand ourselves better, really listen to others, and gently move towards that which frightens us most and talk of other things? I say it's high time. Six and half years this book has felt like an indulgence full of hesitation. Now I feel a responsibility to share what I have learnt so far. Whether it's in the boardroom or the bedroom, we must reclaim our own powerful voice of humanity. You don't need any special qualification to communicate. You are human. It's what you do.

So, we need more people awake and willing to speak up more **For the Common Good!** That's my moot. Not just the good of people either, but **For the Whole Environment.** We can all be leaders in this, at dinner parties, on stages, in meetings, in school, workplaces, in teams, communities, anywhere. It's up to us. There is no longer any point leaving it up to 'them'.

Television is at once bringing our leaders closer and yet taking them further away as the 'medium becomes the message' (a notion this book will explore). Before you think I am advocating we could all be saving the world (hey there's an idea if we all did it together), I am simply talking about a wish for us to do our wee bit the best we can (I reckon we've got 'could do ever so slightly better' on our current report card from the angels, if there are any). Let's be real though. It's a reality that there is something that inevitably seems to get in the way around the whole speaking up/expressing ourselves thing. It's called fear.

Amazing isn't it? We human beings have developed astounding technology that was science fiction when I was a child, we still haven't figured out where dreams come from *and* **Public Speaking remains the Number One social phobia on this planet!** We even have jokes about it...you know the one about the

Christians being thrown to the lions? The rule was if they didn't get eaten they were allowed to go free. So one day one man went up to the lion and said something in his ear and suddenly the lion rolled over and started purring like a kitten. The man was duly released and everyone wanted to know how he had made the lion turn into a pussy cat. Our newly freed man told them all he said to the lion was "Remember, if you eat me you're going to have to make a speech".

When we refer to what is many people's number one fear we most often relate it to the 'public speaking' contexts many of us commonly find ourselves in. Public speaking is *one form of presenting*, which this book is all about. However when I refer to presenting I have rather a loose definition. I mean all kinds of presenting including public speaking. I define presenting as meaning any activity where you are interacting with others whether formally or informally, selling, teaching, entertaining, facilitating, passing on information, interviewing, inspiring one other person or ten thousand, or just plain old talking. Clearly, the development of specialist skills in addition to those presented here is necessary for effectiveness when presenting in different contexts and there are some amazing resources available. This particular book is intended to explore the **underlying attitudes, generic skills and theory** which will then form the foundation of any application. If the philosophy printed here can help one more person speak out it will have been well worth the journey. One great presenter can reach many, many ears.

My own journey in life so far has led to the teaching of many presentation workshops where the focus is on these generic attitudes and skills. In these programmes I have found the fears and concerns of participants surprisingly similar in essence regardless of their circumstances, age, background, culture or status. Consequently I keep seeking principles and strategies that have lasting positive results and the broadest application. Fear of public speaking, or presenting in any form, is a human fear. It's not a 'men thing' or a 'women thing', or a 'teenager thing' or a 'this religion or that thing', or a 'this culture or that thing', or an 'intelligence thing', or an anything thing! The thousands of

people who have taught me through their experiences as well as my own direct path of changing radically how I feel about presenting, form the basis of this book. It is designed to empower you to gain the **confidence and competence** which comes from celebrating who you are and learning the strategies which will help you create the results you want *in any* presenting environment.

The material in these pages represents the results of more than fifteen years of dedicated study of real people in real situations. I have also had many wonderful teachers and much encouragement along the way. This is not a scientific or academic read, it's simply time for me to share what I have learned on my own path of personal evolution. I trust this book will become an ongoing reference as you digest and understand its many different layers in tandem with your own development. Readers who are experienced presenters will gain different insights than those of you who feel like 'beginners' yet this book is designed for you both. Following my editor's first review of this manuscript and the feedback from it's first readers, it became clear to me that this book is not aimed at a type of presenter, rather it is aimed at a type of *person* who makes presentations or wants to increase their level of personal choice around talking in front of people. I would hope that those of you who want to increase your influence will learn a little more about how to do that. The reader who will gain the most benefit is one who perceives a value in investing in their inner life as well as their outer, the one who is willing to delve inside, find their gifts, shine 'em up and let 'em out into the world for all of us to enjoy!

THE APPROACH

Ideally I want this book to be as easy to read as eating something you know you will enjoy, with a healthy appetite! I'd love you to feel happily satisfied at the end, and looking forward. The approach taken here is a **common sense, principles-based, developmental** one as distinct from technical skill-development. In this way I have found although results are lasting and ongoing,

they don't necessarily occur overnight. This is not a 'quick fix' option even though the information here may be immediately applicable. If you have a speech or presentation to make tomorrow and you are looking for some tricks to help you get through it, this is probably not an appropriate book to use. If you want strategies which will help you 'beat the other guy', you may find yourself frustrated. If however, your motivation is to **learn how to better serve your audiences and to thrive on your experiences**, no matter who you present to, or in what context, there will be plenty of food for thought between these pages that will keep you growing for a long time to come.

WILL IT WORK?

This book will be most useful if you are willing to explore beneath the superficial with the courage to face whatever is in the way of you **freely expressing who you are anywhere, anytime, with anyone about anything** you choose. The issues addressed here *include and go beyond* the fear of speaking at a friend's wedding or funeral or making a keynote conference address. It is a practical, grounded approach to learning skills which exist in us all in varying degrees and emphasises **what works** rather than rules and etiquette. It is developmental. It will work best if you adopt an adventurous approach with the material here. As you learn more your consciousness and integrity will take care of the growth. The best thing about all this is that you already have **everything** you need inside you. You just might not realise it yet.

THE PROCESS

Given that I most often work with people in a 'live' setting, I am attempting to provide you with the next best thing to that. In this format we cannot work together with your unfolding understandings as they arise - but you can. Write down your insights and understandings as you go, discuss your progress with a trusted friend or colleague, or contact me (details are at the end of the book). Because there are many books you can read which

address more technical skill-development issues like the use of multi-media I see no point adding to what is already a vast array of good quality resources. You can find these in the business section of any decent bookshop.

BE A GREAT GARDENER

We will be taking an expanded approach here. It should challenge you, stimulate you, stretch you, frustrate you even, but ultimately it is designed to empower you to be in the driver's seat of your presentations. To this end I encourage you to be patient with yourself and your process. To use a gardening metaphor, treat the first sections as looking and learning the garden layout, followed by weeding and new seed planting. The later sections will tend to the new growth and, very importantly, help keep everything safe until nature takes over. All of which will ultimately lead to a bumper harvest! **Note:** It will be useful to remember we all have experiences that time can help us 'compost'. Time can't work alone though, we need to contribute some willingness to transform some of our limiting experiences. They can then be turned into fertiliser for our futures if we choose. We cannot hasten the harvest nor can we rush our own development so patience, compassion, willingness to learn and maybe even to forgive are your best assets.

THE STRUCTURE

The structure is designed to start with the big picture and address the very personal issues involved with presenting, then gradually move into a generic level of practical specifics. Your choice of course, but you may find it most useful to follow the path as set out here at least for your first read through. I encourage you to highlight the bits that stand out to you as they will be relevant to what you learn. Ditch any old thinking that says 'writing in books is bad'. Make this book live for yourself as you learn. Make it your own. Second and third reads will draw your attention to different things in the same way it does with movies. The craft is

to keep making distinctions.

The parts, or bites that the text is divided into, are:

- **Introductory pieces**, including this one, which set the tone of what is to come at an overview level and provide a context for my approach to this subject - the Frame.
- A **bench-marking section** designed to help you clarify your perception of yourself in relation to presenting right now - taking stock.
- A section addressing the more **psychological and emotional factors** involved which will give you some insight into why so many people are afraid of presenting in the first place, a little brain theory, where your own responses come from in a generalised sense and keys to moving forward.
- A **self-development resource kit** which provides you with principles and strategies which will empower you to get the results you want in any presenting environment. This section will also stimulate your ongoing development.
- A practical and easy to use **8-step preparation tool** which will help you organise your material and yourself for best results.
- A **‘Where to from here?’** concluding section.

Most chapters conclude with a ‘wrap up’ and ‘what’s important?’ review. There is no reference section or bibliography. I have included references as I go and once I started a bibliography, true to form, I didn’t know where to stop. So trust your process and the right resources will find their way to you. As soon as you are on a particular path, that which is complimentary will come your way. You can take that to the bank!

TO GAIN MAXIMUM VALUE

You may be tempted to skip straight to the resource chapters and indeed these may suffice for what you need. As I said though, I would recommend you work your way through the book at least once in the sequence it is presented for best results. Much of what

comes in later chapters has links earlier in the text which could become confusing if you have omitted working through or at least reading these chapters.

I do not expect you to agree with everything I say, nor is it my intention to convince you of anything. Rather, the intention is for you to trust **you** even more when you have finished than you did when you started. This book comprises information and ideas which have helped me and many others become more confident and competent presenters. My encouragement to you is simply to 'play' with the material and use what works for you.

BE A DETECTIVE TOO

If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable at any stage, treat your discomfort as an opportunity to learn more about your own responses. Get curious about it because it's telling you something. Our feelings give us huge clues as to what is going on and what to do next if we remain open and curious. Emotional Intelligence is now officially sought after - this book will help grow yours. Be aware sometimes people feel worse about presenting before they feel better when taking a self-development approach, exactly like when they get some coaching on their golf swing. After practising for years doing it the same way and playing at the same level, learning some new technique can blow your game for a while until you integrate the new learnings. It's called a learning crisis and if you have one, rest assured you are in for a whole new positive step ahead so look forward to it, enjoy the ride and know you are getting your money's worth! Perseverance is the key to continued improvement as I'm sure you are aware so be kind and be generous with your process. *Please treat yourself well.* You are learning about something most people are too afraid to even confront so congratulate yourself for even starting!

Please note: Any errors are mine. They are one of the many ways I model the beauty of imperfection.

The exercises here have evolved from many I have tested from all sorts of sources (some long forgotten). Feel free to continue their evolution so they become even more useful.