

Erase Your Presentation Myth-givings

For millions of people, there are three, not just two, certainties in life: death, taxes and the fear of speaking in public. But while stage fright's pervasiveness is no myth, many would be surprised to find that stage fright is fueled by several myths. In her book *Speak Without Fear* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2004), Ivy Naistadt outlines several myths about public speaking that pervade society at large and that most of us have bought into. By understanding and dispelling these myths, she argues, sales reps can take one giant step closer to fearless presentations:



Myth #1: Nervousness is a sign of weakness. Reality: Almost everyone gets nervous. Singers Barbra Streisand and Carly Simon, actress Kim Basinger and weatherman Willard Scott all have admitted to experiencing severe bouts of performance anxiety in their professional lives, and few of us would call them weaklings. Nervousness is simply a sign of excess energy you can learn to control and redirect.

Myth #2: My nervousness is worse than anybody else's. Reality: Some people are simply better able to hide their feelings of anxiety than others, or at least have learned how to channel their nervousness so it doesn't get the best of them.

Myth #3: You have to be perfect. Reality: Audiences want to hear from presenters who come across as human, and humans aren't perfect. The best presenters rely on their willingness to be imperfect in order to put themselves and their messages across more effectively. Accepting that the unexpected can go wrong frees your mind to deal with mishaps when they occur.

Myth #4: You have to be a comedian. Reality: There are very few Jerry Seinfelds in the world. Don't go into a presentation with jokes consciously aimed at getting a laugh. Instead, sprinkle your presentation with anecdotes and stories drawn from your own experiences. You'll be far more likely to get chuckles because people will relate to your experiences.



Myth #5: It's all over if you make a mistake. Reality: No it's not. Guaranteed, if you give enough presentations, there will be times when you'll lose your place, when you'll fumble an answer in a Q&A session, when your projector will refuse to communicate with your laptop or when your mind will simply go on vacation in the middle of your presentation. The key is not to make a big deal out of it. If you don't focus on it, no one else will either – and they may not even notice the mistake.