

Speaking and Engaging to international clients

Intro 00:00

Welcome to the superstar communicator podcast. Our aim is to ensure you speak and communicate with confidence, clarity, credibility, and impact, so that you present the best version of yourself in all business conversations. Welcome to our host, Susan Heaton-Wright.

Susan Heaton-Wright 00:19

Hello, this is Susan Heaton-Wright. And thank you very much for joining me. I am going to be sharing some information about speaking and engaging as a speaker and facilitator internationally. This is something that I'm going to be delivering tomorrow for the fellows of the PSA and the global speaking Summit, so no pressure there. But I was invited, and I'm very honoured to be sharing some of the experiences that I have, and if you don't mind, I'm going to use this session to share some of these top tips. Now, I'm not going to talk about the business side about getting paid and contracts. In fact, in the session, there are going to be questions and I'm going to be a panellist. And that's the sort of thing that I will be answering them. But this is literally how you engage with different cultures, and some of my strategies for doing this. So here we go. I attended an event in London, a private event, and there was a speaker who was speaking from United States on business and business success. For the entire 45 minutes, he used the analogy of baseball, and business, he used examples of heroic act by baseball players, some of the real legends of the game, specific strategies for winning a game. The trouble was that the audience was mainly from the United Kingdom, and guess what, in the United Kingdom, baseball is not a major game. He broke so many rules of speaking and facilitating internationally, he didn't check who his audience was, he didn't realise that he could change certain aspects of his speech so that they were tailored for the audience. And thirdly, he didn't read the room, because half the people had left during the session. Welcome to the world of being an international speaker and facilitator. I have created a way of being culturally aware and this has meant that I've been aware of questions, I need to ask to make sure that my audience is really engaged, but also that they are really served by the content that I have. I'm going to be able to share three examples with you of case studies of things that I've done and the approaches that I've had. But I should flag even now that as an English speaker, it is very, very easy to assume that everybody else understands English, as well as me, a native English speaker. And we should always have that in the back of our head. How can we make it as easy as possible for people to understand us? And also, what could we put in place to support them with their learning and inspiration? So here goes, here are three case studies. The first one I call reading the room, and this was on the fourth of November 2022, and it was for senior women in the United States, an asset management company. And I arrived early for this virtual session and people was entering, and they were sort of quite shy, saying "Oh, I had a good night's sleep last night. I've taken the dog for the walk", but there was no mention of the big thing that was going on in the United States. The day before had been the election. Trump against Biden, yet no one was talking about it. And I thought, Susan, "keep your mouth closed. Keep listening." And I'm really pleased I did No one mentioned the election, and I certainly didn't. We focused on the content that I was delivering. Some of the feedback afterwards from the client was "I'm so pleased that you didn't mention the mention the

election. We are all very emotional about it, both sides of the election. And you enabled us to focus on what we were doing". It was so easy, I could easily have jumped in and made a remark started some really interesting conversation that was not related to what I was there for, read the room, watch, listen to your audience, because they're going to give you cues. The second point is, I delivered some work virtually, again, for an accountancy organisation that trains accountants globally. This was in the Middle East, and there were over 300 people, mainly men, mainly from the Middle East, and North Africa. And, understandably, I was aware that as a woman, there would be some things that I would need to modify from a cultural point of view. One of the things that is useful to do is to discuss this with your client, with other people such as business associates that you know, in the country, I was immediately told, "well, in Saudi Arabia, women are driving now", but that wasn't really much help to me. However, I asked things like, "Do I need to modify the clothing that I wear?", in fact, I will modest clothing. But I was also aware that the most of the people did not speak English as their native tongue. However, I found out that their training was in English. So they had a level of competence. However, I never take this verbatim, and I thought of ways that I could make it easier for them. I suggested a transcription of my talk so that they could read through it, however, the client didn't want that. I showed them the slides, and I also always have polls, if it's either Mentimeter or if it's face to face, or polls that you use on a virtual workshop. I always show the wording, because there might be words that don't mean the same thing to the audience, or there might be a better way of explaining it. And in this case, there were a couple of modifications that were made, which is brilliant. I also checked to see what they were interested in, I didn't want to go down the route of the baseball speaker. So I discovered that they really like tennis, international, tennis, and rugby, who knew! So I was able to use those examples, and also have videos one of which the commentating was very unclear. So I ensured that there was subtitles so that people could read that. I also include I have an app on my phone. And I include blended learning material, in addition to this, as well as the slides for further studying so that people could delve into this much further. It's those little things that make a real difference to make sure that you are really engaging with your audience. And finally, the third one: I was honoured to be invited to speak in Myanmar, well virtually, for an international women's event. This was by a British business woman over there who wanted to support business women in Myanmar. Now, the only information I had was that these women had small businesses every day they were frightened for their lives that they wouldn't be able to walk to their work or walk to school with their children without there being violence. They were also worried for their families, and they were running their businesses to support them to feed them. The rest of the all female lineup was very impressive. There was an ex-British ambassador who sadly is in jail at the moment, but the jointer in in my ma have put her in jail, a deputy a British ambassador for my mom and her very high up UN representative from the region, a young woman who is half-American lives it in my ma delivering really good support for young people, the business woman and myself. The disadvantage I had was that I did not understand the culture, and I needed to get more information. There wasn't much forthcoming from the organisers, so I reached out to the embassy, and I find out their English is not their first language, in quite a lot of cases, not very strong so I needed to come up with other ways of doing that. And I wanted to make sure I understood their lives and what I could do in the content to make a real difference and to support them. So a few things that I did, I've told you before that I've got my app, I videoed the session beforehand, just in case there were problems with Wi Fi. In fact, there were but not at my end. I also did a transcription and I have people were able to read through it as I was speaking. I encourage them to use emojis, I wasn't able to see them, because culturally, many of them do not want to be seen on screen. And I made sure that there was a really

clear call to action, so that they had something to go away with. In the end, this is about us serving our audience, and making sure that they understand what we say that we can provide other support systems in place, such as a transcription, such as subtitles, such as additional blended learning material, so that they will understand. I also believe that it's important that we tailor things and check with our client so that it's going to resonate with them. Another thing is that quite often clients say they want something really interactive, but how can we frame that so that the audience will understand that it's okay to speak up and to ask questions, because that's not the case with all cultures. So do we want to be the baseball speaker? Or do we want to be the most incredible speakers sharing inspirational content? I believe I know what it is that you want to do. Good luck. Thank you very much for watching, and thank you, Linda, for your comment. Absolutely as an English, in English is my native tongue. I know that there are so many people that assume that other people are fluent. But we can make differences by slowing down our speech using more straightforward language without being patronising to the audience, and using examples that are relevant to them. So I use the baseball example, it was irrelevant to a UK audience and to have those other things in place, is there anything that you would add Linda? Well, I'm sure that you'll reach out to me, thank you so much for watching, and do take care. Bye bye.

Intro 13:39

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