

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:00:00]:

You. Hello, everybody. This is Susan Heaton Wright and Nick Simon from superstar. Communicator podcast. Here we are today talking about public speaking. So Superstar Communicator is all about presenting the best version of yourself in all business conversations. So that can be meetings, presentations, a virtual meeting like this, networking and public speaking. And public speaking is one of those areas that many people can get very nervous about. In fact, there are statistics that suggest that 75% of people would rather die than do public speaking. Now, I don't recommend that. And also, I feel that that's a waste of a good life, isn't it? And there are ways that you can get around and help develop those skills that you feel less nervous. But I will say a secret that I always get nervous before I speak. And I haven't always done this. When I was very young, I was very quiet in class, and the sort of family message was that I shouldn't speak up. So I had to push through a number of things in order to do public speaking. And this session is all about asking questions around public speaking. And I know that people have been sending in questions and Nick has got some to ask me. But before we carry on, I would say that even when we're having a one to one conversation, we are public speaking. As soon as we're speaking to somebody else, we are public speaking. Would you agree with that, Nick?

Nick Simon [00:02:01]:

Yeah, definitely.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:02:03]:

Good. I'm pleased that you agree with me on that. So if we can reframe our mind and say that unless you're mute, unless you don't speak to anybody at all, ever, you are public speaking. So you're already doing it. And it's a case of stepping up and seeing how you can increase that and empower yourself to step up and do it, because it's really important for professional development, for career development, that you are able to do this. So, Nick, you've got some questions?

Nick Simon [00:02:45]:

Yes. So the first one, Susan, is how can I get some experience in public speaking?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:02:51]:

Oh, that's a really good question, and thank you very much for that question. I believe that especially if you're nervous about speaking at work, there are ways that you can do it. One of them is Toastmasters, and I know a number of very good international speakers who have gone through the Toastmasters Master's route, where they learn about speaking in front of other people, sometimes with a topic at short notice, and they get feedback. And it's a

very, very useful thing to do. Another thing that you can do is that some charities are desperate to have speaking to represent them. I know that there's an organization that I worked with, I volunteered my time a couple of years ago where they created an ambassador program of which speaking on behalf of the charity and delivering short speeches to companies that had provided money and things like that. They did that. And I created a training program for that so that people could have a go and they would be able to develop their skills and get used to the nerves that you feel beforehand. So those are two great ways that you can do that.

Nick Simon [00:04:27]:

Great. And I think what you said earlier about if you're speaking to one person that is public speaking I think you can also sort of reframe your mind into thinking that way that if well, I've spoken to one person, then that's technically public speaking. Therefore, one person and 100 people is basically the same. And if you reframe it in that way you can easily get better at practicing the public speaking aspect and eventually speak to a whole crowd or something.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:05:03]:

I think you've made a really good point there. It's a case of thinking about that conversation where you're having with one person. So I know that broadcasters, radio broadcasters who again can't see their audience they will think about one person that they are speaking to. And if you can think about that one person that you're speaking to in the audience that you're having a conversation, then that makes it easier. But I'm sure there are some other questions around that.

Nick Simon [00:05:38]:

Great. And what is the most important point to consider when speaking?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:05:46]:

Oh, yes. Now that is purpose and the audience. So why are you speaking to the audience? It's not about you. What am I saying? It's about the audience. Why are they there? Why can they be bothered to listen to you? What are they going to get out of listening to you and the mix of the people that are there? So, for example, if I was speaking to some of your contemporaries nick talented people in their early twenties I would probably be delivering a different style of speech to people that were older. And so we need to think that and also think of the seniority which sector they're in. So you're in the music sector whereas if I was speaking to people from the insurance sector, that would be very different. So it's all about the audience and the purpose of the speech.

Nick Simon [00:06:54]:

Great. Yeah. And I guess that you speak to different people in different ways. That kind of connection you get when you're public speaking, if you're speaking to a crowd of a certain group and they are unable to connect to you because you're speaking to them in a different way, that can sort of stifle your ultimate thing you're trying to say to them. So I think that's definitely an important factor.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:07:26]:

And I think that you hit on another point as well that different groups of people and I don't want to stereotype, but if, say, I were speaking to musicians obviously I'm a former musician and using very technical words from insurance, for example, I would lose the audience. So you've got to think about the audience and what they know, what language is familiar to them great.

Nick Simon [00:07:58]:

And now we are doing more online materials what can we do to modify your speaking?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:08:10]:

Oh, that's a really good question. I mean, first of all, I feel that when I'm speaking virtually I make sure that I fully engage the audience so I know that there are people watching today and remember, if you have got questions, don't forget to leave them in the comments. The thing is that when you're speaking virtually you can't see people in the same way that you would be when you're face to face and you are not going to pick up the energy in the room or the atmosphere. So the way that I deal with it is that I ask lots of questions and I make it interactive. So I will have slides that are very interactive, that they don't have many words on them, but I ask questions, I ask polls. I actively encourage people to ask questions and to comment on it because inevitably, people have got different experiences and there might be something that someone shares that is brilliant and will be of huge value to the people who are in the audience. So that's what I would do. I think also you really need to think about the lighting and the sound and keeping things moving in a way that you wouldn't necessarily do when it was face to face so having a poll every four or five minutes, having a question, keeping things going so that the audience's attention will still be there great.

Nick Simon [00:10:01]:

Yeah. And the way you say it, it's sort of like being a newscaster or something. They have materials that they're given and they have to quickly say it and get it solved and then move on to the next thing. So that a kind of interesting momentum of information is kept.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:10:23]:

Absolutely. It is a case of keeping everybody's attention and I would say, oh, we've got a question. I would say that if we are in the room because things have really changed with public speaking face to face, we are seeing less big keynote speeches when there are hundreds of people there for 45 minutes and now clients are wanting a shorter speech and more Q and A, which I think is brilliant. And so I would say that when you're doing a public speech, making it shorter and making sure that it's top level, that people will be very interested and be curious enough to ask questions, because that's when the real gems come out, of which we have got a I don't know who this is, but it's LinkedIn user. Do say who it is. You hit a brick wall in the middle of your speech, you stumble over your words and your brain simply won't pass go. Your nerves now have a complete hold of you. What advice do you help these types of situations? I hope that hasn't happened to you but I would say if I were to ask some of my public speaking friends and myself, we have all had one of those scenarios where all of a sudden our brain just goes blank. And I think that what you need to make sure you do is to take a deep breath, perhaps walk to the other side of the room and start what you were saying and look at the slide that you've got to remind yourself. Or if you're not using slides, why not ask a question related to your topic? If I were in the room with you, I would be using some physical techniques. There's one that I often use, which is called diva feet, which is a way of really standing for sitting, if sitting diva where you are relaxed. And certainly when I was a singer, there were times when I would get tense because we all do, and I would think feet, and I was able to relax. And I use that as a sort of emotional anchor when I'm speaking. If I'm getting a bit tense or thinking, oh, I'm going to forget the next bit of this speech. So, yeah, if I were in the room, I would have working with you in the studio, I would do this sort of thing with you. I hope that answers your question. Are there any other questions?

Nick Simon [00:13:32]:

I think there's a new one.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:13:35]:

For some reason, I can't see these now. Do you want to read it out to me?

Nick Simon [00:13:39]:

Yeah. So this is from Lynn Scott.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:13:42]:

Hi, Lynn.

Nick Simon [00:13:45]:

In a virtual technical engineering work meeting, it is helpful to send out a preread, then review it so everyone starts in an activated state. Does that work for more general talks?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:14:02]:

Now, it sounds as though, Lynn, that this is more related to a meeting rather than a public speaking speech, but I would agree with that. Certainly there are a couple of speeches that I've been doing in the last couple of months, and I have sent a little video beforehand to create the curiosity to share one or two things that I'm going to be talking about so that people are prepared. So I think that that's a really good way of doing it. It's almost an equivalent of sending a preread, isn't it? But you don't want to give away everything beforehand by expecting people to read a load of information. And a public speech is going to be slightly different from a technical engineering work meeting because you're not going to go into technical information in the same sort of way. A technical speech. Ideally, you want to intrigue people, create curiosity and get them to ask more questions. So you're giving an overview. All right.

Nick Simon [00:15:22]:

And I think Lynn added a bit more to that question. So what about audiences who are more diverse in knowledge and ability? And how do you give more context before you start?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:15:37]:

Okay, so there are two more questions there. So audiences who are more diverse in knowledge and ability. My feeling is that you should keep everything at what I call headline level. So not going into too much detail and never assuming that people know more than they do, you're giving an overview. And if you're wanting to educate those people who don't know as much, what you could do at the end is to have a QR code or a link so that people can download further information so they can learn from that. Absolutely. Diversity doesn't exclusively mean age or race or culture. It also means what level they are within an organization. So the other one, how do you give more context before you start? It'd be great to have a little bit more information about that. But the way that I do it is that I would introduce I would give a lot of information beforehand for the organizer of the speech. So I do a summary of what the speech is about and some clear outcomes. And if necessary, I would do a short video beforehand saying, hi, I'm really looking forward to meeting you. I'm going to be speaking about this. I'd like you to have a thought about this point. If necessary, you could have a link to an article as well, or there might be a Ted Talk. That's a similar topic. To start the curiosity, start the idea to prepare the audience. Okay, great.

Nick Simon [00:17:38]:

And furthering on, from what you said about audiences having a sort of diverse knowledge and ability, I was interested to see how do you approach the audience and not come off as underestimating the audience's knowledge?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:17:58]:

Well, I think that you have to add curiosity and interest to that. So even if everybody in the room is more experienced than you, if you've got a story related to that, either a personal one or one from a colleague who learned something, people's interest is going to be there.

Nick Simon [00:18:26]:

Great. And has public speaking changed?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:18:32]:

Yes, I believe it has. As you know, I'm a fellow of the Professional Speaking Association, which is a huge honor, and there are some people who are fellows who are very experienced, and they have been speakers for a number of years. I was speaking to one of them recently, and he said that now virtually all of his work is facilitating workshops rather than keynote speaking. And there are a number of reasons for that. One is that of course, there are less conferences and events. People are even since the Pandemic, even though we're now open up, there are fewer big conferences because organizations have seen that virtual events do work. And so there are a few of those available. And also, if you are a public speaker and you come and deliver a speech, they're not going to ask you to do it the same thing the following year because they want to have new speakers for it. Another thing, and I did mention that earlier, is that there is a demand now for more short speeches and more Q and A. So if you are an expert, you've really got to know your stuff. Because when people are asking questions like people are now that you've got to be ready to provide really good quality.

Nick Simon [00:20:14]:

Answers there and that's with the added people are on the internet as well, so they can look up whatever information.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:20:22]:

They're all on their phone.

Nick Simon [00:20:24]:

Yeah, exactly.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:20:27]:

I think that you've hit one very important nail on the head and that

is if you are not totally sure of an answer, perhaps there are some statistics or analysis, say, I don't have that information to hand, can I take your email? And I will send that information out. Certainly. There was a speech I did a year ago and there was something very specific, so I sent out the information to the booker afterwards and they distributed it to all of the audience and that means that I'm still demonstrating my credibility and it answered the question.

Nick Simon [00:21:13]:

Yeah. And we have a question from LinkedIn user. How has public speaking changed you?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:21:21]:

Oh, that's a really good question, isn't it?

Nick Simon [00:21:24]:

Let me reframe it. So has public speaking changed you? And if so, how has it?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:21:31]:

It has changed me because it has given me a voice, it has made me speak up. Certainly in meetings I am able to speak up far more than I used to when I was younger. That might be partly to do with age, that you reach an age when you think, I'm just going to say it, but absolutely, it has given me the confidence that I have an opinion and I have a valued opinion that will be useful in the conversation, in the meeting, but it has also built up my confidence generally and my visibility. I mentioned that when I was younger, I was very quiet and very reluctant to speak up in class and I would avoid public speaking, but honestly, it has made a real difference to me, personally and professionally.

Nick Simon [00:22:38]:

Great. And we have a few more.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:22:41]:

Oh, fantastic.

Nick Simon [00:22:43]:

So Crystal Gartner says hi. Season. Thanks for the talk. Very interesting. Could you give us a bit more information on the nonverbal of the speech, as in tone of voice, breathing, articulation, and how that translates nowadays into virtual meetings without camera?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:23:09]:

Oh, gosh, loads of questions here, Crystal. I think I'm going to have to do an Ask Susan just on nonverbal communication. However, as we know, it's not exclusively what we say, but how we say it, and that is related to our nonverbal communication. So our posture, our gestures, our facial expressions and the tone of our voice. And if you've been on one of my virtual master classes, I often mention the fact that the pitch and the tone of our voice alters in different business conversations. So if we're nervous, the voice goes up and we can pick up on that subconsciously. So we're going to feel, if we're listening to a speaker whose voice sounds nervous, we're going to pick up on that. We're going to question what they're saying with the tone of voice because it doesn't match. And that's the thing. We've got to match what we say with our gestures, with our facial expressions, with the tone of our voice. And you said that how that translates nowadays in virtual meetings without a camera. Well, the thing is that if you don't have a camera, people are going to pick up on the tone of your voice far more. But if you are sat in such a way that you're tense, that's going to project onto the tone of your voice. And as with the telephone, if the only other clue that people have other than what you say is the tone of your voice, you need to imagine that you are in the room or the camera is on so that you are relaxed and your voice is free. Okay, great.

Nick Simon [00:25:14]:

And Lynn Scott has another question. What is the situation with plagiarism people using your content? When you speak publicly or virtually, do you see your thinking credited to others?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:25:32]:

Oh, that's a really good question. I remember one of the things that I talk about is diva feet. And I'm not sure, Lynn, if I talked about diva feet when we met, but diva feet is a term that I've been using for a number of years, a really good way of a neutral way of standing for men and women when they're speaking. I remember going to a conference and there was a speaker there who used the words diva feet and got us all standing. I am delighted to say that they didn't do it totally correctly, however they used the term diva feet. I was in a dilemma, really. One was to shout out and say, hang on, that's my term. Or to try and leave it and think, you know what? This is someone that doesn't know their stuff. Diva feet is mine. It's part of superstar communicator come to me. And so I let it go. But it is frustrating. Another thing that I talk about is ding dong words. And I have to say that I have an American client who actually asked permission and credited me for the dingdong word bingo, which was so wonderful, and I think it's an inevitability, but let's hope that there's karma and all of that comes my way again. And you said, I remember, sit on your bones. Yes, sitting diva. Yeah, it really works for that.

Nick Simon [00:27:18]:

So I have another question. So what are your free top tips for public speaking?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:27:26]:

Okay, so first of all, as I mentioned before, think of the purpose. Why are you speaking? Why should people be bothered to listen? Think about your audience. So what are they going to get from this? Who are they? What sort of age group? What is the diversity there? Whether it is within a particular sector or is it multiple sectors? And then try to think of ways that you can engage them, not by standing there and delivering that's the old style of speaking, but reengage what can you do throughout the speech to keep them interested and curious in what you're speaking about.

Nick Simon [00:28:17]:

Great. And I had another question about you mentioned how online virtual workshops are now shorter when it comes to the speaking part, and there's more virtual interaction now. So how would you approach interacting with the audience both in real life and in the virtual?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:28:44]:

Okay, so in the virtual, I think I've mentioned that it depends how long it is, but I actively encourage people to comment and ask questions, and I include that in my content. Owen Joe has said this, Mark has said that. Because it can provoke discussion, I also use polls. So within zoom, you can ask polls. You can ask questions that people can then. And one of the options that I put is other put in chat, and that's the interesting stuff. And every so often a slide, I'll say, what's the first thing you're going to do as a result of this work? So I'm getting them to think throughout the process. From a public speaking point of view, if you're face to face, I will have different things that I use. I've got cards, so I get them to hold cards up. A number of people use red and green cards. I'm aware that there are some people who are colorblind, and those are possibly the worst colors to use for that. So we need to be aware of that. Those people don't feel confused. So I use different colored cards for that. I also use interactive polls, so there are various platforms like Mentimeter AHA slides, slido that you can get people using their phones to vote for particular things. And it's keeping that interaction there and of course, encouraging people at the end to ask questions.

Nick Simon [00:30:28]:

Great. This is a bit of a weird question. You've been on radio, I think, before. Is online speaking similar to radio, or is it sort of a different kind of speaking?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:30:46]:

It is quite different because the radio presenter is unless you're in the studio with them, they're at another location. So you're having to listen and take the vocal tone as being part of the cues. And also there are occasions I'm not going to mention names, but one on Radio Two that I was asked, and it was all about her rather than having a proper conversation. So you've got to go with that. It's not necessarily you in charge or you as the VIP. You're there to prop them up sometimes.

Nick Simon [00:31:32]:

And how has your background in opera singing and performing helped you with public speaking?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:31:40]:

Oh, that's a good one, because people often think that I'm only working on the voice, which is not true. I mean, even when you're working on the voice, it's so closely related to your posture and your nonverbal communication anyway, they should never be separate. But definitely the performance side and preparation, mental and physical preparation have been really useful for that. Learning to manage your nerves, learning your content, understanding that the audience, the way that they react to what you say. Of course, in opera there is a score, so you're not able to improvise then. However, you are aware of the energy in the room, face to face when you are performing. So, huge similarities.

Nick Simon [00:32:47]:

Great. And going off of that kind of idea of confidence, how do you show confidence in virtual public speaking as opposed to real life?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:33:01]:

Again, a really good question I mentioned about the voice, if you're not confident, that's going to show in your voice, isn't it? You're going to sound a little bit nervous and people pick up on that. But also, if you've got a camera on, like I have now, the way you present yourself with your nonverbal communication, with the way that you sit for stand, your facial expressions are going to demonstrate that you're either confident or you're really nervous.

Nick Simon [00:33:42]:

Great. So going off of that, the idea of preparing for public speaking, how much should you prepare for a public speech and how much should you open yourself up to kind of going with the flow kind of sections where I guess it would be interacting with the audience?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:34:06]:

Oh, that's a really good question. I mean, definitely you should know your speech. There's no doubt about it. I don't like mentioning

politics, but there is a previous Prime Minister who definitely was a winger on this and make it up as they went along. And I don't want to be that person that is disrespectful to an audience who've taken time out of their busy lives to listen to me. So I make sure that I'm completely prepared and to provide the very best version of the speech that I can do. Obviously, if there are interactive bits, so if there's a poll that's on mentimeter, and particularly if the result is quite different from what you said, you're going to comment on that. And that is a real gift. And certainly when I will always leave enough time to include a comment about that. And maybe I'll ask another question. But those are only small sections.

Nick Simon [00:35:26]:

And we've got a question from Lehope. Le Hope. How should you move around the stage to give or show confidence when talking to a live audience?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:35:39]:

That is a really good question. I mentioned about diva feet earlier on about that sort of natural way that you can stand and it's almost an anchor, particularly when you're feeling a little bit nervous, but it's perfectly normal to move around the stage. However, I attended a conference a couple of weeks ago and there was a speaker there that was clearly very nervous, had some fantastic things to share, but he was nervous and he was literally walking around in circles to the point that it was disrupting the experience for the audience because we were all distracted by that. So I feel that you can say something one place, perhaps walk a couple of paces to another direction to start a new part of the topic. But I would avoid walking around the whole time because it can distract.

Nick Simon [00:36:42]:

Great. And I recently did a showing of my portfolio to some video game programmers and I found it was a long time since I did public speaking in that way. And I ended up having a minute of time to speak. And my plans of what I was going to say, I got through it very quickly. In about 10 seconds, I'd just spoken what I was going to say too quickly. So how do you keep yourself from speaking your speech too quickly and sort of giving yourself time to say those things?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:37:28]:

Okay. So quite often when we're nervous, we speak faster and our hearts are pumping. We might be getting nervous, we might be breathing more shallowly. If you feel that that's happening to you, try to slow down both your heartbeat and your speech by trying to take deeper breaths. It might feel unnatural, but it's going to slow down your speech so that it becomes easier for other people to listen to you.

Nick Simon [00:38:03]:

Great. And what kind of extra things do you suggest people should add to their public speaking? So things like videos or images or that kind of thing.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:38:17]:

I'm really pro lots of images. Partly I'm going to tell a secret. It helps me when I'm doing speeches that I'm not as familiar with. It reminds me where I am in the speech. And also I put in the bottom right hand corner what the next slide is about so that I look at that and it reminds me and a number of speakers do that. As with videos, I feel that provided they are relevant, then that's absolutely fine. But I've sat through too many speeches. When there's a five minute video that you get the impression that they are filling up time with that and it's not really relevant. But there are some people right at the end will have maybe a 32nd 1 minute video that is related and finishes the speech. And that can be a really good way to finish a speech.

Nick Simon [00:39:25]:

And if you're not using a PowerPoint I remember in school we had to do public speaking for English and you could go up with small cards and do your speech from there. But oftentimes I would just write pointers and then on the spot speak around those pointers rather than just write the entire speech. So which would you recommend to do when you're doing a public speech? Do you recommend doing an entire speech and just reading off of it or pointers and just going with the flow of those pointers?

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:40:09]:

I don't think you should ever read a speech out. Because you're reading it out rather than engaging with the audience. Obviously, if you get nervous, having a couple of cards as prompts is okay. And as we saw in the Coronation, there were prompt cards, weren't there? They were quite visible. But ideally, you should really know your speech and to be able to deliver it, because you know it really well and the fact is that nobody knows what you're going to say. So if you make a mistake, no one's going to know. It's not like with music when everyone knows when you get that mistake.

Nick Simon [00:40:54]:

Yeah, great. I've run out of questions.

Susan Heaton-Wright [00:40:59]:

Okay. There aren't any more. We've had some fantastic questions from the audience today, and I think we should do one on nonverbal communication because of those questions. It was from Crystal. So I promise that we will set one of those up quite soon. But thank you

so much for the questions and thank you very much, Nick, for asking the questions. These are some of the things that here at Superstar Communicator, we do. We do public speaking workshops and coaching and virtual ones as well. So if you would like more information, please contact us at www.superstarcommunicator.com. Be very happy to have a conversation with you. So until next time, this is Susan Heatonwright and Nick Simon from Superstar Communicator. Thank you very much for watching you. It.