



## Podcast #041 Presenting with Confidence

Hi listeners and welcome to this week's episode of The Marketing Menu podcast with Nicky and me, Liz.

Hello everybody. So you went to an HR conference yesterday. How was that? It was more of a workshop actually, and I was asked to attend on behalf of a client, which I found really interesting because I was thinking it was going to be more hr, but it was talking about company culture and I think what came across to me was there was a really strong marketing influence in as much as it's all about communication. So you could have a company culture and you can have your mission and vision statement. You could have your aims and objectives. But it's absolutely no use if that's just sat with the Board of Directors and that's not filtered down to the people that are working on the front line and that's down to communication.

That's internal communications, isn't it really? I suppose that is marketing to your internal, for want of a better expression, audience particularly if you are a larger organisation is just as much a job as the sort of marketing you might be doing to market your products or services.

Equally important, in PR terms they call it your internal publics. So that came across really strongly to me and maybe something we can focus on in a future podcast is about how to communicate with your team. I know obviously a lot of our listeners might be individual business owners, but when they grow and they're going to have teams, how best to communicate with them.

You mentioned there about vision and mission statements because that might be perceived as being a very business orientated mechanism, I suppose, something that you don't necessarily think of from a marketing perspective, but I was doing a workshop last week about how by having a vision and a mission statement very much sets the tone and is the foundation of many respects of your marketing activity.

And your brand.

Yes. Because effectively you're determining what your values are as much as anything, and then the marketing aspect is about communicating those in a succinct manner, but it all starts from the vision and mission even though that might not be a marketing type term. Yes, we will revisit that then. So, listeners, we have talked in previous podcasts about how to present yourself at networking meetings, but how many of you have actually been asked to do those dreaded, formal presentations either to a panel, a small group, or even larger audiences. It might be because you've been asked to speak specifically about your business

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or maybe a subject that you're considered an expert in. Either way, you might quite understandably be a little terrified. So we're going to give you some tips today to help you prepare and ideally calm some of those nerves.

I mentioned at the end of the last podcast about how I had to give a presentation to a group of 200 cynical, 14-year-olds. And after that, I was never scared.

Put that in your armoury! Rather you than me.

So what's our first top tip?

Well, first of all, prepare. Find out exactly what is expected of you, do your research about the organisers and other speakers if it's not just going to be you, what format do they want, for example, is it going to be powerpoint or keynote, if you're an Apple user. Then you can be more confident about putting your presentation together.

Once you have written your presentation, which is probably the easiest part of the process, to be honest, you need to practice. Now we can't emphasise enough how important this is. It might feel really weird being stood up in front of a mirror or loved on to deliver your speech, but it really honestly makes all difference. Not only does it iron out any glitches in the wording, but it also helps you decide what words to put the emphasis on and whether the delivery actually works.

Now, it's important to say here if you're doing it front of someone you know, you need them to be a critical friend. They need to be really honest and you need to listen to the feedback, even if it isn't that positive. And keep rehearsing, don't leave it until the night before, this will just make your anxiety worse.

Don't be afraid to have a script or you could take a set of cards with bullet points on to refer to if you are fairly confident about the content of your presentation. Of course, the tendency with a script is that you constantly look down at it and not at the audience so try to get the right balance.

If you're not familiar with giving a presentation, try going to see some or look on YouTube at some confident speaker and see how they do it. How do they stand? Where do they look? How are they engaging with their audience? What are they doing with their hands?

Oh, I'm a terrible hand-waver!

Are you?

Yes, so I tend to try and hold something in my hands, like cue cards or a pen. Anything that will stop me from being like a windmill!

Haha! So, you've got your presentation ready, you're rehearsed to within an inch of your life, and you are familiar with what equipment you will need. Now to the day itself. We would highly recommend that you do a dummy run to the venue if it is somewhere unfamiliar. There is nothing worse than being late if you are anxious anyway. Make sure you know how long the journey is going to take you and where to park. Arrive early so you have plenty of time to prepare – that will help keep the nerves at bay.

Oh yes, there's nothing worse than getting to a venue with minutes to spare and then find you have a problem setting up the laptop and projector.

Exactly.

Also, the earlier you get there, the more comfortable you will feel with the room and you may get to meet people as they arrive which is far less nerve-wracking than walking out to a ready assembled audience.

The adrenaline is going to be flowing at this point but if you need an extra boost of energy and confidence, try playing some of your favourite music in the car on the way, something upbeat obviously although if you need calming down, you could try some classical music! Make sure you have eaten and you have water to keep you hydrated.

Nicky has talked before about creating a persona if you are really nervous about meeting people and you could try this – have a look and find a speaker who you really admire and pretend to be them

Yes, remember to give yourself a really good positive talking to before you go on, reminding yourself that you are amazing and that you wouldn't have been asked unless you were considered good enough to do it.

Oh, I've been there. Minutes before going on thinking they're going to see right through me and know I'm a fraud and have no idea what I'm talking about!

I think we all do that at some point, Liz! It worth saying here that the audience is not there wanting to watch you fail. Most audiences are rooting for you and will also understand if you are nervous or trip up over your words.

Yes, they're probably thinking thank goodness it's them up there and not me!

Precisely! However, if you do make a mistake, don't panic. Take a deep breath and continue. Don't let it paralyse you. When we are anxious, we tend to shallow breathe which means we're not getting enough oxygen into our lungs and that can make us feel a bit dizzy. So, without gasping, just make sure that you are taking regular deep breaths, right into the bottom of your lungs which will automatically help you feel calmer.

Also, when we're nervous we tend to speed up our speech. We race ahead which is really awkward if someone else is operating the slideshow. Again, breaths and pauses help regulate our speech. Another trick is to check in with the audience to make sure they are understanding what you say. They don't necessarily have to give an answer – you're just playing for time. But it does also give an opportunity for questions to be asked and when you can answer off the cuff, this will help your confidence. You do know what you're talking about!

Looking out into a sea of faces is pretty daunting and the tendency is to look away but that can affect the tone and volume of your speech. It's an old trick but try talking to someone at the back of the room. You may not be able to see their face but it will ensure that you are looking up and that your voice carries.

So, back to the presentation, it's really important to smile! You may not feel that smiling is the most natural reaction to your inner terror but it will help you feel better and people will probably smile back, which is a bonus!

Word of warning here though about using humour in your speech. Be very sure of your audience before you start telling jokes or relating amusing anecdotes. Forced humour won't go down well and it's subjective so what one person finds funny, another may not so approach with care.

The same goes for using jargon. Unless you're presenting to an audience of those in the same industry, be careful about using acronyms or abbreviations that others may not understand. That is guaranteed to lose connection with people who don't understand what you're talking about.

Don't try and include too much information which leaves the audience feeling overwhelmed. We've all heard the ones who cram so much technical info into their 30 minutes that you feel like you've been beaten up! Keep it simple, clear and give people something to take away that they can put into action.

That's where rehearsing can iron out any info that isn't necessary or is too complicated.

Absolutely. Now, we've talked about checking in with the audience and you need to clarify whether you can take questions throughout the presentation or whether you will take Q&A at the end but be prepared either way. You always get one who has got the killer question they want to ask. Don't be phased by this. If you don't know the answer, be honest and say you don't know rather than fudge an answer. They'll respect you all the more.

Good point. If there's an opportunity for you to find out the answer and send it to them after the event, that's great.

You may get a dry mouth from so much speaking so remember throughout the presentation to stay hydrated and change your position. You are probably likely to be standing and when we're nervous we tense muscles so if you are stood for any length of time, you could get sore so make sure you move around a bit without distracting the audience.

And finally, accept that you're going to be nervous and it's perfectly natural to feel that way. I heard Adele say that she is terrified to the point of projectile vomiting before she goes on stage. Hopefully, listeners, some of the tips we have shared will help prevent you from being affected like Adele!

Gosh, I hope so! Well, that's the end of this week's podcast which we hope you've enjoyed. The next one will be on Wednesday 24th October when we will be talking about the 7C's of Customer Communication.

Yes, listeners, this is a marketing model that Nicky & I have developed for The Marketing Menu which will help you really understand your customer and how to engage with them.

Great stuff! So, until then, it's goodbye from me, Nicky Matthews.

And from me, Liz Gordon. Goodbye.

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