

Train your public speaking muscles

10 TIPS TO HELP SAFETY PROS
STRENGTHEN THEIR SKILLS

1 FACE YOUR FEARS
One of the biggest hurdles for speakers is the “fear of the unknown.” To ease those fears, get answers beforehand to questions you may have related to time allotment, audience, room setup, how to start, etc.

2 GET ORGANIZED
Consider taking your audience on a “tour” during your presentation. “You lay out a map for them in the beginning and say, ‘Here’s where we’re going, folks,’” says communication consultant and coach John Capecci. Set up signposts along the way to keep your audience engaged.

3 PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE
As with any skill, public speaking proficiency improves with experience and repetition. “When you’re going to run a marathon, you don’t just open the front door and start running. You warm up. You start slow. The same goes for public speaking.”

4 GET ON YOUR FEET
Public speaking is a whole-body experience. So, when working on a presentation – whether it’s complete or not – get on your feet and work on delivering it. “If you start speaking it earlier, you’re actually warming up your entire tool – your voice, your body, your expressions.”

5 FOCUS ON TAKEAWAYS
Step back and think about the audience’s perspective. “Put yourself in their place and think about what knowledge they have. The question I like to ask myself is, ‘If they remember nothing else, what do I want them to take out of the room?’”

6 MAKE IT PERSONAL
Look for opportunities to share personal experiences and stories. What have you experienced as a safety pro and how can it help get your key points across?

7 UNDERSTAND VIRTUAL PLATFORMS
Presenting virtually requires just as much practice as doing so in person. Work on directly addressing your audience via the camera. When making a key point, stop sharing your screen and engage with your audience. Also, know ahead of time if attendees will be using the chat function or asking questions verbally.

8 TAKE IT EASY
Instead of being your own biggest critic, focus on a positive mindset before a presentation. This can often raise your comfort level and help build your confidence.

9 LEAN ON YOUR COMMUNITY
Discuss the process with your safety colleagues. Ask them about how they handle certain situations during presentations and what’s most likely to keep audience members engaged. Don’t be afraid to ask for feedback.

10 INVEST IN ASSISTANCE
Help can come in a variety of ways, whether it’s a \$20 course at the library or hiring a communication coach or agency. Look for coaches or agencies that are accredited, ask about their approach to working with speakers, and make sure it matches your needs.

By Barry Bottino. Find the full article in the February 2022 issue of *S+H*.