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FOR WOMEN**

Developing Public Speaking Skills

Introduction

Public speaking is a vital skill for any entrepreneur, helping to build credibility, attract customers or investors, and advocate for business growth. This guide provides practical strategies and tips to help you develop confidence, craft compelling messages and engage effectively with any audience.

Whether you're pitching your business, speaking at a local event or presenting to investors, these insights will empower you to use your voice with impact.

Understanding your audience

Knowing your audience is key to delivering a message that resonates. Understanding their background, expectations and interests allows you to tailor your speech for maximum engagement. Whether addressing local community members, potential customers or business partners, effective communication starts with knowing who you are speaking to.

Tips:

- **Research your audience:** Identify key concerns, preferences and cultural context. This helps you shape your message in a way that is relevant and relatable.
- **Clarify your key messages:** What do you want them to remember? Focus on two or three core ideas that align with their interests.
- **Use storytelling:** Sharing personal experiences makes your speech relatable and memorable; highlighting real-life challenges and successes fosters connection and trust.

Building confidence and overcoming nerves

Many people fear public speaking, but confidence is a skill that can be developed. Overcoming these fears allows you to present yourself and your business with authority.

Tips:

- **Prepare thoroughly:** Knowing your material well reduces anxiety. Outline your speech and rehearse multiple times.
- **Practice regularly:** The more you practice, the more comfortable you will become. Try speaking in front of a mirror, recording yourself or rehearsing with friends.
- **Control nervousness:** Take deep breaths before speaking, use positive self-talk and visualise yourself succeeding.
- **Focus on your physiology:** Breathing and posture play important roles in how you feel. Take slow breaths, and exhale for longer than your inhale. Stand tall, with your head held high and shoulders back to feel more confident.
- **Start small:** If public speaking is new to you, begin with informal gatherings, local networking events or small business meetings before moving on to larger audiences.

Crafting your message

A clear and structured message ensures that your audience understands and remembers your key points. Rambling speeches can lose attention, while well-organised ones leave a lasting impression.

Tips:

- **Structure your speech:** Use the simple format of Introduction, Body and Conclusion.
 - Introduction: Start with an attention-grabber such as a question, statistic or personal story.
 - Body: Organise your main points logically and provide supporting examples.
 - Conclusion: End with a strong call to action, summarising your message and encouraging the audience to take the next step.
- **Use simple and clear language:** Avoid jargon and complex phrases; speak in a way that is easy to understand and accessible to all listeners.

Engaging your audience

A great speech isn't just about what you say, but how you connect with your audience. Keeping people engaged ensures they absorb and act on your message.

Tips:

- **Make eye contact:** This builds trust and shows confidence.
- **Use gestures and body language:** Stand tall, use hand movements naturally and avoid fidgeting.
- **Vary your tone and pace:** Speak with enthusiasm. Avoid monotone delivery by emphasising key points and changing pace to keep interest.
- **Encourage interaction:** Ask questions, invite audience participation or share relevant anecdotes to keep the energy high.

Continuous improvement and learning

Public speaking is a lifelong skill that improves with experience. Constant learning and feedback will help you refine your style and build confidence over time.

Tips:

- **Record and review your speeches:** Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Request constructive feedback:** Ask trusted colleagues, mentors or friends for honest insights.
- **Keep learning:** Read books on public speaking, watch great speakers and observe their techniques.
- **Practice in different settings:** Try speaking in various environments to build adaptability.

Final thoughts

Public speaking is a powerful tool for leadership, advocacy and community impact. As a woman entrepreneur, your voice matters, and every opportunity to speak is a chance to inspire, educate and grow your business. With practice and perseverance, you can turn any speaking engagement into a compelling moment that drives action and success.