

Top 7 Tips for Giving a Truly "Live" Performance

The long-standing theatre phrase "Illusion of the First Time" means that when an actor performs in a play for the 10th, 100th or 1,000th time, he or she must create the illusion that this is the first time the actor has said these words, used these expressions or made these movements. The audience wants and expects an aura of freshness.

Likewise, superlative speakers need to give an obviously "live" presentation. No matter how many times you have talked about this topic previously, today's audience is hearing you for the first time. My seven tips will help you create the appearance of spontaneous vitality.

1. Select a topic that captivates you, one you will continue to be excited about after hours of preparation and numerous presentations.
2. Do not memorize your speech. If you do, you will sound like a reciter, rather than an individual who wants to share his or her thoughts convincingly.
3. Focus on remembering and sharing key words and major points. The exact wording is not all that important. Your listeners will want to believe you are speaking "off the cuff," although you have prepared thoroughly.
4. Move away from the podium. Get close to the audience physically. Did you ever see a sales person standing behind a lectern while closing the deal on your new car? Of course not. Proximity generates vitality.
5. Use ordinary language. Avoid big words that people don't use in daily dialogue. Say "avoid" instead of "eschew" and "legal action" instead of "litigation."
6. Have the courage to ad lib, and let listeners know you are doing it. Say, "I hadn't planned on including this quotation, but it is so relevant I want to share it with you."
7. Picture yourself having a conversation with an individual, and speak like that to your audience--which is nothing more than a collection of individuals.