

# Speak Often, Be Awesome

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Whether making an Executive Presentation, updating your colleagues or giving a toast, speaking to an audience, for some people, can cause anxiety ranging from sleeplessness to serious physical distress. In fact, studies reveal that more people fear delivering the eulogy at a funeral than being in the casket. What makes that fear go away? Speaking often! The more one gets comfortable with talking in front of others, the more likely the person will become strong communicator. In fact, speak often; be awesome!

Most people who are nervous do every thing they can to avoid any type of public speaking. They feel too vulnerable, almost as if they are alone on the tundra fearing the attack of wild animals at any moment. Not tackling fear is a serious mistake. A better alternative would be to uncover some comfortable, “low stakes” situations to practice speaking to others.

All of us attend meetings and because many people are sharing ideas, speaking at meetings is not terribly stressful. However, instead of only speaking when called upon, request to be added to the agenda. Explaining a new process or procedure may only take ten minutes, but it will dramatically increase confidence if the audience is responsive. Then, when that feels comfortable, segue from explaining a process to giving an update on a project or to conducting a lunch-and-learn. The time you spend in front of a group of people who know you will continue to make your confidence level soar.

Video conferences are another easy way of boosting success. So are virtual meetings, webinars and telephone conferences. Since the majority of audience members will be located elsewhere, it does provide an opportunity to practice delivering a message while not being very threatening.

Off the job, there are many opportunities. For example, one could be a lector at church, facilitate a Sunday School Class, or talk to parents of a little league group or parent teachers association. Giving a toast at your father’s 80th birthday or your brother’s wedding also counts.

Finally, there is Toastmasters (www.toastmasters.org). Toastmasters is an international volunteer organization dedicated to enhancing people’s public speaking skills. They meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, and, typically, members have the opportunity not only to speak in front of an audience on an extemporaneous or prepared topic, but to also get feedback from people who also want to get better. The organization meets in communities and business around the world. For the organization closest to you, consult their website.

Years ago, Susan Jeffers wrote the book, *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*. The premise of the book, tackling one’s fear, also applies to public speaking. So what are you waiting for? Look for opportunities to speak often and you’ll be awesome!

*Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.*