

MY VIEW

Public speaking brings out the best



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It happened in 1997. I was working for a marketing company in Connecticut and had been recently promoted. Along with the lofty title and increase in pay came the added responsibility of — dare I say it — giving presentations!

I remember when my boss came into my office and enthusiastically gave me the “good” news: I would be flying around to our various sales offices with the president of our division, giving creative strategy presentations to our sales force. I put on a brave face and said, “Yes, no problem, I can do that,” but the truth of the matter was, I was terrified! My stomach sank, I was filled with dread and in the weeks that followed, the assignment hung over me like an ominous specter.

You see, I had three problems with my assigned presentation. First of all, I loathed speaking in public. It was something I was never comfortable with and had

worked hard at avoiding my whole life.

Secondly, the president of our division was a fantastic speaker. He was one of those folksy fellows like former President Bill Clinton, a guy who seemed comfortable speaking to any size audience in any kind of situation.

And thirdly, in city after city, he went on before me. This drove me crazy. Think of it as the headliner going on before the opening act; he looked great and I did not. I looked mediocre at best.

But some good came out of my embarrassment. I became highly motivated to face my fears about public speaking. So I joined Toastmasters, a global public speaking organization. I ended up joining a club in Connecticut and have continued attending meetings in clubs around the country. By regularly attending

meetings, giving speeches, taking part in club roles and competing in speech contests, I reached the point where I not only became an effective speaker, but I truly enjoyed speaking!

In Toastmasters clubs, I have met people from all walks of life — from plumbers to attorneys, salespeople to doctors, and entrepreneurs to authors. Everyone profits mightily by sharpening their public speaking and presenting skills. And the good news about public speaking is that the more you do it, the better you will become at it.

By becoming comfortable with public speaking and presenting, you will get three things:

Confidence. There is nothing like public speaking to increase your confidence and self-esteem.

Promotions. You've heard it before, leaders are speakers and speakers are leaders. The leaders of tomorrow are those individuals who have the ability to get up in front of an audience and speak clearly, confidently and persuasively.

Long-lasting inward satisfaction. Public speaking takes work, but it is so worth the effort. There is nothing as thrilling as getting up in front of a group and turning all that nervousness into enthusiasm, energy and charm. There is nothing more satisfying than walking away from a presentation knowing you confidently presented your material.

Toastmasters is worth your time and consideration. Becoming a confident speaker will help anyone in business. After all, even if we're not in a formal sales position, we still sell. We sell ourselves, our ideas and our recommendations. We sell by communicating and by improving our public speaking, we become even better communicators— more confident, more poised and more persuasive.

I would encourage others with an interest in maximizing their personal development to join. It is worth the time and effort.