COACH'S CORNER

GLADIEUX CONSULTING
~ EIGHT DAYS A WEEK ~

Dear Michelle,
I'm not looking to be smooth in front of hundreds of people, I just want to present competently in meetings. How do you make public speaking look so easy?

Thanks for your question. If I'm making public speaking look easy, it's an illusion. Practice and feedback in as many settings as possible get you the skills and comfort level required for expert speaking. This can be a lifelong, incredibly valuable pursuit if you want your ideas heard and put to use.

Remind yourself: it's not about you, it's about your audience and content. You're a medium for your message, in service to the topic and recipients. While you must manage first impressions smartly, it becomes irrelevant whether you're old, young, tall or short, female or male, etc. Excellent presenters overcome stereotypes. If Jedi Master Yoda showed up to speak at your meeting,you'd listen and learn. You'd quickly forget that he's almost 900 years old,two feet tall (and green) as your heart and mind were drawn in.

Find passion for the topic, or find someone else to present.

All of us are intimidated by an audience at some point. You are no more or less valuable than anyone in the room. You're no better, so don't speak as if you are. You're not lesser, so don't fear the opportunity. Prepare for it. Perform an audience analysis before you present: What are the skills and demographics of your audience? How educated are they in this topic? What constraints might you encounter? What do you have in common?

The audience is likely rooting for you and interested if you genuinely want to be there. You've probably seen speakers who didn't. It's painful to watch because it's painful for them. Sometimes, I hear a presenter announce that they're nervous and I cringe. I completely understand the impulse to confess, but the result is an uncomfortable audience. Enjoy your presentation, and we enjoy it with you.

Please give yourself credit for facing what studies show to be the number one fear in America. Public speaking gets easier the more you do it. I agree with Mark Twain: "There are only two types of speakers in the world: the nervous and the liars."

When you no longer notice time passing except to observe necessary breaks and start/end times, you're gaining ground and finding flow. Put your focus on the audience and forget yourself. Then, bring yourself back in focus when you ask for feedback about how others feel your presentation went immediately after the session.

Happy presenting!



Are you dealing with a communication challenge?
If you've got a question, write to Michelle@GladieuxConsulting.com for consideration.
Questions remain confidential and anonymous when published.