

SPEAKERS: Do Your Audience a Favor and Get Over Yourself

Perspective on People:

By Karen Friedman

I was really excited to hear the speaker. She's a well-known network correspondent whom I've watched for years. She's thought provoking, witty and quickly cuts to the chase. So when I changed my flight to get to the conference in time to hear her speak, imagine my disappointment when she blew it. Actually, I was more disappointed that she had no clue she blew it.

Here she was-- a media celebrity in a ballroom of seasoned public relations professionals but she had not stopped to consider her audience and what they cared about. Yes, she told a few stories about life in the news trenches, but the stories were all about her. How great she was. The obstacles she had to overcome. The tough decisions she makes every day. Me, me, me and more me.

What she failed to do was help her audience understand how they could use this information. What lessons did she learn that her listeners could apply to their lives? How could her vignettes empower, motivate or inspire others to action? Most importantly, how could they benefit from her expertise and apply it to their profession so they could maximize results?

Just because you talk on TV or find yourself in the public eye does not mean you can wow an audience.

Public speaking is an art; for some a profession. Like any other art or profession, it takes practice. Being famous or invited to speak does not qualify you as a speaker.

Lesson One

Learn as much as you can about your audience so you can tailor your remarks to them and help them improve. What do they want to learn from you? In this case, was it how to get more coverage, pitch a story or perhaps build relationships with the media?

Lesson Two

Don't talk about yourself. Share successes, failures and experience to help others apply lessons to their own lives. For example, I recently heard a speaker talk about her 11 year old daughter being diagnosed with cancer a week after her father died. As sad as her story was, she wanted to share her story to help others cope when life happens and the world as they knew it seems to crumble around them.

Lesson Three

Get over yourself. They already like you which is why they came to hear you. In this case, the speaker told everyone that if they wanted their story told on 'her program', the only



Karen Friedman is a professional communication coach, speaker and Chief Improvement Officer at Karen Friedman Enterprises. Her techniques to help business professionals become more powerful persuasive communicators have been applied on four continents. She is the author of the best-selling book *Shut Up and Say Something: Business Communication Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Influence Listeners* (Praeger). Also a regular columnist for American Business Journals, her columns appear nationwide. Friedman was formerly an award-winning television news reporter and is the winner of Enterprising Women's prestigious Woman of the Year award.

www.KarenFriedman.com

decision maker at the network that really mattered was her. Seriously? Arrogance is not becoming on anyone.

At this point, I know you are wondering who I'm talking about. I won't tell you but will offer a clue. I turned on CNN the other day and

she happened to pop up. As I was about to change the channel, the interview caught my attention. It was a meaty conversation and admirably, she didn't let her subject off the hook. As a former reporter, I was impressed. Then, bam! She blew it. In the middle of an intense conversation about presidential politics, she started talking about herself, her family and her personal beliefs. Who cares? Your job as a communicator is to provoke thought and facilitate understanding. There's nothing wrong with sharing your experiences as long as your audience can apply lessons learned to their own lives.

But if you simply want people to tell you you're wonderful or you're delivering lines in hopes of applause, you're there for you and not for them. If that's the case, you'll blow it every time and likely have no clue that you did.