

# TEN COMPELLING REASONS TO IMPROVE YOUR SPEAKING SKILLS

John Plank



## Is speaking simply an obligation for you?

### What if speaking could transform your career - and your life?

**Your academic and professional success is built on a foundation of excellent analytical and writing skills. Without those skills you could not have achieved your present position. How well you speak will increasingly become the determining factor in your success.**

You may already be a good speaker. If speaking has not been a requirement in your work – you may feel that you’re not a good speaker. In either case, I’d like to encourage you to look at speaking from a fresh perspective.

Here are 10 compelling reasons to improve your speaking ability right away!

#### 1. BECOMING A LEADER.

Leaders speak. It’s that simple. But there is a priceless secret. Leadership does not teach us speaking skills; speaking teaches us the essential leadership skills! When you speak you add an emotional component to your ideas; your listeners understand you at a deeper level.

By speaking, leaders share their values, ideas and their enthusiasm. It is only when you speak that we truly know what you care about and we are moved to action.

#### 2. A NEW KIND OF LEARNING.

Most of my clients have a passion for learning. The classical method of study, the “Trivium” requires us to first understand, second to analyze, and third to translate the information into our own words so that we have “ownership” of the concepts and ideas. Speaking takes the value of this method to its highest level; by speaking about your areas of expertise in the context of a wide range of listeners, you have the opportunity – indeed the necessity – of considering your best thoughts in even greater depth, and from many more points of view than you would have from simply writing.



It is only when you speak that we truly know what you care about and we are moved to action.

I have the privilege of working with some of North America's finest speakers; almost all of them acknowledged that as soon as they began to speak regularly they experienced a huge improvement in their knowledge and understanding of their subjects.

If you are passionate about your topic and want to become an acknowledged expert – there is no better way to achieve this than to speak regularly.

### **3. CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR ORGANIZATION.**

When we have achieved a measure of security in our own careers, we have the opportunity to shift our focus to adding value to our organization. This contribution requires continuous and effective discussions with people at every level, both inside and outside of our organization. Your ability to eloquently and persuasively present your ideas and to encourage and inspire your colleagues will distinguish your unique contribution.

### **4. HELPING OTHERS.**

Mentoring and encouraging your team members and your colleagues is rewarding for everyone, as well as for your organization. Mentoring requires exceptional listening skills, and the ability to communicate our understanding of our colleague's challenges and opportunities. We write to communicate what we know – we speak to communicate what we understand and what we care about.

### **5. IMPROVING KEY RELATIONSHIPS.**

Your success at work, perhaps even your enjoyment of your work, may depend on one or two key relationships. One bad relationship can take all the joy out of our work. Relationships that are not working will only worsen, unless one party takes the initiative to improve them. There are many strategies which have been proven to be effective, but they all have one thing in common – they all require an advanced level of verbal communication skills.

### **6. ACHIEVING YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS EARLIER.**

To rise through the ranks of your profession you must have a track record of successful projects and other accomplishments. To build on these

achievements you must also be able to speak eloquently and persuasively to your colleagues, and potential clients. By focusing on speaking skills early in your career, you can change the entire trajectory of your progress towards success, and meet your career and financial goals five, or even ten years ahead of time.

## 7. BRINGING ENJOYMENT BACK INTO YOUR WORK.

Four years ago, I began work with a new private client. “Jim” was 48 at the time, and a well known and successful litigator. Only a few people knew that Jim had always dreaded speaking. Jim suffered for days before speaking, and he always refused requests to speak at his association meetings, which caused some colleagues to think he might be arrogant.

After only three months of working on his communication skills, Jim was able to address his colleagues at a trial lawyer’s convention for the first time. His presentation was a huge success. It was truly a joyous experience for Jim, for his staff and his wife who attended the speech. The next day, Jim came to my office to thank me; he said, *“Now, for the first time I know I can be the kind of lawyer that I dreamed about being when I was in law school!”*

There are thousands of “Jim’s” in your profession. When you master a few basic skills, speaking can be an exhilarating experience – and you can bring the joy back into your work.

“

When you master a few basic skills, speaking can be an exhilarating experience – and you can bring the joy back into your work.

## 8. BUILDING YOUR SELF-CONFIDENCE.

Speaking is no different to most other skills - when we practice the basics, we get better. But speaking feels like such an intimate reflection of who we are. Sometimes we would rather not speak, than look and sound less intelligent and less confident than we are. Many people judge themselves harshly. We measure our ability by our worst performance.

So, here’s a little “*tough love coaching*” from me to you – you simply don’t know enough about speaking to know beyond a doubt that you cannot be an excellent speaker. Regardless of genetics, or culture, or personality type, if you want to be a really good speaker, then that is exactly what

you can be. Read a little about it, listen to good speakers, and get some coaching. Just do it! Enjoy the benefits you deserve and enjoy continuous improvement in your self-confidence.

## 9. BEING REMEMBERED.

In many cultures there are traditions which inhibit speaking. “*Children should be seen and not heard*”; “*women are not supposed to speak in public*”; “*be silent in the presence of your superiors*”; “*nice people don’t speak like that*”. In any case, whatever the cause, the tragedy is that many people are unable to freely share their thoughts and feelings, even with those people that

love them. The custom of conversation is in decline. Family gatherings and family meals are no longer opportunities to learn more about one and another, as we focus away from our family and friends and towards television, iPods, and electronic games. I try to encourage everyone to nurture speaking and conversation in their daily lives in every way they can. It takes real commitment, and continuous and determined application, but the rewards are forever and our children’s children will thank us.

The custom of conversation is in decline. Family gatherings and family meals are no longer opportunities to learn more about one and another, as we focus away from our family and friends and towards television, iPods, and electronic games.



## 10. BUILDING YOUR ORGANIZATION’S REPUTATION.

Your record of success may be amongst the best. Your firm name alone may command respect. But right now, today, and for the future, your organization’s success depends on the quality of each of the daily communications that your clients, colleagues, and potential clients have with each and every member of your organization.

Only a few organizations make the development of personal communication skills a top priority. Those who do, reap the rewards. There is a huge return on investment. Internally, you benefit from improved relationships, better briefings and brainstorming for important new ideas. There are better meetings, shorter meetings and fewer

meetings. Externally, your excellent communicators are bringing in new business, nurturing existing business and establishing your organization's unique reputation.

## **YOUR TURN.**

If you care to comment, or would like to share some of your personal experiences on speaking, we would love to hear from you.



*John Plank is one of the world's most respected communications coaches. He helps national leaders, lawyers, senior executives and others to dramatically improve their speaking skills. Formerly director of actor training at the Stratford Shakespearean Festival and currently performance coach for CBC Television, John created the internationally acclaimed Commanding Presence™ programs. Contact him at [john@commandingpresence.com](mailto:john@commandingpresence.com).*