



(At left) Jan Fox spoke on sharpening your speaking skills in order to grow your business at ATA's 56th Annual Conference in Miami.

The Art of Speaking Boldly

Winning an audience over with an engaging story is much less about the content and words used to tell the story and much more about one's voice, gestures, and movement.

Public speaking is the fastest way to grow your business. That's what Jan Fox, ATA's public relations consultant and speaker trainer will tell you. In case you missed her session during ATA's Annual Conference last year or couldn't find a seat (it happened!), Jan's approach to speaking has proven effective for all levels—from independent contractors to C-level executives alike. Her tips can help you develop your business, whether you are talking to a fellow volunteer at a local event, presenting to your local chamber of commerce, or meeting with a potential client.

MAKING AN IMPRESSION

What's the best way to land a potential client and make an impression? The

answer is what Jan calls being a "bold" speaker. How? Let me explain below.

Be Believable: First, you must be believable. That means you need to know who you are, what you're doing, and why you do it. The best way to convey this is to tell the audience your story. For example, how did you get to this point in your career? What makes you a strong translator or interpreter? It's important to show passion in your story when you tell it, but try not to ramble. Get to the point, show energy, and prove your credibility.

Know Your Audience: Next, make sure your speech or presentation is on target. The most important key to staying on target when speaking to potential clients is

to know your audience. Do some research beforehand and prepare your presentation to fit your listeners. For example, you wouldn't present the same pitch to a group of engineers that you used when speaking to a school superintendent. Another technique that's useful to learn more about your audience is to pay attention to their reactions, posture, and engagement during your presentation and make adjustments as needed while you speak.

Be Likable: We would all like to believe that we are likable people, but when pitching to potential clients, Jan suggests that speakers try their best to embody the following traits:

- The ability to relate to others
- Strength and energy
- Credibility and confidence
- Empathy and interest
- Being down to earth and approachable
- Humility

Be Daring: Allow yourself to be a daring speaker by going after those who might have the most issues or seem problematic. Why? If you demonstrate that you're willing to engage and learn from those who disagree with you, then you might just win more support by surpassing your audience's expectations.

Know who you are, what you're doing, and why you do it.

Watch Your Body Language: Bold speakers also know how to maximize their impact by performing some essential micro-acts. Believe it or not, your body language is often more important than your words. As "word people," we may scoff at this initially, but paying attention to visual rhythm is key. When making a big point in your presentation, use large gestures to emphasize the point. When speaking to a group, make eye contact with several people in each section of the

room. Speak to the person with whom you're making eye contact and hold his or her focus for a few seconds before moving on to the next person in another section of the room. Avoid making patterns in your movements or eye contact.

In addition to your movements and eye contact, it's just as important to be aware of your posture when preparing a presentation. Jan suggests videotaping your presentation when practicing your talk. Watch your posture and movements and adjust accordingly. Your posture should exude confidence, professionalism, and success and avoid appearing messy, anxious, or lacking passion when you speak. Step outside the imaginary box or off the imaginary "X" on the floor. Get out from behind the podium, and again, use your gestures to assist you in making your points.

DEMONSTRATING YOUR EXPERTISE/VALUE

The bold speaker does not simply spell out to a potential client what he or she can do for them. Rather, this speaker tells stories to make a point and then allows listeners to conclude on their own that they need the speaker's services. What kinds of stories are appropriate to tell a potential client? Craft a story that shows potential clients why they need you and your services. These types of stories should be about how you saved the day when a client had a translation or interpreting issue that appeared insurmountable. Did one of your translations save a client thousands of dollars? Did you help a client gain access to a new market by interpreting for recent business negotiations? Do you have an unexpected story that will completely surprise your listener? These are the types of stories that engage clients and keep them interested in you and your potential to help them.

Here are a few tips that Jan recommends when telling a potential client a translation or interpreting success story.

- Inspire your listeners.
- Be brief.
- Inform the audience about your profession without boring them with too many details.



Craft a story that shows potential clients why they need you and your services.

Start your presentation with your own story about how you became a stellar translator or interpreter and then segue into the success story. This will engage your listeners from the beginning, which means they'll want to listen to you and act.

JAN'S "RETAINABILITY" RUNGS

How do you keep the audience engaged throughout your talk? Jan suggests paying close attention to what she calls "Retainability Rungs." Good talks have a little bit of each of these characteristics:

- Persuasion
- Inspiration
- Invitation
- Instruction
- Information

Persuade your listeners that they need your services. How? Inspire them. Invite them to engage with you. Instruct them without making it obvious that you're doing so. Inform them. As we know, client education is a large part of working in our industry. Inform potential clients that your services will offer them ways to grow, ways to reach those they could not reach

without you, and ways to profit long into the future. If you can make your way up the ladder rung by rung you'll be on your way to retaining your audience's attention during your pitch.

IDENTIFY WEAKNESSES

Remembering to incorporate the various points described above can seem tricky at first. This is where videotaping yourself can prove useful. Jan recommends watching a video of yourself speaking to identify a few common pitfalls. This will help you notice how you might use language that stalls your talk, such as using the following phrases: "Today I'm going to talk about," "Let me go back," or "We'll get to that later." These types of phrases are unnecessary and can make it appear that you're unprepared.

On a similar note, avoid saying "um" by simply closing your mouth. Every time you start to say "um" or "uh" when you speak, just close your mouth. You can practice this in everyday conversations with those around you. Start paying attention to how many times you say "um" or "uh." While this may seem minor in normal conversation with friends and family, this stall language may mean you'll appear less intelligent, unprepared, or informed when speaking to clients. By practicing avoidance in all forms of speaking, you'll also be less inclined to use stall language in your pitch to potential clients.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOICE MODULATION

When practicing speaking, pay close attention to voice variation. The rhythm of your voice should be unpredictable when you speak. No one wants to listen to a monotonous presentation, and a rhythm that is predictable can distract listeners or just put them to sleep! Jan suggests changing the pace of your voice when telling a story. If you want to make a very serious point, slow down your speech and use a low voice. When you want to show excitement, start slowly and begin to speak faster, raising your voice as you speak until you reach the major point you want to make.



Above: ATA event speaker Holly Mikkelson practices voice modulation with Jan Fox.

Here's an example of a story I told as a result of practicing what I learned in Jan's session. I've included how I varied the tone of my voice throughout the story in brackets below.

[Serious and slow tone; make a small gesture like you're talking on the phone]:

"A doctor called me last week and told me he had a problem."

[Whisper; lean in toward the audience]:

"He wanted us to translate a love letter he'd written to his Brazilian girlfriend to let her know how he felt about her."

[Faster and slightly louder; open arms wide and raise shoulders to show a sense of surprise]:

"Can you imagine? An old-fashioned love letter!"

[Normal tone; make a gesture mimicking typing on a computer]:

"We translated the letter and returned it to him within a couple of days."

[Serious and slow tone; stand still with arms at sides]:

"And then... we waited."

[Pause for a few seconds and stand very still]

[Whisper; make a small gesture like you're talking on the phone again; lean in toward the audience]:

"He called back at the end of the week."

Believe it or not, your body language is often more important than your words.

[Faster and louder; pump fists in the air]:
"It worked! She loved the letter and agreed to marry him!"

[Normal tone, laughing; open arms toward the audience and shrug shoulders]:
"Who would have thought that translation could bring two people together like that?!"

Now, you may be thinking that this is a silly story to tell a potential client. Well, as silly as it sounds, the story is true. By being believable, my audience will be more willing to accept this fact when I tell them.

This type of story also engages listeners and grabs their attention. As Jan pointed out, it's much less about the content and words used to tell the story and much more about one's voice, gestures, and movement. After I break the ice with this brief story, I can go on to persuade my potential clients about how I can help them with their translation problems.

MOST IMPORTANT: BEING A GOOD SPEAKER MEANS BEING A GOOD LISTENER

Perhaps the most important point in learning to be a bold speaker and growing your business is your ability not only to speak well, but also to listen well. Listening to your potential clients and engaging them with your words, movements, and tone will show them that you are the right translator or interpreter to fit their needs. ○



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SHARPENING YOUR SPEAKING SKILLS

Jan Fox's Website

<http://foxtalks.com>

ATA 56th Annual Conference eConference

www.atanet.org/conf/2015/econ.htm

(Contains Jan Fox's presentation)

Amy Cuddy's TED Talk: Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are

<http://bit.ly/TEDTalk-Amy-Cuddy>

