

GOING FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

Many of us fail to make the leap from a brilliant script on the computer screen to brilliance in the room. Have you mastered these make-or-break techniques?

By Margie Zohn

It's 3:15pm, and you have spent the last 7 hours at your computer creating the most amazing deck of slides ever seen by humankind. You realize that your prospective clients will be arriving for your presentation in 15 minutes.

As you get up, you feel terrific tension in your shoulders and the dull headache that comes from staring at the screen for so long. You didn't really get lunch – just a granola bar and a diet coke, and you're little light headed upon standing. It's hard to focus your eyes clearly.

You grab a cup of coffee and speed down to the conference room, where, in a few short minutes, you will need to inspire trust, confidence and excitement in these clients so they will sign on with you.

When they arrive and get settled, you open your mouth to speak but your voice is slightly hoarse (you've hardly spoken in 7 hours), you're swaying on your feet and every other word seems to

be “um”. Your eyes have a squinty look so that you can see clearly.

The clients stare so silently at you as you go through your deck. At the end, they have only a few questions and then rise to shake your hand before leaving.

What Just Happened?

Was it a home run or a bomb? You have no idea.

Sound familiar? I call this failing to go from screen to stage--- from the computer screen to the live presentation. Many of us do not make this leap well. Why?

The 3 Mistakes

1. **People see information as their biggest value add to a situation.** Hence, they spend copious time thinking about the deck (what they will present), and no time considering the delivery (how they will present it).
2. **People often have anxiety about standing up to present so they remain “in denial”**, avoiding the reality until it hits them like a freight train.
3. **People think: “Rehearsing the delivery only makes me more nervous!”** That is only true when the rehearsal techniques are ineffective.

Most people have never been taught how to make transitions. In high school, we went from Math to English class with about 6 minutes in between. Was any of that 6 minutes spent in preparing us for peak performance at the next task? I doubt it. Yet, in order to achieve peak performance, we need to do what star athletes and artists never fail to do: warm up.

Learning from The 3 Mistakes

What does this mean in a public speaking situation?

It means limbering up all the parts of you that need to shine in your presentation: your voice, your body, your face, your mind, your passion.

The best warm ups begin with self-awareness: closing your eyes, taking a deep breath and noticing what you are feeling and thinking.

If you feel a lot of anxiety, you might need to practice some deep breathing to calm down.

If you feel low energy, you might need to move around to get the blood flowing.

If you feel tension in your jaw, you might need to massage it or stretch it a bit.

If your brain feels scattered, you might need to get clear on your reason for being in the room: visualizing the outcome you want and tailoring your words and actions to help you achieve it.

Warm ups help you make the transition from where you are to where you need to be.

Once warmed up, a pitcher will throw some practice pitches. For a presenter, this means actually speaking your introduction aloud (preferably to another live human being).

How to Tell If It’s Working

If you are unsure of how effective you are, a video camera or a trusted colleague can give you extremely useful feedback so that you can make adjustments.

Countless slide decks fail to impress when the presenter does not truly connect with his or her audience. Rehearsing and warming up are ways to arrive at your peak performance every time. Be sure to make your most brilliant transition from the screen to the stage.

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