



**National Speakers Association of North Texas**

[www.speaker.org](http://www.speaker.org)



# **The Platform**

**Newsletter of NSA/NT**

# Speaking and Training Pitfalls By Jeff Davidson

---

Here's a look at some speaker and trainer pitfalls and what you can do to avoid them.

## Arriving Without Sufficient Clearance Time

Whether your presentation is across the world, across the country, or across town, increase your probability of success by arriving with time to spare. This may require coming in the night before you're scheduled to present.

By arriving early, you gain a considerable advantage that can often be the make-or-break factor in the success of your presentation. You get to settle in, calm down, check out the facilities, walk the room, talk to people, check out equipment, and arrange things. In doing so, you give yourself the edge over the trainer who arrives "just in time." These days, with affordable mobile technology, you can be productive all day long wherever you are, so arrive early!

## Waiting for Latecomers



Depending on what type of session you're offering, often there is discretion as to when you will formally begin the presentation. Do not penalize those who have come on time and are ready to have you start as scheduled.

Only in the case where it is readily apparent that the majority of the attendees are missing are you justified, perhaps, in delaying the start of a presentation. Otherwise it is your responsibility to start on time.

Start with a story or an audience warm-up technique. In such cases, the late arrivals do not miss any of the meat of your session and the punctual arrivals feel satisfied that you began on schedule.

## Offering Excuses

Perhaps the most pitiful opening a trainer can make in addressing an audience is stating that he or she is "just getting over an illness," or is fatigued because of a heavy workload or travel. Attendees do not care about your personal circumstances on route to your presenting at this particular time - nor should they. If you are too ill, exhausted, or stressed to conduct an effective session, alert the meeting planner as far in advance as possible so that he or she can find a substitute trainer.

Misinformed speakers may feel that somehow, by issuing an excuse, the presentation should be evaluated less strenuously. After all, if you're not at your best mentally or physically, don't you deserve a break?

Paradoxically, issuing a lame excuse, particularly at the outset of a session, prompts the audience to judge you more critically than otherwise.

### **Fiddling with A/V Equipment in Mid-Presentation**

Once you have begun your training session, it is not the time to determine whether an overhead projector, slide carousel, LCD panel, or other equipment is in working order. It is extremely unprofessional to fiddle with the equipment in any way once the presentation has started.

Audience members intuitively, if not actively, sense that they are working with an amateur when you steal presentation time to learn how to turn on a piece of equipment, or worse, trouble-shoot it.

As for your A/V materials, people will forgive you for graphics with bad color schemes, corny jokes, or inconsistencies. What riles audience members the most is when a presenter uses minuscule fonts barely readable in the middle of the room, and impossible to discern from the back of the room.

Some trainers apologize in advance saying, "Please forgive me for the clarity of this slide," or "I know the print is hard to see, so I will read it for you." These are lame apologies since, presumably, you had days, weeks, or months to improve the quality of your A-V materials.

*Jeff Davidson* wrote the "Complete Guide to Public Speaking" and offers a 3-CD album on selling your articles/books. [www.manwithyourplan.com/CDSeries](http://www.manwithyourplan.com/CDSeries)