

## **Super Speaker Original**

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Monica L. Wofford  
Owner, PresentersPlus, Incorporated  
P.O. Box 683316  
Orlando, FL 32868  
1-866-382-0121

**Head: “Super-Speaker” May be Perfect, but is He Effective?**

**Subhead: Your Audience Prefers a Real Person over Perfection**

We have all seen the speakers with perfect gestures, perfect hair and perfect timing. We may have worked with trainers who promise to teach you gestures and presentation skills with finesse and poise. Remember the saying “nobody’s perfect”? If that is true for your audience wouldn’t that also be true for you as a presenter? The answer is yes! Your audience expects humanity and imperfections, not a flawless “Super-Speaker”. Successful presenters make a connection with their audience. They make mistakes, laugh at their imperfections, and even tell stories of their blunders so that the audience can connect with a real person.

If you want to be “Super-Speaker”, go out and get the cape and big “S” emblem for your chest. Keep your distance and lead your learners to believe you are the picture of perfection. Don’t be alarmed if they fail to subscribe to what you present and lack motivation to follow your recommended actions or behavior changes. Perfection is unattainable and so are the actions of a “so-called” perfect “Super-Speaker”. Choose to show them your humanity and they will follow you. These three steps will put you in place to lead them.

### **1. Learn to Laugh at Yourself**

No amount of preparedness will eliminate your ability to goof up. Spare wireless remote batteries will not keep you from tripping over the carpet. Go ahead trip, and then laugh. Call it a

blonde moment and laugh. Follow your PowerPoint with precision and when your computer takes on a mind of its own, laugh. Build the mistake into your presentation as a learning point for dealing with the unexpected or handling negativity, but laugh, instead of panic. Mistakes happen and he who maintains a sense of humor, maintains control over the situation. Your audience will warm up to the fact that you make mistakes, too. Laugh and they may even laugh with you. Adults learn better when they are relaxed and laughing. They are also much more likely to listen to you when they believe that you are one of them.

## **2. Be Natural**

I tell every speaker I consult with to “be natural and be you”. Use the gestures you would use in a one-on-one conversation. Use your own speaking and movement style, as opposed to someone else’s. The audience can tell when you are emulating someone rather than just being yourself and being comfortable in your own skin and style. Talk to individuals with your eyes and face. You would never look at someone’s forehead or imagine them naked if you were just chatting casually. Now, if the tension of a large audience forces the naturalness out of you, then find a way to get comfortable. Know your environment before you speak. Listen to your favorite song prior to a presentation. I even know one speaker who cackles like a chicken on stage before anyone arrives so that he knows nothing more embarrassing could possibly happen during the event. When your audience can sense that you are just being you, then they are much more likely to take your advice and believe the wisdom you are trying to share.

## **3. Use connectors**

Skilled speakers pause almost as much as they speak, so pause. No, I mean really pause, for an entire breath or even two. Then take the audience with you as you survey the entire room in silence. A pause works best after a point or a question to your audience. Make a point, and then

pause. The audience will connect with you in the time allowed to absorb your point. Ask a question and then pause. The audience will connect with you in being able to form an answer. You can also connect with the meet and greet before a session. Take the time to meet your audience. Talk to them, shake their hand. That touch alone will create a greater connection. By meeting people, you may also increase your comfort level that disappears when “Super-Speaker” arrives in the scene. Connectors bring you closer to the audience you are about to address. What better way to become comfortable than to realize that you are speaking among acquaintances who know you as another flawed human being that is willing to share part of themselves.

I have yet to see a costume that says “Super-Speaker”, though I am sure it has inhabited my closet before. I have seen many speakers attempt to wear such a costume when they try to be perfect. The audience truly wants to feel as if they can do what you are proposing or showing or teaching them how to do. If they feel as if you are the only one who can actually achieve this skill or behavior or task because you appear to be perfect, then you are missing the mark on what speaking and presenting is all about. People want new knowledge, skills, beliefs and new ways to achieve the dreams that they have, but they also want it from someone who can say “hey, I make mistakes just like you do and look, I was able to do this”. After all, “Super-Speaker” may be able to leap tall audiences in a single bound, but do you want to leap over the heads of your audience or connect with their hearts and minds?