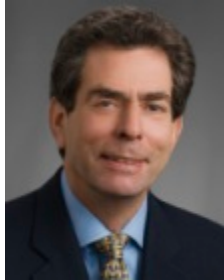


# How to Prepare for Speeches & Presentations

Avoid the myth of 'I'll do better *live* than I do in practice.

by **Andrew Gilman**  
*CommCore Consulting Group*



**F**or those who don't like prep sessions, dry runs, murder boards, and mock interviews, here's a bit of advice from the professionals who play on the biggest stages:

I recently had a conversation with Franc D'Ambrosio, the actor/singer who played the role of Phantom (Phantom of the Opera), longer than any other performer in the world. Franc says that a great performance before the live, ticket-paying audience is in direct relationship to the rigor and effort put into practice and rehearsal. He's even sounded this out with his peers in the sports world -- gold medal winning Olympic athletes.

Elite performers say that their practices have to be so rigorous and true-to-life that by the time they get into true competition, game or match, their performance is almost automatic. If you practice well, slight changes in a game or show won't throw you off. To the contrary, if you haven't rehearsed enough, little things can have a big negative impact on performance.

D'Ambrosio's comments track one of the central points in Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*. Gladwell cites research that it takes 10,000 hours of practice of constant repetition and coaching to get good at sports, playing musical instruments and countless other endeavors.

I'm not sure why, but an increasing number of executives have been trying to avoid the serious rehearsals. We have heard reasons such as: "I've been through training before." Or "I'll read through the material tonight before tomorrow's pitch, (speech or interview)." Or "Make sure that the newer presenters get rehearsed."

I'm not a psychologist, so I won't analyze what's behind all the reasons why business people don't want to rehearse. Here are a few of the ways to avoid rehearsing:

*I'm too busy. There are other things more important to do today. I've done this a million times before. I don't like to show any weakness to my staff in the rehearsal room. We haven't finished the speech so how can I practice if the content isn't done. I'm already pretty good. I can just go with the answers in the FAQ document.*

The short answer to all of these reasons (excuses) is that to avoid the communicators disease of "woulda, coulda, shoulda" it's imperative to invest the time in training, practice and rehearsal.

Here are a few suggestions to maximize your rehearsal:

- Place rehearsal time on the calendar. Once it's on your schedule, it's harder to take off.
- If you don't like a big crowd, rehearse in front of a smaller group.
- Practice the toughest questions.
- Work on both style and content.
- Use video, even if it's a "flip" type camera so you can watch yourself and make adjustments.
- If you don't like the performance or an answer, keep working at it until you get it right.

Clichés are around for a reason. This one makes sense: Perfect practice makes perfect performance