

GETTING THE BUTTERFLIES FLYING IN FORMATION

– Program objectives and expected outcomes

Christine Maher, head of Celebrity Speakers, a leading bureau which specialises in providing professional speakers for various occasions, says there should be an RSPCA for people – a Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Audiences.

Judging by the number of boring and tedious speeches that are given to conferences, seminars, AGM's, speech nights, weddings and business meetings each year, she is right.

Many speakers get up to talk with an assumption that the audience will listen to them. Some speakers even feel that the audience has to listen. After all, they are there in the room. They came along, didn't they? They may even have to pay attention. None of this means that they are going to listen to you. Common courtesy may prevent people actually walking out during your presentation. But that does not mean they are listening. They may "walk out in their mind".

In today's information satiated age, most of us are expert at "tuning out". When a speaker is droning on, the audience maybe thousands of kilometres away – skiing in Thredbo, lying on the beach at the Gold Coast, fantasising about a member of the audience, or back at the office sorting out some problems.

This 1-day workshop will introduce you to what we refer to as "Route 350". This term takes its name from the communication psychology research finding which shows that most people can listen at around 500 words per minute. But the average person can speak clearly only at around 140 to 150 words per minute.

The difference, a potential to process 350 words per minute, is channelled into other thoughts unless it is occupied by the speaker using some technique other than just talking.

When audience members let their minds wander onto other subjects during your presentation, they have gone down Route 350. Speakers have to win and hold their audience's attention – and regularly "gather up the stragglers" who wander off down Route 350.

Instead of thinking that all you have to do is speak the words, realise that you have to "sell" the message. The audience is not a captive crowd just sitting there waiting for your pearls of wisdom. Most presenters seriously over-estimate the attentiveness of their audience. An audience usually includes many people who would rather be somewhere else.

Start with this assumption and you're on safe ground. You will appreciate the preparation and delivery of your presentation differently.

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