

The Public Speaking Payoff

By Ilene Bergelson

Talk might be cheap, but public speaking is good for the bottom line. Premier voices in our industry are now recognized worldwide: JC Santana, Paul Chek, Bob Esquerre, and so many others. Have you heard of Lisa Coors, Bill Sonnemaker, Nicki Anderson, Robert Cappuccio or Nick Tumminello? If not, you will. Their ability to effectively communicate their knowledge has helped them become bankable entities. Their presentation skills have drawn the attention of organizations such as ACE, PT on the Net, Fit-Pro, PTA Global, Perform Better, Power Systems, and TRX.

Some professionals, such as Fraser Quelch of TRX, Ian O'Dwyer of OD on Movement and Fabio Comana of ACE are earning a portion of their income from speaking engagements like conference lectures and CEC courses around the country. But you don't have to be part of a national organization to be in the game: public speaking skills can open up myriad opportunities right in your very own neighborhood.

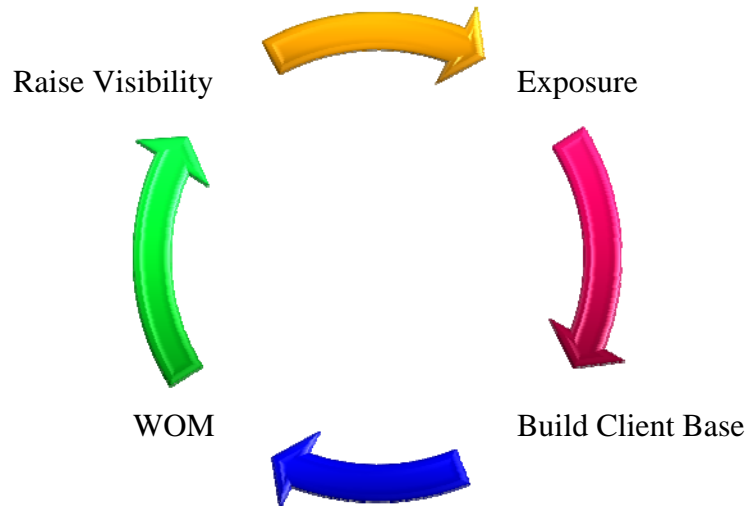
Be a Local Hero

How are you making a name for yourself and your business in your community? In this age of bytes, blogs, vlogs, texts and tweets, the impact of live interaction is more powerful than ever. An excellent live, local speaking event can translate to instant clientele and word of mouth promotion from attendees. Events can be formal or informal; as long as we are providing a valuable experience for our audience and speak with composure, confidence and magnetism, everyone benefits.

How can fitness business leaders, such as personal training studio owners, use public speaking in their community and within the industry to elevate their presence and draw business?

Let's look at 2 primary goals we have as business owners and how they feed each other:

1. Raise the visibility of our company/brand
2. Build our client base



Examples of this cycle are everywhere. Equinox started as a local gym that sought out high profile members and up-and-comers in entertainment. Their members led to media opportunities, for which Equinox had to be ready with engaging speakers. Over time, the group fitness instructor roster was filled with the city's premier instructors (who became popular because they are engaging in front of a room!) and the company continued to raise its visibility by volunteering programming and services for sporting events like marathons and organizations such as the Fresh Air Fund. All of this activity led to increased Word of Mouth marketing, which helped to grow the client base.

In addition to Equinox's aggressive marketing of the brand as a whole, the Group Fitness Department built a strong relationship with the local TV morning news. Countless instructors (me included) and programs have appeared in front of millions of people.

This series of activities positioned Equinox as a "Go To" gym; whenever experts are needed for fitness segments, Equinox gets the call and the opportunity for more exposure. That exposure leads to increased brand recognition and even more opportunities for Equinox to be in the forefront when a newspaper, magazine or television show needs someone or something on fitness. The effect: increased business and a bigger bottom line.

But what if your business is more of a neighborhood joint than a national giant? The same is true: getting out there brings people in.

Small business booms the same way

PPF featured trainer, Lisa Coors, owns Coors Core Fitness in Cincinnati and maintains a full client roster. Lisa accounts much of her success to her public speaking skills. While still in graduate school, Lisa's final presentation for her MBA prompted her to get more speaking experience, so she became a Spin Instructor. The practice she gave herself in the Spin Studio and the corporate world paid off: sometime after Lisa became a full time personal trainer, she was invited to present on the fitness convention circuit. That engagement led to additional speaking invitations and business opportunities. As she established her specialty in fitness for working with clients who have Parkinson's disease, Lisa's experience as a speaker made it easy for her to capitalize on her connections in the Parkinson's community. She became a recognizable figure within that community as well as in the Cincinnati metro area as a whole. Her increased visibility lead to co-presenting with famed cyclist and Parkinson's patient, Davis Phinney. That appearance lead to a video deal and a surge in her client roster. Her personal training studio is thriving and she often has more clients then she has time to train. In the midst of an economic recession, Lisa Coors has actually been able to expand her business.

You can do it too.

Taking the Reins

You have speaking opportunities everyday. Which of these occurs in your business?

- Location Opening
- Pitching to prospective clients
- Partnering with other companies and cross-promoting at area events
- Group Classes and Small Group Training
- Prospective Member Tours or Orientations

If you're not already treating these as public speaking opportunities, you should be. They also serve as practice for honing your message for a bigger stage.

Steps to get started

1. Determine the event (see Sidebar for ideas)

- a. Identify service or product of focus
 - b. Identify your target audience
2. Select speaker(s): Identify candidate who
 - a. Can relate to the audience & build trusting relationship
 - b. Has natural charisma & ability to connect with others
 - c. Is easy to understand (volume, diction, delivery, conversational style, etc.)
 - d. Can be ready on time, prep on own and/or follow guidelines
3. Prepare Speaker so they know
 - a. The topic
 - b. The audience's frame of reference, likes, needs and wants
 - c. Their fellow team members, their qualifications, business, brand, services (can field questions, recommend people and services, etc.)
4. Outline the marketing strategy by identifying
 - a. Your target audience
 - b. Why they should care about your promotional offering
 - c. "Buy" incentive(s) for target audience. For example:
 - i. Pre-event promo: complimentary shoulder massage given to attendees
 - ii. At event promo: sign-up for sessions today and get extra session free
 - d. Sources of access to consumers in target range
 - i. Area businesses & organizations
 - ii. Complimentary service providers
 - iii. Media outlets, etc.

Listen for Opportunity

Don't underestimate the power of the Casual Conversation. I have booked thousands of dollars in contracts in chats over dinner. Ask people open ended questions about their lives and their work. When someone expresses an interest in what you do, respond honestly. Be real. Be yourself. If you are passionate, eloquent and truly believe in what you do, it will come across. Since you are in a casual conversation, you are not expected to sell. That's an advantage: there's no need to pitch aggressively or convince the other party of anything. Sincerity is powerful. Just

share your passion and let the conversation progress naturally. It's artful and effortless networking!

Tie in Success

Create a member (or community) event around new equipment, new services, special promotions, newly hired or promoted trainers, new certifications earned by your staff, and continuing educational programs you host. For example, when I teach **Training for the Sport of Motherhood** (my CEC Specialty Certificate course for trainers and group fitness instructors), the facility who hires me has the option to add a special event for their members too. The event is a meet and greet which I lead and includes a short presentation to the members and their guests on the benefits of prenatal & postpartum fitness, a Q & A segment and an introduction of the facility's qualified staff. All sales, reception, group fitness and personal training personnel staff are recommended to attend to learn and share the experience with members. It is an excellent tool to promote the facility's team, foster in-house referrals between different departments and outside referrals by attendees spreading the word to the general public. The format of the event positions the featured fitness professionals on staff as experts. The prenatal/postpartum training and group attendance is catapulted to another level. My fee for leading the event can be made back the same week or even day by the facility through new sessions purchased, which will increase sales even more with the resulting WOM.

All companies can increase their sales right now by following the same model. Whether the event is lead by in-house staff or a guest speaker, the cost is a small investment for a larger profit. Follow-up events can be held by their own staff, raising the bottom-line year after year. You would be surprised at how many miss this opportunity by skipping such an event.

Keys for Event Success

2 Tips for Quality Performance

Tip 1: Be prepared

When you are handed the microphone, figuratively speaking, you'd better have something to say and you'd better say it *well*. The nature of public speaking is that of total exposure. If you are cultivating exposure opportunities and you are not working on being able to *deliver* your

message skillfully and with style, then you are wasting your time. See the sidebar for a head start.

Tip 2: Put your audience first

With all this talk about generating income, it's important to interject here that the priority must always be placed on *quality* if you want to uphold the integrity of your brand (and yourself). If you are just in it to make money, your audience, or at least some of them, will come away feeling like they had a "hollow" experience. Our clients come to us with the express desire and need to have confidence in our abilities and to feel understood and safe in our care. Whether our speaking skills lead us to more effectively reach our local community or launch a product line, we've got to represent our brand with integrity through the quality of our offering.

3 Tips for Filling the Room

Tip 1: Aim for your audience

Collaborate with organizations whose consumer base is a fit for you and your services. For example, if you provide fitness coaching for weight loss, get in touch with nutritional organizations, weight loss support groups, doctor's offices, health food stores, colleges, parent or school organizations and any other groups you may find people who will want your services.

Tip 2: Be prepared to cast a large net

You need to reach out to more venues than your target because they may not all accept your offer. If you would like to do a weekly 45 minute presentation to one organization, reach out to several groups to host. If you are lucky and everyone says yes, see if you can partner two or more compatible organizations to co-host or waitlist groups for the following month.

Tip 3: Promotion, promotion, promotion

I cannot stress it enough. Effective promotion is essential. Long gone are the days where you simply post a flyer and you fill the room. Repeated outreaches must be made and you must enlist others to spread the word...repeatedly. Give yourself and your host organization enough time to get the word out a minimum of 3-4 times through different means. Upload a teaser clip to YouTube™, send evites™, post a sign, invite your database to a free teleseminar call that will

give them a few tips and the incentive to come to the big event. Most of all, talk it up and get your people talking about it.

Face time is priceless

Live interaction is still the biggest, most effective generator of WOM. Savvy fitness business owners know this and capitalize on public speaking in their community and within the industry to elevate their presence and draw business. They know that being seen and heard by your consumers connects you to them and makes them think of you and your brand first. If you want to be a positive force and thrive in your community, get out there and speak up. You'll be doing a service to your community and your bottom line!

CALLOUT BOXES Sidebars

EVENT IDEAS

More business-driving opportunities await those who take the initiative. Sure-fire events that create impact are:

















- Special events for members, guest and the general public
- Hosting an evening with medical care practitioners
- Talks and presentations to local groups (e.g. local business groups, special needs associations in alignment with your area of specialty)
- Talks and presentations to local schools
- Health and wellness breaks at other industries conventions or area businesses
- Launch party to announce expanding your range of services
- Fundraising events for local organizations
- Industry events e.g. conferences
- Creating educational workshops either for the public or practitioners
- Media ops like on-camera spots
 - man on the street
 - fitness or lifestyle expert
 - hosting cable access shows
 - Podcasts, webinars, teleseminars, radio show appearances – either as guest or host (technically not 100% live, but public speaking skills are essential)

Which do you think raise visibility in the community and which lead to increased clientele?

In virtually EVERY case the answer is BOTH. Talk about a payoff!

DON'TS N' DO'S FOR THE BUSINESS SPEAKER

DON'TS

-  Skimp on practicing and timing content
-  Eat poorly, too much or not enough
-  Arrive late
-  Apologize for not being good enough
-  Approach audience and material tentatively
-  Let mistakes and mishaps throw you off your game
-  Use inappropriate humor or content
-  Dress inappropriately
-  Forgo eye contact with audience
-  Speak AT the audience rather than WITH them
-  Move or stand stiffly, anxiously or frozen behind the podium
-  Memorize content and try to deliver it word for word
-  Breathe quickly, shallowly and without awareness
-  Speak too quickly, softly or without proper enunciation
-  Read the entire presentation from your notes
-  Forget your audience :
 - Who they are
 - What they want/need/find interesting-relevant
 - That they are part of a conversation-the Exchange

DO'S

- + Practice speaking: take the lead in meetings, join Toastmasters, take workshops, work with a coach
- + Know *why* you are speaking about your topic— make sure it matters to both the audience and you. Let the audience see, hear and experience your passion.
- + Prepare topic by answering, “What kind of exchange/experience do I want to create?” “What kind of exchange/experience do I want my audience to have?”
- + Space out any notes you have so they are easy to read.
- + Time your presentation and/or arrange for someone to give you 15 & 5 min signals to end.
- + Rehearse repeatedly, leaving room to improvise throughout based on set key points.
- + Get a good night's sleep the night before

- + Eat nutritiously the night before & the day of the event
- + Practice Vocal Care! Limit phone or airplane conversations beforehand.
- + Warm up your body, breath and voice so you have full access to your entire range
- + Use a sign-in sheet with permission grant to add to your database
- + Get written permission from attendees onsite at the start of event to videotape, photograph. Be explicit about usage and waiving compensation.
- + Drink room temperature water, in a bottle with sport cap or no-spill top.
- + Check in with audience, ask them to contribute shares or participate by other means, e.g. raising a hand. Interact & stay connected throughout
- + Acknowledge to audience any change in programming or time length from what was promised
- + Speak in a conversational tone
- + Use multi-modal aids, appeal to multiple learning styles and frames of reference
- + Implement audience interaction segments when possible
- + Keep it short and offer something special for attendees to come back and use your services, bring friends, etc.
- + Stay on point and keep your content clearly in support of your main objective
- + Close with a wrap up and make yourself available to audience afterward.



A fitness professional and performer on Broadway, film & TV, Ilene Bergelson has spoken to audiences of every size. With over 20 years of teaching experience, she lectures internationally and is the founder of *LifeMoves Health*, a comprehensive communication coaching & fitness education company. Her EmpowerSpeak workshops and Light Bytes Audio Programs have helped professionals around the world achieve their potential. For more info & upcoming events calendar, go to www.LifeMovesHealth.com/shop/index.html