

EPISODE 25: HOW TO PREPARE AND GIVE A SPEECH THAT PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER

with Bob Kulhan

Marketing for Creatives Show
at IntNetworkPlus.com

Announcer:

Turn your hobby and freelance work into a profitable business! Make your marketing easier by applying the strategies of experienced entrepreneurs and have more time to do the work you love. You are listening to the Marketing for Creatives show with your host Marina Barayeva.

Marina Barayeva:

Hi everyone. This is Marina Barayeva. Welcome to another episode of Marketing for Creatives show. In this episode, we gonna talk about how to prepare and give the speech that people will remember.

By the way, if there are topics that you also want us to talk about on the show just send me an email to marina@intnetworkplus.com.

Going back to the public speeches, when you know your work, and your craft share it with everyone. Let other people know about you and what you do.

I'm super excited to introduce you to our special guest today Bob Kulhan.

Bob is the Founder, President and CEO of Business Improv, a world-class leader in creating experiential training and development programs for corporations of all scopes and sizes.

As a performer, Bob has over 21 years worth of stage credits. He was an actor with Chicago's famed Second City and was the first core faculty of The Second City Training Center.

Marina Barayeva:

Hi Bob. How are you doing today?

Bob Kulhan:

Hi Marina. I'm well. How are you?

Marina Barayeva:

I'm doing amazing. Welcome to the show.

Bob Kulhan:

Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Marina Barayeva:

Bob, tell us a little bit about yourself. How is the story being in acting for so many years connected to the world-class training company?

Bob Kulhan:

I am a 23-year vet in the world of improvisation and sketch comedy. I'm originally Chicago train. That's where I got my chops for the first 15 years rather have those 23 years I was in Chicago.

Then I moved to New York and continued to perform, teach, and direct in all the great theaters in New York. And then 19 years ago of those 23 I started extracting the tenants of improvisation as they'd be used to produce the outcome of comedy and started redirecting them to business so that people are more adaptive or creative or flexible, innovative, communicative, collaborative.

And I do that through behavioral sciences, so behavioral psychology, cognitive psychology, social psychology, behavioral economics, organizational theory, that type of stuff.

Marina Barayeva:

You started creative and ended up with all of that complicated stuff.

Bob Kulhan:

That's right.

Marina Barayeva:

You're the actor. You do the training. But for people like creative entrepreneurs or small business owner how giving the speeches, because today with talk about speeches, how it can benefit them in their business? Because sometimes people even don't see the opportunities behind of them.

Bob Kulhan:

You mean to bring in some acting elements to their presentations?

Marina Barayeva:

Even just having the presentations. Because sometimes I talk to people and they're like: "Public speeches? Me? No way."

Bob Kulhan:

Well, this is the thing. Speeches are just another medium for communication. We all have to communicate any entrepreneurial buzz across the board.

A good chunk of that communication is in fact verbal. We have to get used to talking with each other, whether it's a one on one or small group or a larger group or a humongous presentation. What I always say is if you know your material, you can get a good firm base and then you're just talking with people. You're not talking with everybody. You're talking with individuals inside that everyone and the need to communicate your message clearly, effectively, and memorably is imperative for any entrepreneur,

Marina Barayeva:

So what the opportunities people can get out of giving public speeches? Or they will just listen to the episode and then entertain their friends?

Bob Kulhan:

Why not? If you want to practice giving speeches, then why not bring a bunch of friends over?

Marina Barayeva:

They want a business. They clients.

Bob Kulhan:

Then practice, practice, practice, practice. The opportunities could be anywhere like online, for example, find someone like you who'd be willing to entertain someone like this guy to have a conversation and walk through your ideas inside and out.

You can also find all sorts of small business organizations around the world that have open forums for discussion. And then you have the more classic type of presentation venues like Toastmasters for example. They give you the opportunity to give speeches as well as well-rehearsed and practice speeches.

Then I would simply say that the thing that I'm saying over and over again, it's practice, practice, practice, practice, practice.

Marina Barayeva:

As entrepreneurs and small business owners, how we can pick the topic for the speech?

You gave us a lot of options where we can go and give the speech, but how can we know what to talk about and then how it will benefit our business so it won't be just a speech about anything?

Bob Kulhan:

First, you should know how to communicate about your business, right?

Marina Barayeva:

Of course.

Bob Kulhan:

That's the idea. You have a home base. You know what you have to get back to. Then there are two ways to approach it. One, that I prefer, is know your audience. If you know what your audience is and who your audience is and perhaps as much if not even more importantly, what the audience wants. Then you can craft your message in their terms, in their language and show why what you're presenting is beneficial to them.

Then the sub route to that connection: what do you want? What do you want to convey and what's important to you? That links directly back to your brand, your company, and your message.

And now it's a matter of putting it in terms of the audience so that they understand it

Marina Barayeva:

How do we pick the topic for the speech? We talked about blogging a lot, and this is a speech. It's not writing. It's not a social media thing. Before you apply for any speeches, you need to send them the topic. You need to know your idea. You need to write some summary.

Bob Kulhan:

I would say know your audience. If you know your audience, you can pick your topic from that. So that's what I meant by really doing some homework or some legwork to understand your audience and understand how to communicate with that audience. Because then you could pick and choose topics that are meaningful and appropriate to them.

Then you reverse engineer that. So if you know what topics are meaningful and appropriate to your audience and you know what your basis, then go from your audience to your base. And that's how I pick topics.

If I know, for example, XYZ organization is having a call for proposals for a topic, well I know my base is Improve and linking improve to business, so I know how to get to this.

Then, what is this XYZ organization focus? If they're focused for example, is on change and volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, things related to change, then I can say OK, so what does improvisation has to do with the third topic of change? Then I could show how improvisation actually creates a good base for being agents of change.

That's what I mean by really understanding what your audience is and what they want, then picking a topic that's on their terms and reverse engineering how you're going to get to it from your business.

Marina Barayeva:

Basically, you just mix together, your knowledge and what your business is about with what the company or someone who invites you for the speech or you apply for the pitch wants to? For their audience, right?

Bob Kulhan:

Yeah, absolutely.

Marina Barayeva:

OK. How to prepare for the speech?

Bob Kulhan:

First, it's know your audience, know the goals. I'm going to stress that over and over and over again. Then know your material inside and out. Once you craft your speech and let's say you have slides, remember that slides or any visuals are there to support you.

It's not the reverse. You are not there to talk about the slides. The slides were there to highlight what you are presenting. And then when I say practice, I mean practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice.

So much so, and now I'm going to go to the acting terms. When I was an actor, either sketch comedian or was doing Pushkin, for example, or Stanislavsky, you know the material inside and out so much, so you could take a shower and recite a monologue.

You could wash the dishes and do your half of dialogue even that you could play the other person part in your mind. You know this material so well that you could do a second or third task and still recite the material verbatim.

If you were that comfortable with the material and you know it inside and out, then you can start letting your voice come out, your passion come out, and your excitement come out, and that's the thing that people want to see.

No one really cares about perfection anymore. The days of a perfect presentation are gone. That is a ghost, thank goodness. What they want to see are the human elements of this, and so mistakes are easily forgiven. As long as you're hitting the content in that way.

And notice, this is the first time I'm actually bringing true content to the table. Not that I'm talking about now, the details of the content, because everything before that is knowing your audience, knowing yourself, getting so comfortable with the material that you can make mistakes and recover from them.

And by the way, interact. Interact with your audience. It's not talking at people. It's talking with people. That is the correct preposition that should be used that were just communicating with each other in this specific format.

Now if you have all that in place, then it's time to keep your message simple and affect people.

Marina Barayeva:

Would you write down your speech before? You set your topic and what's next? Because if I just improvise about stuff, tomorrow I'll forget what I talk about today and then maybe there'll be another material. So how to deal with this?

Bob Kulhan:

Bullets. Meaning one line, one sentence, one or two words. So I don't memorize an entire monologue for a presentation. What I know are my key points that I want to hit.

This is also another way to keep it simple because if you over packet, then it gets very blurry for people and we can't really remember what the points are. So if you have a couple of points, three points for example, and you just keep hitting these three points over and over again, you break them down, and you can put it back together again. You know your material inside and out; then you can answer any question about these three simple points.

So with each one of these points, let's say there are three major points, creates some bullets underneath them, how to support them, how to answer questions about these things, and then just talk.

Because in anything like even in this conversation, you know, some questions you want to ask me, right? However, if we go down a path that you weren't expecting, you'd want to take advantage of that opportunity, more likely than not, right?

Marina Barayeva:

OK, I'm going to take advantage (laughter).

Bob Kulhan:

OK. Go ahead. Yes (laughter).

Marina Barayeva:

OK, but you're confident. You were in acting, and a lot of people are one, they can be shy in front of the audience and the second is even if you can be confident in what you're talking about, knowing your materials, when you have the bigger audience or the audience which you want to get into, you get quite nervous.

You get to the stage, and you do not remember most part of your speech. How to prepare for that? How to secure yourself or how to practice that?

Bob Kulhan:

OK, so one, there's nothing that's going to replace regular practice. If you really know your material inside and out, if you forget it, then you start at a different point, and you can come backward and forwards, and that practice creates that relaxation.

If you're relaxed and you start owning it, it becomes authentic. Your voice comes out. Your passion comes out. That's what I'm talking about as well.

Now, some tricks to getting rid of some nervousness: warm up. Warming up is essential to performing anything, whether you're performing an Improve show or you're going to be performing a sport, for example.

What do athletes do before they perform? They start stretching out. They've got the music on. They're visualizing. They stay loose. They're not shooting out 20 emails or picking up the phone and having four or five conversations before they get out and perform there.

They create the space before the performance that they get in the right mental and physical place to perform at a high level.

If we take that, we can learn from athletes and put it now into our world and by the way, performers as well, right? Actors, actresses before shows. We're not focusing on anything other than just staying loose and being ready to perform.

If you take that same thing, put it in front of what we need, give yourself a half an hour, an hour before, put some music on, your favorite tunes, just walk around, stay loose, warming up. That is a way to warm up, to stay loose.

Warming up implies. That'll get your energy pumped up and excitement. So if we're going to do that, then find ways to shake, you know, even stretch out, yoga, whatever it might be that allows you to find that zone so that you're physically ready to impart energy on people and you're mentally there so that you are adaptable and flexible and you can handle anything that takes place.

And also the last thing is it comes to a performer, nervousness or anything related to freezing on the spot. Remember that you're going inside your head. So if you keep thinking about freezing and stuff like that, then you're caught in this tremendous labyrinth that is inside your head.

Take that same mental focus that you could put inside your head and thinking about 'Oh, I I'm nervous. I'm this. I'm that. I'm... I'm... I'm this. I'm that.' And go out.

What am I gonna do? Who am I going to be visualized the house walked the space beforehand so you can get in that space, look at picture people inside the house and then once you get out there, instead of going in, what am I going to say? What am I going to do?

It has some cheat sheets and slides. Just look up there. Oh yeah. I'm talking about that. There's a cheat sheet and then push all your energy out to your audience and give them what they want. Which is you in that moment, at that time talking about whatever it is you're going to talk about.

Marina Barayeva:

I wish people see you jumping in front of the video that I see. That's what you did (laughter).

Bob Kulhan:

I told you, I'm going to bounce a little bit. I'm a dancer (laughter).

Marina Barayeva:

OK. What would you suggest to write down the whole speech before they give the presentation and memorize that, so you will not get too nervous? Or, like you said, bullets, but I think it's maybe too short for some people. How to deal with this?

Bob Kulhan:

Pick and choose. You know yourself better than anybody else. Now I would say that that kind of inherent danger in writing a full speech, especially if it's a long one, is that you have to memorize a very long speech and you have to practice that over and over again.

What you're really relying on then is getting off, book and really going word by word as supposed to saying 'I have a lot of content here. I need to reduce it down in a way that it's memorable for the audience and impactful for them as well. And then keep it simple for myself. So now I don't have to memorize 3000 words. I'll memorize 300 words and these are the 300 words that I need to memorize.

And more importantly, of those 300 words, these are the top 50 words that I need to memorize because if I know those top 50 words or really then top 3 words, then you can always go back and forth to them.'

I would say, a good chunk of answering your question should really be based in practice. You have to figure out what works well for you and that means trial and error. You give yourself permission and time to fail and learn and try again and fail and learn and try again.

Marina Barayeva:

How would you suggest to start practicing that? Would you just do some small presentations first before you go and promote your business or you start promoting your business right away?

Bob Kulhan:

Yes. I would say the key word though is practice, practice, practice. So why not start small? Why not start by yourself?

Just do it to the wall. Talk to the wall a little bit. Give your presentation pace back and forth in, in your kitchen or in your basement or backyard and talk out loud to give the presentation.

Even look in the mirror. If you can do that without being distracted. Or pulled up your phone and record yourself and that gives you the opportunity to see what you're presenting in a way that other people are going to see it.

Then from there, if you're going to take a baby step approach to getting comfortable performing after you practice it alone by yourself and even in front of a camera or a mirror. Then why not invite a couple of friends over and by friends, I mean people not associated with actually providing success to your business.

Rather, these are our spouses, brothers, sisters, significant others, buddies, whoever it might be, and even if you consume wine or beer or have a beer or two and then just work through your presentation in a very fun, relaxed way and get some feedback.

Get some feedback from them so that you get an understanding from them, what they hear, what they see, and then you have the opportunity to learn and tweak it and grow and change so that when you move it out to a more unsecure environment, perhaps with potential clients, you have practiced this already several times over in many different formats and should have gained a level of experience and comfort that comes with it.

Marina Barayeva:

When people will give the presentation they will not get drunk at the time, no beers or vines so how to give the speech that people will remember? What to talk about? Or should you act somehow? What to do?

Bob Kulhan:

What I have learned is that yes, content definitely matters and this is why I keep saying just keep it simple. What's the most important thing in your message that you want driven? because everything else supports that one message or three bullets or whatever it might be in a simple way.

Otherwise, then it really is all those quote unquote x-factors that stand out. And the x-factors implies that it's undefinable factors that makes somebody stand out or more memorable. When in truth, what makes people stand out is energy, excitement, and passion, showing people while you're interested in it.

It also comes from that base of knowledge that we've said so many times over: know your audience, know your material, be Very comfortable with it.

Be Interactive. It's what makes you and your message more memorable. If you were talking with your audience, not at your audience, you're not pedantically lecturing them; you're in a discussion with them, you're engaging with them.

That means you're ready for anything at any given time, and if you know what your motivation is, you know what the audience's motivation is, you know how to communicate them, you know what your basis is, you practice it over and over and over again and you're super comfortable and you let your personality come out, then that content is going to be memorable. It is going to be sticky and you're going to be memorable and sticky as a presenter as well.

Marina Barayeva:

OK, let's imagine that you are giving a speech. You are on the stage and you just freaked out. You just forgot everything. You're staying on the stage. You see the crowd of people, they're listening to you and you need to say something, but you get too nervous already on the stage.

Bob Kulhan:

Yes. So total freeze.

Marina Barayeva:

And that's it? And they will look at you like is that the end of the conversation? (laughter)

Bob Kulhan:

No, it's what you were saying (laughter).

So if you totally freeze on the stage, which by the way has happened to everybody under the sun. What I would say is that there's a hamster that runs in a wheel inside your head and that powers your brain. And the hamster, that little road inside, that we'll get caught in the

wheel. Sometimes it just starts slipping around a little bit and sometimes he or she falls off and bumped his or her head and they get a little confused.

If that happens, what I say is take a deep breath and look out to the audience and start talking with anybody and just like 'I lost my place. Where was I on this one? Oh good. OK, thank you. Thank you for helping me out. Let's get back on track.'

Because if you just focus on one person and pretty much block out everybody else, then you're not having a giant conversation with a hundred and 50 or 200 people or even 20 people. You're having a conversation with one person and that one person can get your back.

Marina Barayeva:

We are ready to go out with our speeches. How to find the opportunities to give the speech that may benefit the business?

Bob Kulhan:

Research. Look. Internet. Talk to people. Go to conferences. Go to festivals. Go to networking events.

It's just the constant grind for me is the best way that I've learned which is just put on your detective hat and go find them.

Marina Barayeva:

Yeah, but for example, you will not go to every opportunity because some of them are not your audience. Are there any criteria how to pick the opportunities? How you pick where to speak at?

Bob Kulhan:

I look at really the same guidelines as I would for picking a topic or creating the speech as a whole, which is, well, who's the audience? Who am I going to talk to? Who are the key players inside the audience? Where is it? When is it? Does it fit inside my budget or my timeframe?

Look at all of the components of it. And then do some research as well. That typically with the Internet, you can get online and find a specifically who that audience is and what they're going for.

Or go the old-fashioned way, pick up the phone and call them. Have a conversation with them and talk to them about their key demographics. Talk to them about their audience. Talk about the number of people. Ask the questions that you would want to know before choosing whether or not you're going to go down that route.

And once again, there's nothing like word of mouth. If you can find people who have actually spoken at that event before and call them up or shoot them an email and start a dialogue with them. More often than not, people are willing to help other people.

There's this inherent pull that we all have that when somebody asks for help, we're very likely to say 'OK, yeah, I'll help you. It's good Karma. It's that people who have helped me in the past, etc., etc.'

Marina Barayeva:

When you give a speech for businesses, how would you end the speech? Will it have a call to action 'Buy from me,' 'Use my service'? How to get clients out of that? Or just use for promotions?

Bob Kulhan:

Yes, yes, yes, yes and yes. All of those ways that you just mentioned are viable ways to end a speech.

It depends on what the audience is. If the audience is out there and it's essentially every presentation is a competitive pitch, then perhaps the best way to approach is to back up and say, 'We'd do elite work, and we want to work with you. So if you have questions come, find me. I'm at booth 17' or whatever it might be.

It might be that call to action 'When you wake up in the morning, what makes you hungry? We can help you achieve these goals. Call us now.'

Other times it might just be that you just give a fantastic presentation and you drop the mic and you walk off and say, 'There it is. Find me if you want to. Don't, If you don't. And see what happens.'

It depends on all of those true x variables that need to be defined, which is you, audience presentation, format, outcome, etc.

Marina Barayeva:

Many people think that they weren't born for the stage like your other people and they don't even consider giving public speeches as a part of marketing and branding, as the part of their businesses, but I know that if you give some of those people the world of encouragement, they would try and could be great in that. What would you recommend to those people? How would you encourage them?

Bob Kulhan:

First, really remember that people want to hear from you and everyone accepts failure now. You don't have to be perfect.

Ninety percent of the time, maybe 10 percent of the time, there should be levels of perfection. Otherwise, even in that last 10 percent, there's so much room for error and growth as long as you're on point and continue.

And then for me, it's practice. Just keep it simple. You know, we very often get overwhelmed by the big picture. So I go back to an old adage which is What is the best way to eat an elephant?

Marina Barayeva:

Piece by piece?

Bob Kulhan:

Yeah, piece by piece. One bite at a time. So start really small. Don't worry about eating the whole elephant and being perfect right away, or just be the best presenter instantly.

What's the one thing you could do for yourself? Then practice that and get really good at that.

Then what's the second thing you can do for yourself and practice that? Now you have two good things that you're good at, which means that with practice comes failure. So you give yourself the opportunity to fail and stretch yourself and get more comfortable, which means you have to learn.

So practice and fail and learn and adapt. Practice. Fail. Learn. Adapt. Practice. Fail. Learn. Adapt. Over, over and over again on a step by step, piece, by piece basis, until you have levels of comfort.

And then every time you do it, just press it just a little bit more. Do it just a little bit more. Find more and more opportunity to practice it.

It's very much like riding a bicycle. For those who know how to ride a bicycle, think about the first time you rode a bike, and for those who don't know how to ride a bike, think about the first time you touch typed on a keyboard or any type of printer in any capacity, typewriter, first time you use your phone, first time you've used knife skills or flavor profiles in the kitchen, martial arts, whatever that which required practice, practice, practice to be good at.

The first time you ride a bike though is very different than the fiftieth time you ride a bike. And that's very different than the five hundredth time you rode a bike. So if you're just trying to ride a bike one time and get off and say, 'OK, that was horrible. I fell off my bike and scraped my knee.' You're never going to get the 50 times.

And once you get to 50 times, you increase the probability of getting 500 times because you get comfortable with it and you practice, and you fail, and you learn from it, and you adapted. And you did it again, and again, and again, and again.

Marina Barayeva:

Let's give our listeners a little summary. So we know our audience, we know our content, and if you would put that into a little strategy, what are the three steps our listeners could begin with to prepare and give the speech that people will remember.

Bob Kulhan:

Step number one would be a research. Do your homework. Be detectives. Find out as much as you can across the board and put yourself in the best position to create a base.

Number two, keep it simple. Keep it simple, your message. Keep it simple, what you're doing.

That I'm going to add four steps. Really, practice, practice, practice, practice, practice. Until with that simplicity, you're so comfortable with it that step number three or four, depending on how you look at it, you let yourself come out. You show why this is important to you. You show why this is exciting to you. You show why you are a creative and an entrepreneur, and you show why it makes a difference to them on their terms.

Marina Barayeva:

In the tip number one, when you're talking about creating a base what base would you create? What researchers would you do? About the conferences? Topics? Or what?

Bob Kulhan:

Yes, yes, yes, yes. All of it. All of it. Know your conference. Know your audience. Know your message. Know what you're talking about.

Have a backup plan if technology goes down. Have a backup plan if you're delayed, and you're 20 minutes later, 30 minutes, they bumped you to the next day or ask you to start earlier.

Really, just do as much research and groundwork as you possibly can to create a strong enough foundation so that if anything happens, you have a base that you can consistently go back to.

Marina Barayeva:

Fantastic, Bob! Thank you so much. It was a pleasure to have you here. Please share with us how can we find more about you, your business and all those creative things you do.

Bob Kulhan:

Thank you. Thanks for having me. And you can find more about me by following me at [Kulhan](#) at Twitter or my company [Business Improv](#) on Facebook or [BizImprov](#) B-I-Z-I-M-P-R-O-V on Twitter.

And I have a book called [Getting to "Yes. And"](#) and it's a Stanford University press book and it has a lot of what we were just talking about in there in great detail with actually some challenges that you can put in to help yourself and help people around you too. So that's how you could find me.

Marina Barayeva:

Fantastic! Thank you so much!

Bob Kulhan:

Yeah. Thanks for having me. That was fun!

Announcer:

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