

We talked in the last chapter about what to say when spieling, but not about the actual art of presentation itself.

Public Speaking for a tour manager is your ability to tell the client the information that you are a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on. There are many different ways you can improve your ability to speak in public, and we'll get to them in a minute, but first let's talk about the elephant in the room – public speaking anxiety.

If you're going to be a TM, you're going to have to speak in public. If this makes you nervous, you need to get over it – you'll be doing it a lot.

## Overcoming Anxiety

Thankfully, it is possible to become a calm, confident public speaker regardless of your level of anxiety.

### 1. Work Out What it is, Exactly, That You're Afraid Of

Are you nervous someone will laugh at you? Worried you'll be judged?

Fear of public speaking is almost always due to anticipating that something bad will happen when you start talking in front of a group. Which is, quite frankly, ridiculous. When was the last time you saw someone throw a tomato at a speaker, or heard someone laugh if they stumbled?

Public speaking is an irrational fear. Though that doesn't make it any less debilitating, the fact that it's all in your mind means that if you can change the way you think, you can overcome it.

The secret to changing the way you think starts with remembering that your group is always on your side. They want you to succeed! They're not there out of spite, they're not there to laugh at you. They're there because they have a genuine interest in what you have to say. Apply rational thinking to your fears and they will become much more manageable.

### 2. Be Prepared

Anyone would be nervous if they hadn't thought about what to say. Make sure you know your subject matter and have done your research.

SME and public speaking go hand in hand. First, you need to know your subject. Then you need to be able to present it. If you are a

nervous public speaker, try learning more about your subject matter. The more you know – really know – the more confidently you will be able to talk about it.

### 3. Practice

Practice is one of the best ways to overcome performance anxiety. Sure everyone has nerves speaking in front of a crowd for the first time. But by the hundredth time they've talked, most are polished, calm, and collected.

How does knowing this help you? Well many of the things you say as a tour guide will be pre-prepared informational talks (spiels). These are things you can practice ahead of time in front of a mirror, family, or friends. It doesn't have to be your clients that hear you a hundred times! On your first tour, you should have practiced speaking about your subject matter so many times that it is second nature to you already.

### 4. Take Your Time

Relax. Trying to get things over and done with will only make you more nervous. Stop, take a deep breath and enjoy yourself.

Talking fast makes you breathe erratically. Breathing erratically deprives you of oxygen. Oxygen deprivation triggers a panic response within your body. By talking fast, you're actually making the situation worse.

Make a conscious effort to talk in a regular manner, with pauses for emphasis when appropriate. It will calm you down and make what you are saying much more interesting!

### 5. Embrace the Audience

Do you get nervous when you're sitting at the kitchen table talking to friends? No.

One of the things you can do to make yourself less nervous is to treat your audience like you would your friends. That doesn't mean slap them on the back! Rather, it means make eye contact, have an interactive conversation, and remember that they're on your side, not against you.

Engaging with an audience gets you out of "public speaker" mode and into a more normal mode of speaking. It also prevents you from focusing on your own thoughts so much that they become an issue.

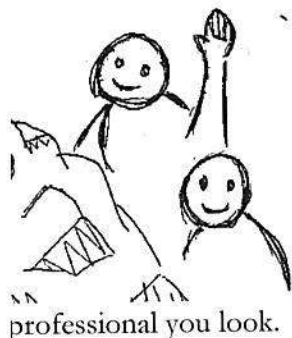
**Further reading**

There is a wealth of information on how to overcome fear of talking in public on the Internet. A great place to start is this free Wikihow article: [www.goo.gl/hx6XCe](http://www.goo.gl/hx6XCe).

**First Impressions**

Now that you are confident about speaking in public, you need to make a good first impression. 90% of the first impression that you make will be based on your physical appearance.

Unfortunately, long before you even open your mouth, a customer will have already made a judgment on how good you are. That judgement will be based on how



professional you look.

First impressions aren't everything, but they are important. They set the benchmark for your tour and immediately fix an opinion of you within the customer's mind. This opinion is very hard to change – so you must make a good one!

Fortunately, it is very easy to make a good first impression, because it is almost always based on your physical appearance. This means how you are dressed, how you are groomed, and how you act.

**Clarification**

Although it is true that first impressions start to form as soon as you've had any contact with the customer (for example, when they first peruse your website or Facebook page), here we are talking about the first time you meet face to face.

**Personal Dress**

The aim with personal dress is to appear professional.

As a general rule of thumb, closed shoes, collared shirt, and slacks make a good impression unless local custom dictates different. If the weather is such that shorts are appropriate, then they should be cut in

a style similar to dress slacks. Basketball shorts, T-shirt, and running shoes are only appropriate on a running tour – if you've never tried one, you should!

Carry a clipboard when you first start out, too – it makes you seem important and this is not just for your clients! Museums and other attractions will take you more seriously with a clipboard – have you ever seen someone carrying one that wasn't doing something important?

**Personal Grooming**

Your personal grooming must be top notch: hair well groomed (this includes nose hair, gents!), showered and scrubbed, deodorant used, teeth brushed, your eyewear (if you wear glasses) should be in good condition, and fingernails and toenails cleaned and trimmed.

You should carry a packet of breath mints and pop one every so often so that your breath stays fresh. If you are the type that sweats a great deal, then bring along an identical second shirt and a small can of deodorant when you do a tour, in case you need to change.

**Act the Part**

If you'd paid a lot of money to go on a tour, how would you feel if your guide stood up in front of you with wide terrified eyes, stumbled over their lines, forgot your name, and generally just looked nervous?

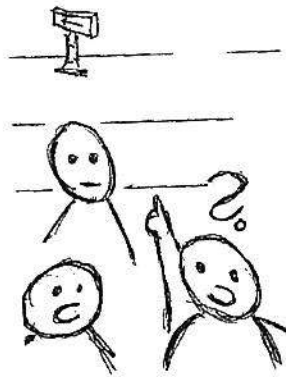
Not a good first impression, right? Being well prepared, being an SME and knowing how to dress and present well is half the battle. The other half is simply a matter of smiling, being calm, confident, and authoritative when you first meet your group. Always remember – you know more than them, you're the expert. Act like it.

**Smile**

Don't forget to smile when you first walk into a room. There have been a number of studies about what makes people attractive and one answer on every single list is smiling. The more you smile, the more people will find you attractive and right or wrong, attractive people are trusted and respected more.

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### Word Use



— You need to remember that most likely the people on your tours will not be from the same region or even usually the same country as you. Avoid slang no matter how well it is accepted locally. I once got slapped because I said a girl needed to wear thongs on an outing we were doing. In Australia, a “thong” is a sandal – i.e. open toe shoes for your feet. In America, it means underwear. I learnt my lesson right there and then.

Avoid vulgarities, too – when in doubt, leave it out. I don’t think I really need to

explain this one any more.

Finally in the “avoid” category, avoid the word “um” and similar stalling words. You know the type – when you can’t quite remember what you needed to say and ... umm... well, you know? Um is one of those words that you can get away with once, but if a client picks up that you’re saying it repeatedly can become incredibly annoying. They’ll be focused on counting how many times you say it and not on what you’re actually saying.

Try to become aware of any words that you use often – for example, you may be someone who says “basically” or “essentially” or “if you know what I mean” when describing something or coming to a conclusion. Try to keep your delivery natural, but varied.

I once had a local tour guide that finished every sentence out of habit with the word “OK?.” I never actually knew if she was a good guide or not because I couldn’t focus on anything else she was saying!

The way to stop yourself from saying um is to be well practiced. Usually you’ll say it as a stalling tactic while your mind races ahead to find what you’re saying next. If you can’t remember what to say, just don’t say anything. A small pause is much better than a stalling word. If you say um out of habit, the way to stop yourself from saying it is to video yourself while you speak. As you watch it back you’ll very quickly realize how stupid you look and put a stop to things. You could also practice in front of a friend with the promise that every time you say the word, you need to buy them a drink! Trust me, once your wallet starts to hurt, you’ll clean up your bad habit very quickly.

### Accents and

Remember that a different country friend that has Australians, but British accent! (don’t speak loudly!). How do ask, but a gene to seems to have stronger their has changed a strong Australian where I’m from

In addition to the speed at which a little, however slow (like when delivery.

Remember that may have learnt speaking it. He because at the English had a

The setting in speaking club studying to be American as a him. On this One young man things up in his approached the coffee at another

Everything stormed out of was wrong, and because he had

“I am sure that said?” asked the



"He said 'I would like to have intercourse with you, I am sure I will enjoy it,'" she replied.

The mentor handed her the dictionary and told her to look up the word intercourse. How would you react in a situation where someone said that to you? Before you answer, you had better look it up in a dictionary; Webster New World College dictionary states that it means "communication or dealings between or among people, countries, etc.; interchange of products, services, ideas, feelings, etc."

I'm sure that's exactly what you were thinking, as well.

## Your Performance

While the purpose is different, tour guiding has many things in common with teaching and acting. All three require that you present yourself to an audience and command their attention. One of the ways all three do this is by means of performance.

### Project Your Voice

The ability to project your voice to carry across a crowd of people is an important skill in a tour manager. You don't want to shout, but you do want everyone to be able to hear you. The secret to this is to breathe deeply when you speak – more air in the lungs means more projection when it comes out. Make sure you articulate your words, too – this provides extra clues for a person to work out what you are saying if hearing is hard. If you have a problem with projecting your voice, there's a great article here [www.goo.gl/kDkMNl](http://www.goo.gl/kDkMNl) that will help.

### Avoid Distractions

This can be both distractions you create and distractions in the area. Distractions you create include excessive waving of hands or playing in your pockets. Some "talking" with your hands is appropriate, but if you feel this is a problem, try carrying a clipboard or hooking your thumb in the top of your pants pocket with the rest of the hand outside as a solution.

Distractions in your area can be visual or noise related. Visually, you don't want something going on in the background more interesting than you – unless it's the specific subject you're talking about. This means not stopping to do that city spiel on a street next to a busker or to discuss your African history next to a lion stalking prey.

Noise related distractions can be things like busy loud streets. If

you want to talk about something, but you know it's going to be noisy when you get there, consider finding a quiet out of the way corner close by, where you can spiel before walking the group to see the actual object.

If you do have a distraction arise that you can't avoid and you notice people's attention wavering, acknowledge it. If there's a movie star walking past, stop and give people time to photograph them, then resume your talk after. If a drunk walks through your group or a stander stands beside you starting to mimic you talking, stop and wait politely for him to leave, or move to another location.

### Join a Club!

If you are still in school, consider joining a Drama club or class. These are excellent ways to get some free instructions on how to act. If you're not in school and you're not confident performing in public, many communities have adult education classes that offer free or very low cost classes in basic teaching techniques and acting.

You might find this one a little hard to swallow, but watch the movie *The Mirror has Two Faces* starring Barbara Streisand and Jeff Bridges. These two play college professors with completely opposite styles of teaching. Barbara's character is an English professor whose students just love her and her teaching. Jeff plays a mathematics professor whose classes are so boring that even he yawns. In the course of the movie, Barbara gives advice on how to improve Jeff Bridges' teaching skills. Much of her advice you might want to consider as you develop your spiels and practice your presentations.

### Practice

Yep, there it is again. Practice. One of the biggest things that you can do to improve your performance when presenting is practice. Find ways to talk to groups of people. Practice your spiels until they flow off your tongue. Walk through a practice tour as if you had guests with you (but if you are doing this in public, I would suggest you put your ear piece from your cell phone in, that way when people see you talking to yourself they won't think you are crazy, just that you are talking on the phone).

have a degree in Egyptian archaeology and ancient history, so please feel free to ask questions as we walk around and I'll answer as best I can.

"This tour is free so it won't cost you one single cent, but we do ask that if you've enjoyed the tour, at the end you consider leaving a tip – whatever you feel like this tour has been worth. I donate 10% of all my tips to preservation projects at the museum so its exhibits can be enjoyed by future generations to come."

### Want to see a video of it?

Shortly after writing the first edition of this book I had some fun creating a series of promotional videos to showcase it. In one of the videos I give three example tip talks. You can watch the video now on YouTube at [www.goo.gl/1pfhrZ](http://www.goo.gl/1pfhrZ)

## Create Memories

This is an important concept so it deserves its own section, even if it can be easily expressed. The purpose of taking a vacation or a tour is not to see the place, it is about the experience.

The movie *Total Recall* was right, it is not about going to Mars, it is about the memories. Your job is to help create a highly positive memory of the tour your clients are doing. There are many things that you have to do in order to do that. Your customer service skills, depth of knowledge, and how you present will be a key element that make this happen, but equally important might be facilitating a special occasion or helping (on longer tours) clients to make lifelong friends.

\* \* \*

*"The best tour guide I ever encountered was during a shore excursion off a Costa Cruise in Halong Bay Vietnam. Day excursions from a cruise ships are generally the worst tours you can find. In my mind, they are not really tours, but just transportation from point "A" to "B" back to "A." Seldom do the guides do anything worthwhile other than keep the group together, so you can*

*understand why I was hesitant to take the shore excursion.*

*When we arrived at the shore, I got my first pleasant surprise. There were five tour guides waiting, each was dressed in white shorts and pale blue polo shirt with the tour company's logo and name – normal practice is the tour company goes unnamed.*

*Right out of the gate our guide, Suzy, distinguished herself. Instead of leading us blindly away as the other guides did, she lead us to a nearby palm tree and introduced herself with an outstanding opening spiel.*

*Suzy welcomed everyone to Halong Bay and Vietnam, and then talked for a few minutes about what our day-long boat cruise would be like. She was bright and animated, keeping everyone's attention easily.*

*As Suzy wrapped up her spiel, she produced a number of painter's caps from her backpack. These were simple white caps with the company's name and logo across the front. Suzy was supposed to pass these out from her company as a gift at the end of the tour, but told us she preferred to do it at the beginning. She stated that the sun could be very brutal and wearing a hat would help prevent heat cramps and other related problems, and she encouraged us to drink plenty of water all day, which was available on the boat. Suzy also confessed that another reason that she wanted us to wear the cap was that she could spot us more easily if we went through crowds. Point one for Suzy.*

*When we reached our boat a few minutes later, there was another plus for the tour company. The 10 of us, as well as our guide, boarded a boat that could easily hold 30 people, though maybe not comfortably. Other boats nearby were being loaded with large numbers of people, but we were introduced to the captain and told that there were comfortable chairs on the second level and part of the first level was air conditioned. Suzy said we should find a place to be comfortable and remain seated for the first few minutes till we cleared the docks as the water could be a bit choppy. The other boats were already moving, and I could clearly see another advantage of Suzy's earlier briefing. On the other boats, the tour*

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*guides were trying to do their introduction spiel in the choppy water and the guests were holding on to things as the guide talked. Point two for Suzy.*

*When we arrived at the first stop, Suzy led us off the junk (a type of Asian longboat) and grouped us together on the pier. She mentioned that if for any reason we became separated, we should just come back to the boat. She then proceeded to tell us how to tell ours from the rest (our junk had a dragon head at the front, which had a gold mane and blue eyes). Add another point for Suzy. The tour of the caverns was interesting and we arrived back all together.*

*Shortly after we set sail again, a small sampan loaded with fruit pulled alongside for the crew, who bought some fruit. To our surprise, shortly after Suzy appeared on the top deck with a platter of fruit and some small plates, too! She called everyone over to a table and said that these were two local fruits and that they would be a part of the lunch fruit salad, however, she wanted everyone to get a taste before they were mixed with other fruits. She then showed a dragon fruit and a jack-fruit and explained that this is how they would look at the market if we wanted to buy them later on. Just a little extra step that everyone appreciated. Point Suzy.*

*Lunch was very tasty and was mostly Vietnamese dishes which Suzy cheerfully explained as we ate. At the end of lunch, Suzy announced that we would be shortly passing some outstanding limestone formations and that she would be at the bow giving a little information about each formation as we passed, if anyone was interested.*

*At the end of the boat trip section, we returned to the pier and were led to a waiting bus to go to a local market. Lots of different groups, including ours, all got on the same one and it was here that Suzy really shined.*

*A different guide got up first, who thanked everyone for joining the trip, mentioned tips a few times and then explained that when we got to the market, everyone would be given a gift and they had 40 minutes to explore before the bus departed (and then reminded us*

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*all about tips again).*

*The bus drove on in silence for the next five minutes until Suzy took to the P.A. She said she really had had an enjoyable day and wanted to thank her group for that and continued on by saying that the group had asked her about living in Halong. For the next five minutes, she talked about living there. She told us there were no rich or poor areas of town per se, instead it depended how high you were. As Halong was built on the side of a mountain the higher you went the harder it was to get there and therefore the cheaper the rent. She joked that she lived so high that she had the best sunsets in the area. As an off duty tour guide, I was incredibly impressed at the skill with which she set the scene for getting tipped without once asking for money or doing anything but telling us an interesting story.*

*When we arrived at the market Suzy asked her group to stay on the bus for a few minutes as the others got off. When the others got off she told us that the market could be overwhelming to some people so what she would like to do was to take a fast orientation walk through the market. No stopping to shop, just to get the layout, then everyone can go do their individual shopping.*

*Suzy led us through the market pointing out the different sections and ended at a small refreshment court. When we got there, she said there was still 30 minutes left to do shopping and that the vendor would use calculators to show prices. She gave a short talk about how bargaining was expected and how to do it.*

*She did two other things that showed extra care, too. First she passed out a little cheat sheet that showed different values between dollars and the Vietnamese dong. The second was that she said there were no real designer items in the market and in her opinion, very little in the market worth over \$10. If there was something that we wanted to buy but were unable to bargain down below \$10, then we should come get her and she would see what she could do. She would wait where we were and if she was not there it meant she was helping someone else, so wait and she would be back. She also suggested that we all gather in the refreshment court at the end of shopping before going to the bus so we didn't have to find our*

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*own way back.*

*Suzzy helped two people that day, a woman who wanted to buy some pearls which Suzzy showed her were fake and a gentleman who wanted to buy a large wooden carving. He had negotiated down from \$100 to \$75, and then got Suzzy who got the price down to \$40. When we were all back together Suzzy passed out the rest of the company giveaways and gave her closing spiel.*

*Again the spiel was very warm and friendly and she did not mention tips directly. She did mention that she would be going back to university soon and at the end of the spiel she said she would wave goodbye to everyone from her home high, high up on the mountain when our ship left that evening.*

*I do not know how much Suzzy's average tip was, but my guess was it was generous. There were many smiles and hugs as she said goodbye to everyone individually and when our group went back to the bus it was like we were one big family.*

*When we did get to the bus, the other guides were all lined up in front of the door looking like they were waiting for tips, but their guests just wandered past them — very few stopped.*

*Suzzy did a number of small things that were beyond what the group expected; all of her actions were well appreciated. The only thing that cost her anything out of her pocket was a couple of pieces of paper that the conversion cheat sheets were printed on. An outstanding tour guide — most likely the best I ever encountered.*

*-- Charles*

