

Clear as Mud

As we move into these last few weeks together, you're going to pick up ideas that I've learned in the last 6 months during the creation of this program. I encourage you to be a lifelong student of the art of storytelling and public speaking, because you can always improve. The remaining lessons in this program may circle back to Discovery, Development, or Delivery concepts. Rest assured, they will help you improve your stories....

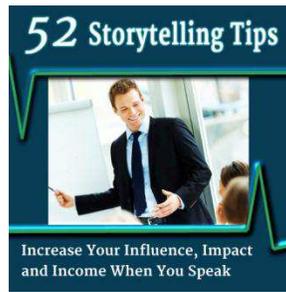
During a recent meeting with several successful professional speakers, I was reminded of a key storytelling concept. Clarity. In the real estate world, the most important part of selling a home is location, location, location. In the storytelling world, the most important aspect is ...Clarity. Clarity. Clarity.

This is a subject that we touched upon in a previous lesson, and it bears repeating in more detail.

In any type of communication, clarity is critical to insuring that the message you deliver is received by the other person[s] just as you intended. In storytelling, your walk-away message and the next step must be crystal clear if you want to leave a lasting impact on your audience. Unfortunately, far too many presenters are as clear as mud.

Why is this a problem? Clearly it must be the audience's fault, right? You know what you want to say, and you're saying the words that convey that message. Why aren't they getting it?

The problem lies in a concept called 'The Curse of Knowledge.' This term, which I first read about in the book '*Made to Stick*,' by Chip and Dan Heath, refers to the fact that it is difficult to communicate when you know a fact that someone else doesn't. This disconnect creates communication problems between two people.



To help you understand this, try the following exercise. Think of a song that everyone knows. Then tap that song on a desktop, and ask another person to guess the name of that song. It sounds like this....

[Sounds of tapping]

What is the name of that song? Listen again.

[Sounds of tapping]

When most people hear this, they don't have a clue. All they hear is a bunch of tapping.

The title of that song is "*Happy Birthday to You.*"

Now that you know the title, listen one more time.

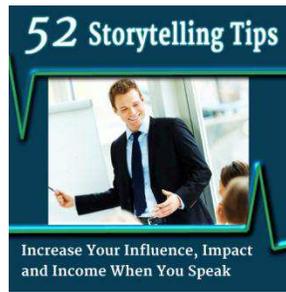
[Sounds of tapping]

Could you hear it that time?

What happened? When you didn't know the title, you heard a bunch of indiscriminant tapping sounds. When you learned the name of the song, you could hear that song playing in your head, and could match the song to the tapping.

What does this have to do with story telling? When you have an idea in your head, you understand it because it's clear in your mind. Unless you are crystal clear about your message and your next step, your audience is, in essence, hearing a series of meaningless taps when your story is not tied around a consistent message.

How can you improve and clarify your message to others? Try this suggestion from my



fellow Certified World Class Speaking Coach, Bob Mohl. Present your story to a group. A week later, contact each of the people who heard your story. Ask them these three questions:

- *What do you remember?*
- *What was the point of the story?*
- *What was funny?*

A word of warning. The responses may astound you. What you think is memorable often isn't. The point you think you're making often isn't what people take away. Parts that you think are funny may not be to others. Ask me how I know this.

Although this exercise can be frustrating, it is one of the most valuable tools you can use to improve your story, and your connection. If people can't remember key points a week later, your story is not resonating at a deep level.

This feedback is invaluable. It will help you develop clarity in your stories. When your message and next step are clear, your story will resonate. It will be remembered long after you speak, and you will avoid the curse of being 'Clear as Mud.'

ACTION STEP: Remember the tapping exercise and use the three follow-up questions discussed in this week's lesson. Whenever you sense that your audience is not clear about your message, think about that tapping exercise, and upon whom the responsibility lies to clearly convey your message. Use the feedback from the three questions to eliminate confusing or forgettable parts of your story.

Your recommended resource this week is the book [*Wake 'Em Up Business Presentations*](#) by Tom Antion. Tom is a highly successful speaker and entrepreneur. He has been entertaining audiences for over 25 years.

Until next week, always remember, you have a story that someone needs to hear.



Recommended Resources

- 1) *3D Storytelling Workshop* Click on this link: [3D Storytelling Workshop](#)
- 2) *Inject More Humor into Your Presentations*
Click on this link: [Inject More Humor into Your Presentations](#)
- 3) *Go Ahead and Laugh!* Click on this link: [Go Ahead and Laugh](#)
- 4) *Stand Up, Stand OUT!* Click on this link: [Stand Up, Stand OUT!](#)
- 5) *EDGE of Their Seats Storytelling*
Click on this link: [Edge of Their Seats Storytelling](#)
- 6) *Hollywood Presentation Skills*
Click on this link: [Hollywood Presentation Skills](#)

Michael's Background

For many years, Michael Davis gave presentations and speeches that were, in a word, ineffective. Mistakes, confusing messages and failed attempts to capture the interest and attention of audiences created tremendous frustration.

Then a chance meeting with World Champion speaker David Brooks opened the door to meeting many other World Champion and Hall of Fame speakers. Investment of time, energy and thousands of dollars in training and coaching helped him develop the skills to become a speaker and leader who influences, impacts, and inspires others.

In 2011, he earned the certification of World Class Speech Coach. He also studies the art of comedy and movie making to learn new skills that can take speech creation and delivery to new levels.

Michael's Raving Fans

*"Mike Davis is an **engaging, inspiring speaker**. I believe, however, that **his greatest talent** is his **ability to draw the best out of those** lucky enough to have him as a coach. I had this privilege for a period of four months. During this time, he constantly challenged me to **improve both the content** of my speeches and **my delivery**. I would not have made the finals in Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking competition without the help of Mike Davis. **I don't know of a better Public Speaking teacher** in Cincinnati.*

Chris Nachtrab
Vice President & Partner
The Everest Group

"Last summer, when I spoke and promoted to subscribe to [my email newsletter] Hot Marketing Tips, I got a big fat zero sign ups.

***At your wise suggestion**, I passed the signup clipboard around the room this time. When you first mentioned it, it felt very old-fashion and not trendy or technology driven. I set a goal for 50 new sign ups. Probably 2 times more than I have ever had sign up at one time.*

*When I tallied the new subscribers after the lunch yesterday, **we hit a total of 72!** I think that is about **46% of the room**. **THANKS!**"*

Drew Dinkelacker
President, The Marketing Accelerator

*"Evaluate to Elevate is a **powerful program**. Every speaker should hear it... twice!"*

Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

*"Mike helped me fine tune a 10-minute presentation from "too much information" into a **clear, to-the-point focus** that has not only **given me more confidence**, but generating **more positive feedback** from the audience NOW than I did before meeting with Mike.*

*Mike has a unique ability to help you focus on the main point(s) of your presentation and then how to present them in a way that is **easy for those in the audience to understand**."*

Doug Smith
Sr. Account Executive
Hubbard Interactive

*"The **success** I enjoyed in the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking is the **result of coaching I received from Mike Davis**. He helped me **refine and deliver** a speech that carried me **all the way to the finals**. His tireless dedication is **outstanding!** Mike Davis will help you communicate better and be more successful."*

Phil Barth
Portfolio Manager
International Paper

*"Mike has an easy way of working with you that **isn't intimidating**... Amazing, **insightful feedback**... My presentations are now **far more interesting** and result in **additional sales** of my services. No matter what the level of speaking at which you may be performing, **you're sure to improve with Mike Davis**."*

Joann Westwood
Westwood Virtual Associates, LLC

"Mike Davis breathed life into a topic that many of our group of trial lawyers take for granted, that public speaking is both an art and a science. It is clear that Mike is himself passionate about this topic and his insights are invaluable for those facing the daunting task of public speaking for the first time and for those seasoned veterans behind the podium".

David Williamson
Attorney

*"Michael has completely opened my eyes! I'm **performing at an entirely new level**. I went into my last event with the **utmost confidence** thanks to him. He even called me the night before with a few last-minute reminders! If you speak for a living — if your revenue depends on your ability to communicate, **you NEED Michael Davis!**"*

Brennan Scanlon
Co-Executive Director
Business Network International

*"I recommend the coaching services of Michael Davis. He helped me to put a new, more **meaningful spin** on my existing presentations that enabled me to **connect with my audience**. He provided me with tools and resources that allowed me to **gain confidence, decrease my anxiety, and more effectively get my message across**. Most importantly, he taught me how to **have fun** with public speaking!"*

Dr. Laura Ward
Cincinnati Children's Hospital