

Avoid These Mistakes that Can Kill Your Presentation

As we near the end of this year-long course, this is a great time to present you with a list of common mistakes that hurt most storytellers. These ideas were shared with me by my coaches and can serve as a great time-saver. Keep this list nearby as you prepare your stories.

Mistake #1: People speak in narration and don't use dialogue. The majority of speakers narrate their stories. This makes them sound like reporters. A small number of people speak almost totally in dialogue. This makes them sound more like actors in a stage play.

Overcome this mistake by using a mixture of both. Ideally, use narration of the story to set up the dialogue.

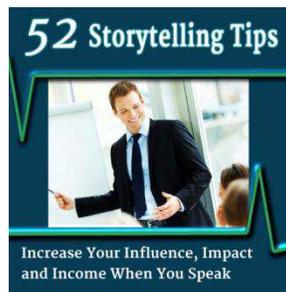
Mistake #2: They don't effectively describe their characters. Most storytellers don't give enough description of their characters. This lack of information creates too many questions in the minds of the audience. This distracts them from the story. There are some speakers who give too many details, which sounds like a novel.

Remember that characters who can be seen and heard are more relatable. The best way to describe them is through dialogue. Effectively done, this can quickly provide pertinent description, and keep the audience engaged.

Mistake #3: They don't establish conflict early in the story. Remember that conflict is the hook. The quicker you introduce the conflict, the quicker you grab audience interest.

Mistake #4: They don't escalate that conflict. It's important to escalate it to the point where it needs to be resolved. When this occurs, the audience is set up; they want to know the tools that were used to solve that conflict.

Mistake #5: They don't explain the cure. The cure is the scene where the



Character goes through an ‘aha’ moment. This is the change the audience wants to experience. Properly done, this sets them up for an explanation of that change.

Mistake #6: They don’t show the change after the cure. Once you share the Cure to the Conflict, it’s critical to show how the character changed as a result. If your character doesn’t experience a change, then your story does not resonate and it will not be remembered. To quote Craig Valentine, *“If you take us through the problem, take us through the payoff.”* Far too many storytellers leave their audiences ‘hanging,’ wondering what the purpose of the story is because they don’t receive the benefit.

Mistake #7: They make themselves the hero. Remember, when you lift yourself up, you let others down. Too many speakers tell stories in which they have all the answers to the problems they face. The problem with this is that audiences do not connect with speakers who come across as special, or have all the answers.

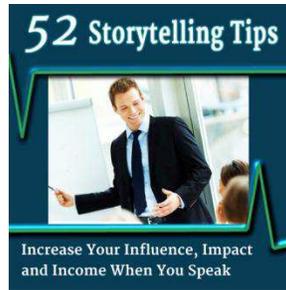
Make sure you give credit to others who passed on wisdom (or solutions) to you. Giving credit to others helps you stay on the level of the audience and can deepen your relationship with them.

Mistake #8: They don’t use character reactions to enhance the emotion of the story. To quote Darren LaCroix, *“It’s often the look before and after the line that makes the line work.”* Very few speakers understand this. They feel that they need to fill up their speaking time with words.

When you show character’s reactions to lines or situations, the audience will see and feel your story, and become more involved.

Mistake #9: They don’t get quickly into their story. Remember the concept of Arrive Late, Leave Early. Most speakers take too much time to set up their story. If you inundate the audience with extraneous details, they will lose interest and mentally check out. Get to the key parts of your story as quickly as possible.

Mistake #10: Early in their stories, they don’t give the audience an idea of the



benefit they're about to receive. If you don't tell the audience at the beginning what they're going to get, they won't want to go on the journey with you. In the opening of their stories, far too many presenters give you in-depth background information that doesn't add to their message. Early on, it's never good to have them thinking *"What in the world does this have to do with me?"*

Mistake #11: They speak the way they write. A good story is like a good conversation, just with more people involved. Far too many people write their stories out, so they have a tendency to speak they way they write. If you want to stand out, turn this formula around.

As you go through your story, ask yourself one question, *"Do I talk like this in everyday conversation?"* Don't use words in your stories that you don't use in everyday life. Why? Because you'll seem insincere and lack authenticity. When you use the same language in your stories that you use in everyday life, the audience gets the real version of you.

ACTION STEP: Review your story and your recordings. I know you've been recording each of your speeches since you heard that recommendation, haven't you? Determine if you're making any of the mistakes made in the list of 11. Use this as a checklist to go over each of your stories.

Your recommended resource this week is the book [*"The Anatomy of Story: 22 Steps to Becoming a Master Storyteller,"*](#) by John Truby. Mr. Truby is a highly-regarded and sought Hollywood screenwriter. This book is more detailed than others that have been recommended in this course. It offers great insight into key aspects of story creation, such a character emotions, and plot development.

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