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# TEACH AND INSPIRE!

by Mónica Ramírez Chimal



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**I**magine you've been chosen to be a speaker at an international conference. You prepared your presentation for months and have practiced it. You are satisfied with the outcome and you are sure the audience will learn. The day of the presentation arrives, so you get there early and set everything up. You watch people get in the room; there are a decent number of people to start. Someone introduces you, and you begin speaking. Ten minutes later, you see people leaving, and 30 minutes later, you see that half of the audience are asleep or looking at their phones. What happened?

If this has been the case for you, don't feel bad. This happens more frequently than you think.

As an international speaker, I've seen and lived things that have made me improve the way I present and deliver content. This article applies if you are delivering

a course, workshop, or speaking at a conference.

### **Teach to inspire, not to impress**

I know being chosen to speak at conferences generates excitement. First, you've been selected out of many other people, which says a lot. Second, your name and session will be included in the brochure and on the website of the organization hosting the conference. Wow! Of course, that deserves to be shared out loud. But when you prepare the material and begin speaking, it is not about you. It's about the topic you chose.

Many speakers think the audience is there for them and have chosen them. That's wrong. The audience is there to learn from the speaker about the topic.

Let's be honest: when you read any brochure, what you are looking for is the topic — a topic that can help you with a problem you are facing

or need to know more about it. It's not about the presenter. Some names, job positions, or companies can impress, but in my experience, it's really about how effective that speaker is at teaching. I've been in conferences where "important people" are the speakers, and I've looked around to see people aren't paying attention or are leaving.

When the speaker is there to impress, it's shown in their words. "I did that." "I have achieved . . ." "I worked at . . ." and so on. The "I" becomes the most popular word of the presentation. Who wants to hear an hour of "I . . . I . . . I . . ."?

In addition, to show how big their ego is, the speaker is also not engaging the audience. They're showing that they think the audience is not at their level. You must remember that you may have lots of experience, but many talented people are in the audience. Do you want to be remembered as someone who taught something different, or do you want to be remembered as an arrogant, inaccessible speaker?

You are there to teach and inspire. You'll inspire other people when they see you as an authentic human being that shows it's OK not to know things and that it's OK to make mistakes. Show the audience how to solve problems. If you've done it, the audience can too! That's inspiring because nobody is perfect.

### Know your material so well you don't need the slides

I bet you've seen these three scenarios:

1. The speaker who keeps standing at the podium without moving.
2. The speaker who remain still and just looks at the screen.
3. The speaker who reads the slides instead of explaining.

How does that make you feel?

One word comes to mind: bored. That's right. You can be in the same position for a while, but after five minutes, the audience will notice your insecurity. You need the podium, you need to stay in the same position, and you need to read the slides because you are looking for security. The message is something like: "Don't move me, or I'll lose the knowledge."

Great speakers believe in themselves and — let me emphasize the *and* — prepare the material so well they know it by heart. They know what they are talking about, so they don't need to read the slides. They can present without the presentation; people are there to hear their knowledge, not to see the slides. The slides help reinforce what the audience is hearing, but they are not the main source of information — it's the speaker. Next time you're presenting, do this: practice your presentation without slides. If you can speak about the topic without them, it's very likely that with the slides, your presentation will be amazing.

### The slides reinforce what you're saying

Many speakers use the slides as a source of security or as a reminder in case they forget something. As I said before, the slides are there to reinforce what you're saying because when people listen *and* see a concept, it's easier to learn. But it's a different story when the slides lead the presentation. The audience doesn't want a slide full of words or technical concepts. The audience wants you to present those words in a simple, easy, and fun way — especially if you're talking about a tough topic, such as

regulations, taxes, or law. Repeating what the regulation says is a waste of time. The audience can check Google or Wikipedia. Talk about what it means. What is the main point? How can people apply that? What the audience wants is a shortcut — the summary of how they can apply that knowledge or learn what to do with it.

As a speaker or trainer, keep in mind that not everyone knows what you know or has the same level of experience. And please, do not abbreviate unless you are sure it's a common term for the audience. If your grandparents were in front of you, would they understand what you are saying?<sup>1</sup>

Put in slides only for the key concepts. Give yourself a chance to lead the presentation.

**You'll inspire other people when they see you as an authentic human being that shows it's OK not to know things and that it's OK to make mistakes.**

### Relax so you speak slowly and clearly

What happens when you are nervous? You begin to speak fast. You don't remember things. You confuse concepts. Basically, no one understands you. If you are going to speak (no matter the size



of the audience), you need to relax. I know it's difficult. Even the best speakers get nervous before going on stage. But fear or nervousness shouldn't control you. You need to pull yourself together, and the key is your breathing. If I had known many years ago what I was going to write about, many of my presentations would have been better.

It's simple: Close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. Slowly, inhale for two counts and then exhale for four. Do that three times. You'll relax. If you don't feel relaxed enough, inhale for three and exhale for six. As you can see, the exhale time is double the inhale. You'll distract your mind by concentrating on your breathing; that's why it must be slow and with your eyes closed. The slower you make it, the better. Some people are so nervous that they have to inhale for four and exhale for eight!

When you are relaxed, you speak slowly and clearly, your knowledge flows, and you look confident and secure. Remember: Great training feels like a conversation, so make it happen!

### **Training is an active experience**

Forget about the old training method where you stand before the audience and speak until it's time for questions. Make it interactive! For that, allow the audience to ask or comment. Include questions or reflections in your material and ask the audience if they've lived that or if they agree. This simple thing will change your presentation because the audience can participate; they can feel that they are part of a conversation. Who doesn't want to be part of an interesting conversation?

In a conversation, you make eye contact, you smile, you are there

in the moment, and you exchange experiences. If the person in front of you needs help, you just do it, right? That's the key to connecting with the audience and treating them respectfully. Leave aside the phone and other distractions. You are there to share your knowledge and facilitate learning.

Making training an active experience means knowing what you want the audience to do because of your training. It's not only about receiving information; it's about what the audience can do after your presentation. Training should be active during your presentation and after it has ended. Otherwise, you'd only be delivering information and not transforming lives.

### **The one who teaches learns the most**

I've said this before: "You may have a lot of experience, but there are a lot of talented people in the audience." Being humble means having an open mind so you can accept that there are different points of view. Diversity of opinions helps to grow yourself and others in training.

If you ask me when I've learned most, the answer is "when I have taught" because questions from the audience can be very noteworthy. Sometimes it's something that hadn't occurred to me. Sometimes it brings to light something I didn't know. The audience made me think, reflect, and investigate. Being a speaker or a trainer is an amazing opportunity to develop yourself and help others develop!

Here is a piece of advice: When you don't know the answer to a question, or you can't answer everything because of time, make sure to get contact information. Investigate the question and tell

them what the right answer is. You'll be seen as a responsible speaker and trainer, a person who cares about others. And at the same time, you'll be giving value after the presentation has finished.

### **Set attention to your knowledge**

I'm a woman, so I know that sometimes wearing a dress or skirt can make me worried while presenting, especially if the presentation style is sitting on a stage. Any woman might be uncomfortable, and it will show. As a presenter, you don't want that.

Regardless of gender, what you are wearing shouldn't be the focus of attention for the audience. What you're saying should be. Before presenting, try different outfits and wear the one that makes you feel the most comfortable. This is very significant! The more comfortable and relaxed you are, the better your performance will be. Keep in mind different scenarios that you may encounter. For example, what happens if you need to climb stairs to get to the stage? What if you stumble? What happens if you drop the microphone? You need to wear what is comfortable and practical so you don't get distracted by the little things. You are presenting, not modeling.

For those who present in a non-native language, here is a reassuring note. No matter your accent, people are going to listen to you if you are presenting in a motivating, simple, and fun way. So, forget about feeling insecure because of your accent or not knowing some words. Set your attention to your knowledge! I have done this, and believe me when I can't find a certain word, I use nonverbal language or a synonym, and someone from the audience always helps me. And

in those moments (of course, it's not something planned; it just happens), the audience sees me as human. They are kind to me, and incidentally, a fun moment happens where all of us can laugh. And laughing helps us relax, making the presentation easier.

By setting your attention to your knowledge, you make sure the audience does the same. Simple as that.

### **Include something real and something that can be used**

As an attendee, I've seen many presentations. Those that include real-life cases are the ones that catch my attention. But sometimes, those cases don't necessarily apply to every attendee. That's when an effective speaker explains how a case can affect any company or its employees. By showing how something could affect a person, the speaker makes the example real for everyone. People tend to pay more attention when shown what a problem looks like and how to identify it.

If possible, try to examine a case from both sides: the one who does it and the victim. In this way, attendees will become more sensitive to the impact the topic can have.

For internal training, show executive-level employees — as well as colleagues in compliance and internal audit — how their behavior, actions, and decisions can influence other employees.<sup>2</sup> Everything they do or say is crucial because they must always lead by example. For any company, training is essential, but it's most valuable for those who run the company. The areas that oversee other areas must comply with the rules and the training. Otherwise, the training won't work.

### **Use reminders between training**

This only applies to internal training in a company. If you are training recurrently, use reminders so people don't forget main concepts between training sessions. You can do several things, such as hanging posters, using animated videos, asking the IT team to help you install a short message that pops up when employees turn on their computers, installing screensavers with phrases, or organizing a competition between areas about certain topics (such as the code of conduct's content or a specific policy).<sup>3</sup> The key is to make those reminders short, fun, and to the point. Your imagination is the limit, so be creative!

One of the most effective strategies is to stick reminders about essential issues on the bathroom door. Why? Because this is one of the few moments when people are alone, and their minds are quiet. So the message is better received.

### **It's not teaching; it's your legacy**

How many speakers minimize the effect of teaching? Many. They think it's something irrelevant, something that anyone can do. Really? No wonder there are so many boring conferences or courses where the speaker uses too many technical words or presents unrelated concepts. Sometimes those "important people" send someone else to present because they are too busy. This reflects how unimportant the audience is to that person.

Teaching is an honor because the audience is allowing the speaker to be in their lives. It's an honor because the audience is giving the speaker their time, attention, energy, and money. So the least any

speaker can do is take the matter seriously.

Teaching is a privilege because not everyone has the skills for it. The certifications, master's degrees, and job titles don't mean that a person is an effective communicator or teacher. You could know everything; however, it takes different skills to teach, share, manage the group, and get people interested in what you're saying. Some people are good at working in front of a computer, and others are good at working with people. We all have strengths. Just make sure that if you are going to speak, you learn the skills to do it in a way where you don't just present — you teach. Do it in a way where you don't just teach — you inspire. In the end, this is part of your legacy. How many lives have you changed? How many lives will you change?


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### **Your training is effective when ...**

Your training is effective when people ask, "When is the next training or conference?" Or people say, "I learned this in training!"

Or suddenly you have more followers on social media. Keep in mind that people are more likely to express what they feel when they are angry, upset, or disappointed. Complaints make people talk. Unfortunately, it is not like that when something is good. So don't feel bad if, after teaching, you don't receive a positive message. Sometimes it's a sign that you were good at the training. After many years of teaching, I've seen that the recognition

comes years later when someone runs into you and tells you, "In your conference, I learned so much!" or, "What I learned from you has changed my life," or, "You made my life better!"

If you've delivered courses and workshops or spoken at conferences, you know these comments are the greatest reward. It's like that warm applause when you finish talking. It just gets into your heart. I hope that now you know how to *teach and inspire!* 

**Endnotes**

1. Mónica Ramírez Chimal, "Oldies but goodies," *CEP Magazine*, April 2016, <https://compliancecosmos.org/cep-magazine-april-2016>.
2. Mónica Ramírez Chimal, "Do I have a conflict of interest?" *CEP Magazine*, December 2019, <https://compliancecosmos.org/do-i-have-conflict-interest>.
3. Mónica Ramírez Chimal, "Get the \$ for your budget," *CEP Magazine*, February 2020, <https://compliancecosmos.org/get-your-budget>.

**Takeaways**

- ◆ Inspire your audience by sharing what you have lived and teaching them how to solve problems.
- ◆ Only include vital information in your slides. The audience wants your knowledge and expertise, not a copy of laws and regulations.
- ◆ Allow the audience to ask questions and make comments. Participation makes your presentation feel like a conversation.
- ◆ Make examples resonate by showing how real-life cases can affect any company and its employees.
- ◆ Teaching is a privilege; it's a different thing to know something than to know how to share that knowledge.

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