

Introduction

You *can* speak with confidence. If you follow the pointers and tips in these coming pages, I have no doubt you'll become an accomplished public speaker. That may sound like a bold assertion but I'm absolutely convinced it's true. Everybody can learn to speak well.

Despite this, many people are scared of getting up to talk in front of an audience. There's even a technical term for this: glossophobia. It's so common that it's believed to affect up to 75 per cent of the population, with an estimated 10 per cent of those at the more extreme end of the spectrum. If you are one of the many who make up this number, it may strike you that your glossophobia is insurmountable. It isn't. With the right preparation and support, you can overcome your barriers and stumbling blocks. In the following chapters I will help you look at speaking in a fresh way that will dissipate much of the anxiety and put you in control. I say 'much', rather than 'all', because some nerves are a good thing. Harnessed in the right way, they bring the necessary energy to your performance. They help you to focus and connect.

One of the fundamentals of successful public speaking is to understand that, no matter how good at it you become, it's always the audience that is the star. They're the focus. Not you. Later on in this book, I'll explain how this works and how to

use it to your advantage – because by truly understanding this, you can boost your self-confidence and performance. I'll also be exploring why public speaking is most definitely not one-way traffic. The best speeches mirror a conversation, and actively provoke interaction and reaction. The goal should always be to:

- engage with your audience, and
- deliver a lasting impact.

Time spent in front of an audience actually delivering a speech is only part of the picture. So, I'll be breaking down the speechmaking process into 'before', 'during' and 'after', all of which are vital stages in ensuring your message hits home. This includes aspects such as creating an environment in which you feel comfortable. A large degree of success comes down to proper preparation.

One of the notable things about wonderful speakers is that there are no stereotypes. They come from a wide variety of backgrounds, and their personalities vary enormously. In fact, their individualism makes them good at what they do. That's because being true to yourself is at the core of successful public speaking. Which is all the more reason to believe me when I say that anyone can do it.

You can do it.

I have been fortunate to pursue and enjoy a career that has immersed me in the world of speaking. I am the Managing Director of Speakers Corner, which has grown to become one of the biggest speaker bureaux in the world. We work on more than 1,000 events a year, and have over 7,000 speakers on our books. Alongside Speakers Corner, I co-founded the speaker management business Speaking Office, with my brother Tim

Gold and Michael Levey. My work is all about supporting people to overcome any fears or barriers they might have, and to make the most of their talent.

So, as well as my thoughts and theories, this book is packed with insights from some of the fantastic speakers it's my pleasure to work with on a regular basis. What they have to say is honest, illuminating and very practical. This is a golden opportunity to learn from some masterful exponents of speaking who have been generous in sharing their 'trade secrets'.

Together, let's banish glossophobia.

It's time for you to become a glossophile, blessed with the skills and confidence to hold an audience in the palm of your hand.

1. Show and Tell

Most of us have an innate fear of public speaking. We worry we may not be up to it; that we'll freeze, stumble over our words, bore the audience or make mortifying mistakes. We will learn, throughout this book, that this fear may never completely subside. But you will learn how to control it, work with it, and use it to your advantage when speaking in front of groups. The title of this book is *Speaking with Confidence*, but that is not to suggest that speaking is something only the super-confident can do. Quite the contrary: speaking is something everyone can do, whether you feel confident or not to start with. I want you to believe in yourself. Because you can do it – and do it well.

Step 1: Belief

We all start life speaking confidently. And that undoubtedly includes you. But, over time, as we get older – and supposedly wiser – we acquire a tendency to feel more apprehensive about public speaking. Our mature, rational brain suppresses the imaginative capabilities of childhood and allows fear and reserve to creep in.

We were all at primary school once. Back then, we used to be excited by Show and Tell, when we could bring in our