



# Dave Mitchell

## the Leadership Difference

### Laugh and Learn

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*This month Dave shares some tips for dealing with most people's greatest fear -- public speaking, and a trip to the Oregon wine country uncovers some surprise wines and great memories.*

#### The Greatest Fear

Time and time again, research on the subject of fear indicates that, for most people, public speaking tops the list. To put that result into perspective, dying ranks anywhere between third and seventh in that same research. As Jerry Seinfeld once said, "At a funeral, most people would rather be in the coffin than delivering the eulogy!"

The ability to deliver an engaging presentation is extremely beneficial if you are a leader, a sales professional or a person who wants to influence and inspire others and create a call to action. Here are a few tips to enhance your ability to deliver an effective speech without the influence of performance diminishing fear.

**Be Mindful of Cognitive Load.** Think of your brain as a computer. It has a finite amount of space to store data and run applications. You ever notice how your computer slows down when you have too many windows open and too many processes working simultaneously? Your brain has the same limitations. During a presentation, you have three huge programs running: content delivery, speaker credibility and audience management. Your goal is to reduce the cognitive load required to run these.

**Content delivery** refers to both familiarity with your subject matter and clarity on how you plan to share it with your audience. Limit this to three main ideas and practice delivering these at least 10 times before your actual presentation. Of these 10 practice sessions, make sure at least three are in front of other people. The more comfort you have with your content, the less cognitive load is placed on your brain to deliver it. Here's a tip for you PowerPoint users; develop your presentation first and then construct your slides. This will ensure that your slides support your message and are truly visual aids for your audience. If you do the PowerPoint first, you will develop them as public note cards for you rather than your audience. This inevitably leads to the dreaded, "death by PowerPoint" experience.

**Speaker credibility** begins with an excellent introduction provided by someone else who is respected by the audience. Whenever possible, get an introduction from a leader who represents the group to whom you are speaking. Write your introduction out and coach the person on how to best deliver it. Be sure to dress slightly (only slightly) more formal than the audience. Do NOT tell a joke, but embrace stories that are mildly and harmlessly self-deprecating. And ALWAYS begin by thanking the audience and extending your appreciation and respect for them. Because you are speaking and standing, while your audience is seated and silent, you have a level of power and authority over them psychologically. To make you more accessible and likable, insert humility and vulnerability into your presentation. Sincere

gratitude, the confidence of self awareness and displaying the ability to laugh at yourself will go a long way toward achieving a stronger relationship with your audience. You can reduce your cognitive load in this area by spending additional time practicing the first four minutes of your presentation. Your first impression with the audience is the most powerful, so you will want to be particularly strong at the beginning. So often, I hear people tell me that they are pretty good speakers once they get going. To me, they are saying that they only suck when it really matters.

**Audience management** refers to all the platform skills that make your presentation engaging. These include vocal intonation, dramatic pauses, using audience names, smiling, moving naturally around the room, using your hands and face to reinforce your words. Most speakers undermine their content by delivering it in a way that is...well...BORING. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Your passion for the content shows how much you care.

I actually approach a presentation by focusing on Aristotle's Appeals: Ethos, the credibility of the speaker; Pathos, the emotional appeal of the material; and, Logos, the reasoning of the content. Most of your cognitive load during a presentation should be related to the passion and delivery of your message (Pathos), not your content. By knowing your content and delivery and executing some strategies for enhancing your credibility, you can free up cognitive space to convey a persuasive, passionate message.

*A Call to Action: Delivering a Persuasive Presentation is our popular two day public speaking workshop. For more information, contact Dave at [dave@theleadershipdifference.com](mailto:dave@theleadershipdifference.com).*

## ***A Journey to the Willamette Valley***

After a recent speaking engagement in Portland, Oregon, my lovely bride and I spent a couple of days in the Willamette Valley wine country. This region is known for their Pinot Noirs and we experienced some fabulous ones. Surprisingly, many wine makers in Willamette are also using Columbia Valley grapes from neighboring Washington to broaden their offerings. Here were four fantastic wines Lori and I experienced:

**David Hill Winery Reserve Merlot Rogue Valley 2008** - A few hundred miles south of Willamette, the Rogue Valley's warmer climate and additional sunshine combine to raise fabulous Merlot grapes. We tasted this wine at the picturesque winery in Northern Willamette on a gorgeous day. I was so inspired by the setting that I picked up the resident vineyard dog's ball and gave it a toss. The dog just stared at me, apparently not similarly inspired.

**Longplay "Jory Slope" Chardonnay Lia's Vineyard 2008** - Todd Hanson's tasting room features couches and vinyl records playing obscure 70's music...basically it was my basement. This fresh, clean Chardonnay illustrates the winery's motto, "Analog wine for a digital world."

**Seven of Hearts Chatte D'Avignon Viognier and Rousanne 2010** --Blending the white wine grapes of the Rhone region of France is all the rage these days and Byron Dooley has created a dandy alternative to Chardonnay with this bottle. We loved several of the over a dozen wines that we tried at their Carlton tasting room. Afterwards, we took a nap.

**VIDON Vineyard 3 Clones Estate Pinot Noir Chehalem Mountain 2010** - Don Hagge is a former NASA Scientist who, with the reluctant assistance of his wife Vicki, makes a limited production of Pinot Noir. We were fortunate to secure a few of the last bottles of this vintage. Don saw us drive up his drive way, put on his coat, walked out and greeted us with great wine that we tasted in his shed next to the house. This is Willamette Valley wine making at its most sincere level.

## **A Heartfelt "Thank You" to our Clients**

I am hopeful that we are slowly putting the experience of the Great Recession behind us. The period somewhere between 2007 and 2011 will spawn a great many stories for our grand kids. So many people whom I respect and admire experienced life changing developments because of the economy. I feel very fortunate to have lived through, learned and evolved during that period. Most of all, I appreciate my many clients who have continued our partnership during these trying times.

**Thank you!**

