

Acting Skills Workshop

What's the difference between a stage actor reciting Shakespeare and an actuary giving a presentation? "Not much," says veteran stage actor, Dave Ferrie. In a workshop entitled "Using Acting Skills to Improve Your Presentation" during the 2006 Spring Health Meeting, Ferrie enumerated the many similarities between the two.

He revealed how actors, as well as presenters, must tell a story that their audience cares about. By deconstructing the technique of acting, he showed that actors and presenters have the same obstacles to success. Those hurdles include finding the right persona within yourself, rehearsal and, of course, stage fright.

Breathing techniques were covered for both relaxation and for effective vocal production. Speech, including articulation, rhythm, pause and climax, as well as tone and tunefulness, proved to be vitally important. Ferrie showed how body placement and movement are essential for effective presentations. He covered rhythm, body awareness, balance and feel. He revealed little tricks on body position in relation to the audience and what to do with your hands.

While nobody was doing soliloquies after the workshop, most did receive assurance that improving one's presentation skills matters greatly for one's professional image. And, we found, it isn't as hard to achieve as we thought.

Acting Tips from Dave Ferrie:

- Acting is deliberate self-expression; it is communication utilizing a range of behavior.
- Stage fright: Get over it through relaxation exercises, but just do it. Commit to the performance.
- Listen and learn from others. Pay attention to their nuances. Record yourself.
- Relax your voice, articulate your words and make sure you can be heard.
- Use rhythm, pause and climax within each sub-topic.
- Default to emphasizing verbs unless you specifically want to emphasize another word in the sentence.
- Use tone and tune to color your speech.
- Place your body with your audience in mind.
- Use your body to help communicate your topic and its importance through posture and movement.
- Observe others at seminars, on stage, in movies and at parties.
- Use a mirror or video camera.
- Start today.