

Tips to succeed in public speaking

PRESENTING AN AWARD, making a toast or publicly recognising a co-worker or colleague is not the time to stand up in front of the audience and make it up as you go along. These mini speeches need to be carefully prepared, with a strong opening, a well-organised body and a memorable conclusion, just like a longer speech. They also need to be rehearsed so that on the night you deliver the speech, you are fully focused on the person being honoured and not on your own performance.

You should refer to the occasion and the reason the person deserves to be recognised. Use short anecdotes to illustrate why he or she is in the spotlight; it may be their accomplishments, their contribution to the company, their long service or some other reason. Above all, be positive and sincere.

However, while you praise them, don't exaggerate their accomplishments. Public-speaking pioneer Dale Carnegie, in his book *The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking* (Pocket Books, 1990), warned against overemphasising: "It makes the recipient uncomfortable and doesn't convince an audience which knows better," he says.

As in any speech, humour can lighten the atmosphere, but make sure it's relevant and shows the person in a good light. And, if you're presenting an award, mention the criteria for achieving the



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award, the selection process and examples of what the recipient did to win the award.

Rehearsing your delivery as much as you can before the occasion will make you sound more spontaneous and help you maintain eye contact with the audience and the honouree, as well as guide you to keep within your allotted time. Practice

helps you sound more fluent by eradicating distracting speech fillers such as um, ah and er.

Practice will also help you control stage fright, which, according to professional speaker Lily Walters, author of *Secrets of Successful Speakers* (McGraw-Hill, 1993), can be reduced by 75 per cent by "simple preparation and rehearsal".

A word of warning: never memorise a speech. If you lose your place or dry up, the focus switches from the honouree to you, the speaker. Discreet notes with key words on small index cards work better.

On the night, stand straight with your feet hip width apart, knees unlocked. Control nerves with a few deep breaths. Keep your eye contact steady, and include all corners of the room. Engage the honouree when you speak directly to him or her, but look at the audience when you are speaking about the person.

It's an honour to be asked to speak in praise of another. But, always remember the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Be sincere; be brief; be seated."

—Moirá Beaton

The right to return

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED enterprises (SMEs) are among those participating in a "Wild West" of Internet shopping in which massive numbers of retailers are flouting the law, according to Internet retailing watchdog SafeBuy.

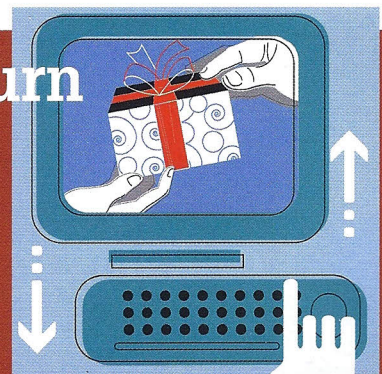
SafeBuy's latest survey of 225 random SME websites found that 7 per cent do not advise customers before they make purchases that they have a legal right of return. Six per cent do not provide a geographic address, which is a legal requirement, and 20 per cent do not publish a contact email.

The watchdog organisation's chief executive, Richard Jones, says some retailers went to "shocking" lengths to prevent consumers from exercising their legal right of return.

Many include illegal statements, such as "Returns must be in perfect condition", which Jones says appears to rule out sending back any faulty or damaged-in-transit goods.

"We knew that there were dodgy traders out there, but this number of online retailers breaking the law is patently unacceptable," Jones says.

SafeBuy has compiled a checklist retailers should adhere to, including:



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- Display a statement on the customer's right to return unwanted goods and include a clear "how-to-return" section.
- Display a geographic address, contact email and phone number.
- Clearly indicate the cost of delivery pre-order.
- Show clearly the security level for each online payment option.
- Explain the complaints procedure.
- Phone numbers on the website for queries relating to an order should be charged at no more than the normal UK inland rate. If technical support lines are charged at a premium rate, this should be clearly stated. —Andrew Don

moted its added benefit of exercising musicians' fingers. They were a huge success, and by the end of the first day we had people coming up to us and asking to buy them, as they'd seen them around the show."

Costco member Yvonne Gorman, owner of Derby-based Essential Print Services, combined promotional products and online marketing to great effect. "We recently distributed more than 500 promotional packs containing a branded balloon, sticky note pad and pen to all of our clients," she explains. "We encouraged people to inflate the balloon and post a picture on our Twitter or Facebook account. There was a great response, and it's really increased social media engagement."

But the icing on the cake was receiving an immediate order from an existing client. "It paid for the entire campaign three times over," Gorman says. —Caroline Roberts