Trish 0:00

You're listening to the HR Happy Hour network sponsored by Workhuman. If you've ever wondered what good can come of AI for HR, meet Human Intelligence. It uses the uniquely authentic data of Workhumans' number-one rated employee recognition platform, to uncover insights into good culture, skills, performance and more. It also helps coach employees on what good peer-to-peer recognition looks like, turning every good job into better engagement, retention and well being, and it surfaces feel-good stories that illustrate the best of your company's culture. Learn about Human Intelligence at Workhuman.com, that's W, O, R, K, H, U, M, A, N .com, and join their force for good.

Steve 0:49

This episode of At Work in America is sponsored by Paychex, one of the leading providers of HR, payroll, retirement insurance solutions for businesses of all sizes. Are you gearing up for the summer hiring rush? Don't stress. Paychex has got your back with their seasonal hiring checklist, whether you hiring for summer, for back to school or the holiday season, this free checklist is your step by step guide to building your best team from AI powered recruitment tools to prepping your onboarding process. It's designed to help you hire smarter, faster and stress free. Plus, you'll get tips for crafting job descriptions, marketing your openings and even making sure you're staying compliant with labor laws. Don't wait until the last minute this year, grab the checklist today at paychex.com/awia. That's P, A, Y, C, H, E, X .com/A, W, I, A, make this hiring season your best yet.

Bill McGowan 1:53

Welcome to At Work in America, the podcast that leads the conversation on the future of work, proudly sponsored by Paychex and Workhuman. We go beyond the headlines to uncover bold ideas, fresh perspectives and the real stories of people shaping workplaces for the better. And now here are your hosts, Steve Boese and Trish Steed, bringing you the insights and trends that will inspire what's next in the world of work.

Steve 2:26

welcome to the At Work in America show. My name is Steve Boese. I'm with Trish Steed, of course. Trish, what's happening?

Trish 2:32

It's a fantastic day. It is snowing where I am, and it's almost Easter like, how do those two go together?

Steve 2:38

I don't know. I don't know. I'm in this like tornado, rain, flood alley in central United States today, it's thundering right now as we speak. Hopefully the house isn't going to float away this afternoon.

Steve 2:41

I'm in Colorado and hopefully the snow will dissipate before it gets to the middle.

Steve 2:56

We'll see. We have a great topic tonight. Trish, I don't think we've ever really talked about this in like, a million years of podcasting and seven or 800 shows, we're going to be talking about how to improve your communication skills, how to get better at presenting, how to be memorable while you're presenting. And I am fascinated by the topic, and in the prep for the show, I've learned a few things, and I'm thinking like, I know what I'm doing. I present it all over the world, right? No, man, I don't know anything. So I am so excited. We're welcoming Bill McGowan, who's with us today. Bill is the founder and CEO of Clarity Media Group. He's an Emmy winning journalist and a best selling author, and he's got a new book coming out soon called "Speak, Memorably: The Art of Captivating an Audience". And Bill, welcome to the show, and congratulations on the book. We're lucky enough to share an advanced copy with us, and it's a great read, and I was like laughing out loud reading it today, but in a good way. So welcome. How are you?

Bill McGowan 3:56

Thank you, Steve and Trish, thanks. That's a great compliment, because I always want to make sure that people are able to have a few laughs. In fact, there's a chapter in the book about the importance of levity in public speaking and presenting. So you know, you have to make it an enjoyable, delightful experience for people. And the problem with most business place communications is, it's pretty dull. It's, it's kind of drudgery, and it doesn't have to be that way.

Steve 4:28

For sure. It's a fascinating read, and I can't wait to get my hands on a hard copy of it, because I will get the hard copy of it because I want to carry it around with me, but maybe before we dive into "Speak, Memorably", and some of the strategies and tips you have in the book, like using humor as a big part of it, let's talk a bit about you. You do broadcast journalism, spent many years interviewing people, I would imagine presenting, you know, doing tape pieces, recorded pieces like, tell us a little bit more about you.

Bill McGowan 4:58

Yeah, I started at CBS in New York, just logging in video tapes when I was about 18 years old. And I like to say that I've worked for every network but CNN as a writer, reporter, producer, and one of the things you learn in TV is how to tell a compelling story in a minute to two minutes. And I think that that's a really valuable skill to learn. And I would say of all the things that I do that turns out to be the most valuable. I feel as though writing skills, still, are so important in your communication skills, because when we coach people to give a presentation or a keynote, ideally, what we do is we go into their content, their written content, and make a lot of changes, because it's hard to deliver a bad script. Well, you ever see, you know, great, legendary actor from Hollywood, and they're in a real Turkey of a movie, and the whole thing just brings down their performance. And it happens to public speakers too. So I learned that one to two minute time frame of telling a compelling story, making it visual, making it relatable, and that has been enormously beneficial in work.

Steve 6:25

So you were already like, ready for the TikTok era decades before there was TikTok, right? And a decade before there was Facebook, right?

Bill McGowan 6:33

Yeah. In fact, when I was a producer at 2020, at ABC, we used to produce long form stories 10-12 minutes, and now long form is three minutes. Give you an idea how much things have changed in TV. But when you produced a story and it was on the air, the next day you would go into the executive producer's office, and what they had was minute by minute ratings, and it showed in the 12 minutes your story was on the air, where people dropped off, or where people came in, and they were able to dissect your story and where it started to get a little boring, or where you started to lose people. So you would have executives at the show say, you see where you introduce that character at four minutes, it's too many there's too many names, too many characters. You lost people there, and it was a brutal ritual that that you had to go through. But it really taught me a lot in terms of making sure speakers don't shoot over the heads of the audience. They don't overload what they have to say with too much data or too many names of people that the audience doesn't know. You really have to approach it empathetically and ask yourself, what is this audience likely to know? What can I reasonably assume they have knowledge wise and what do they want from me? What's the most valuable information I can provide to them? It's not about you, it's about them: the audience.

Trish 8:11

I love that, and I had never heard sort of that experience where you're getting sort of critiqued with that much clarity around when things happen. In the business world, we don't have that luxury, and especially not when you're giving a presentation, right? You're trying to maybe gauge some of that by asking yourself are the people still maintaining eye contact? Are they getting up and walking out, right? But at that point, I almost feel like even though things may happen, you're stuck in the moment. So when it comes to sort of taking what you've learned from production into, you know, corporate boardrooms or large presentations, what would you say would be something that someone can do, maybe in the moment, or is there something they can do? Does it happen more in the preparation?

Bill McGowan 8:59

It is all about the preparation, but the last thing you should do is speed up if you feel as though you are losing your audience, that will be a clear sign that you're experiencing anxiety, that you feel as though this is not worthy of your audience's time. It starts to become a snowball at that point, what would be better to do is, let's say you're going through a slide deck and you feel as though the people around the conference table seem a little antsy. Today, people are checking their phones a little more often than usual. Perhaps what you do is you scale back what you say per slide, and that is not possible if you are presenting a deck that is chocked full of text and information, because then people will realize you're glossing over things and you're skipping over material if you make. Your PowerPoints or your keynotes, or whatever tool you use for a deck, if you keep the information very, very sparse, take a minimalist approach to what is on the slide, then you're in control of how deep or harsh or how shallow you can go in the explanation and the laying out of information per slide?

Trish 10:23

I would agree with that. I've done it both ways. I tend to like when it's just a photo of some thing that prompts me to tell a story. But in fact, when you work in, I guess, many industries, but especially in HR technology, so it depends on the type of presentation, but in HR technology, we tend to want to put a lot of data, right? A lot of graphs and charts and whatnot. And so, what are some things you can do if you do scale back your slides, do you recommend, maybe, you know, giving out handouts or things at the end to sort of illustrate, maybe with data? Or how do you handle those situations?

Bill McGowan 10:57

It requires a little bit more work, but one good way of doing it is to have two versions of your deck. Have one that is completely robust with all the information that you feel is necessary for people to have on hand. And assume that that's the deck that would require no narration to accompany it, no talk track, and you have that be the deck you send ahead or you leave behind, but that's not the deck you show when you're standing in front of the room. Take that deck and strip it way down to its bare minimum, and then that's the one that you deliver to. You know, you were talking Trish about numbers and graphs, and my pet peeve is when I see a graph and All of the explanations for what the y-axis is and the x-axis are in size three font, you know, on the screen I'm thinking. And often I have to tell people, no one can see that. And not only can they not see it, but they're not. They're not looking there.

Steve 12:00

I think worse than actually doing that, Bill, is when the speaker calls that out the second they put that slide up on the screen and says, I know you can't see this, but here's what it says.

Bill McGowan 12:14

Yeah, or I know this looks like an eye chart, but...you know, fix it. Don't apologize, and don't draw more attention to your own shortcoming.

Steve 12:25

It's so true. We joked, or I did a little bit about Tiktok a second ago. Bill, but would you say that in over time you've been doing this for a while, coaching, working with corporate clients and other clients and helping them improve their skills, etc. Are audiences changing as a result of just media changing and consumption trends and habits changing? And whether it's Tiktok or others, are attention spans declining? We hear that a lot is that, do you see that, have you changed your approach because of it?

Bill McGowan 12:57

Absolutely, there's no question. In fact, scientifically, it's been shown that the average attention span has shrunk dramatically in the last five to 10 years, and I think that that's a constant trend. To me, what it means is, every 30 seconds in a presentation, you need to do something to reignite the interest of your audience. And this is where presenting becomes an art. It's not just about presenting a series of maybe independent, separate slides. And too many people think of presenting in that way. They don't think of it as having an overarching narrative, a story arc that that has a beginning, a middle and an end, and you're weaving some metaphorical themes through the entire presentation; but every 30 seconds, you should be doing something to reignite the interest of your audience. One tool that is, I think, really, really effective, is what I call a drum roll line. And a drum roll line is a sentence that teases the reveal of information that's about to come. That could sound something like, "but if we accomplish anything this quarter, here's the most important thing we need to do," and then you pause, and then you reveal that. So think of that as a drum roll line. And because, if you're the best communicator on the planet, it doesn't matter, you're still going to get drift from your audience. People are still going to be daydreaming what they're going to have for lunch, no matter how good you are. So we have to be in the drift killing business, basically. And the beauty of the drum roll line is if they are checking their phone or daydreaming about whether they left the garage door up or whatever that line, they'll hear out of the corner of their ear, and they'll realize something important is coming, and they will turn and engage with you, right? At the moment, did you need them to engage? And that's saying the most important thing. So the drum roll line should be reserved for some of the most important things you say in communicating to people.

Steve 15:13

I like that.

Trish 15:15

The examples that you gave in the book about that, because you had even more, what I found myself doing was going back and using it almost as a tool to evaluate past presentations I've given in terms of, oh, I can see in this one, I really did have a through line, a storyline to the entire thing, and then maybe pick out the ones where I didn't do such a good job at that. So I think too, you can use the book in ways almost like a checklist, if you will, assessing "How did I do? Do I do these different things to make it more interesting for my listeners?" And I think having gone to virtual presentations for a number of years during the pandemic, we sort of lost the visual cues we can get from an audience, so suddenly, being back in front of real people, we have to change the way we present, and that's been a big challenge. Have you noticed that at all with whether it's yourself or other, you know, leaders you're working with?

Bill McGowan 16:10

You know, you get more investment from your audience in person. There's no question about it. One of the things that I talk about and "Speak, Memorably" is this, this trap that people fall into in virtual calls where you are say you're presenting to six people, and there is that chain of thumbnail video windows that show the participants in the call and on virtual, there's no question that people don't feel the need to look into the webcam. They can be looking around, or maybe they're taking notes, but you don't see they're taking notes. If you think the worst, you're probably thinking they're texting with their friends, but they look disengaged on virtual and I discovered a while back that reading the room is possible, but you can't read a zoom. And what I mean by that is looking over at those people on the call does not give you an accurate barometer of how you're doing. And I reached a point in my own presentations where I decided, you know, you keep distracting yourself looking over at people to gauge whether they're in listening and whether they're finding it interesting, and it's taking your attention away from what you're there to do, and that's communicate your presentation. So one day, I decided I'm just going to close all those video windows. I'm just going to close them all. And it completely transformed the level of focus and attention I was giving to the presentation, because I was looking over to get something I was never going to get, and that's affirmation that this is landing and sticking with people, and they're finding it interesting.

Trish 18:06

And see, I've never thought to do that. I can't even tell; we've done countless presentations over the years on Zoom, and you're right. It always feels disconnected, but you have this urge to look. That's a phenomenal tip, because people are still doing presentations and live recordings like we're doing right now. So that's a great tip actually.

Steve 18:28

But I see, I think one of the big themes I picked up, Bill from, from, from "Speak, Memorably", was, and it's not new to me, but you hammered home so well, and the importance of that storytelling element, not just in the arc of your entire presentation, if you're giving a presentation, but even in the individual components of the presentation, like each bit of material or each slide should have a beginning, middle and end in its own self, right? Or otherwise, maybe it doesn't, sort of deserve to have its own little section there, and that's something I think I don't think about enough personally, right? Because you sometimes you just use those slides. And I'm guilty of this of just rat tat tatting them, one after the other, after the other. And I think maybe overwhelming people with too much, maybe material that you're not really thoughtfully thinking about presenting in that fashion.

Bill McGowan 19:19

There's a chapter in the book called The Coppola Storytelling Formula. And I had seen a interview with Coppola maybe two, three years ago on CNN. Fareed Zakaria was interviewing him, and he asked him, "Do you have a formula that you use in making a movie?" And he said, "Well, I learned from the masters in Hollywood years ago that you should identify your three best things and take the best thing and finish with it. Take the second best thing and lead with it and find some logical thematic place in the middle to put your third thing." And he was talking about movie making, but movie making is storytelling. Giving a presentation at work should be storytelling. And I realized this is a great formula for giving a presentation and speaking to your colleagues. Too often I find people kind of leave their presentation in a very coasting, running out of gas, slow, come to a stop. Nothing terribly interesting at the end. And I think you need to leave them with a bang. You need to hook them at the top, and you need to finish it, whether it's a call to action or next steps, whatever it is, it's got to be compelling. And then, as you said, Steve, that formula even works well in each slide of your presentation. You should know cold what is the opening line that gets me into this slide? What's the big idea in this slide? The "if you remember nothing else from this slide, remember this" kind of idea, although never say that. And then, what's the closing line? How do I finish here? Or how do I create a very intentional line that segues from this slide to the next slide? And everything you say in and around those three things can have a lot of conversational wiggle room. It shouldn't be committed to rigid memory, but each of those three things should be concise, punchy, declarative, simple sentences, and that's what gives a presentation a nice, crisp, well produced feel.

Trish 21:42

I love the idea of producing your own presentation, because we're not thinking of it like that. We're thinking like, oh, we just have this information we must get out.

Bill McGowan 21:52

That's right, and you think, "I have to cover all these bases."

Steve 21:57

You stopped me in my tracks with a lot of your pieces of advice, Bill, and not that I disagree with them, but I just never, like, I presented a lot, right?

Bill McGowan 22:06

And it's probably gone really well, right?

Steve 22:09

Well, yeah, you know, it's been okay, right? But, like, I should have known this before, but you sort of said, like, don't have an agenda slide, don't list out the seven things you're going to talk about on an agenda. So I do that every single time I present. I probably still do it.

Bill McGowan 22:26

When was the last time you went to a bookstore and you bought a book and thought, boy, I can't wait to go home and rip open that table of contents. I know that's never been said ever in the history of reading. And so I think that that agenda slide is a bit overused. It immediately gives the audience this sense of, okay, the real presentation isn't going to start for about 45 seconds, so I can remain in my stupor until then, yeah, then the real start is still coming.

Steve 22:58

It made sense to me after I read it and I just, but I think about two now that I'm now we're chatting here. I'm thinking, well, we've done whatever, six or 700 of these podcasts, probably over the years, and I've never once on the podcast said, "Okay, today on the podcast, we're gonna talk about these five things," you know, and listed them one to five. Yeah, we've never done that, right? We've just talked like, quote, quote, unquote, normal people, right? And it's worked out okay, I think, so far. But, yeah.

Bill McGowan 23:25

That doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a statement of purpose as to, what the heck am I doing up here in the front of the room, and what value does it have for you? But I think that line could go at the end of some kind of concise opening story or metaphorical anecdote, and then you can segue into and today, what I hope to accomplish is x, y and z, and then you get right into it.

Steve 23:53

That's a much better way to do it.

Trish 23:54

I will say, we had an interview last summer, I believe it was, with a gentleman who was the CEO of a thing called The Skin Deep with Topaz Adizes, I think his last name is, and I don't know if you've met him or heard his information, but what he talked about was not having an agenda at the front, but it was talking about your intentions. So we have, in most cases, since then, Steve and I have begun doing intentions, instead of giving sort of the play by play, if you will. And that's that worked out. So even I gave two recently in Europe, one in Norway and one in Amsterdam. And in both cases, people came up after the presentation and mentioned they loved the intentions, because I was sort of saying, I'm here to have a relationship with you. This isn't me just giving you information. We're going to have a dialog and keep me honest. By the end, we will have hopefully covered what I intend for us to cover, right, our joint intentions so, but I love the idea of just not even including even that is formally.

Bill McGowan 25:02

I've seen a lot of presenters weave in, in a very subtle, nuanced way, that statement of purpose and that statement of intent. And in the book, there's an entire chapter on the importance of empathy. A lot of speakers get up and it's all about them. And ultimately it's not, it's about the audience, and you need to put everything should be filtered through what you think they need and want.

Trish 25:31

Yeah, that's good advice in general, not just in a presentation or in a boardroom. One of the things I found interesting in the book was you were talking about meetings and how they're really not that effective. Could you maybe talk a little bit more in our daily communication, what can we be thinking about, or should we be thinking about if we're going in, whether it's a one on one, or maybe a small group meeting with our team, whether maybe we're not even the leader, and I want to preface it with you said that we're always auditioning for our next role. So with that in mind, if I'm going into a meeting with maybe my boss and several of my peers, how should I be showing up? What should be on my mind if I'm auditioning for my next big role?

Bill McGowan 26:13

Saying a lot in very few words, because most people talk a lot and say very little. And if you're auditioning for your next role with somebody who is a superior of yours in a company, don't waste their time. There's no there's nothing worse than doing that. Showing an economy of words and efficiency in communicating. Most people belabor a point and go around in circles and meander and repeat themselves, they overstay their conversational welcome. And there's a chapter in the book that's called The Verbal Diet, which really challenges people to get by each day with fewer words, we speak probably about 16,000 words a day. And my challenge in the book is imagine if you, somebody told you you only get 12,000 today. Imagine how that would change your perception of speaking. You would be constantly aware of the need to be efficient and concise in what you say, for fear that you'd get to four o'clock in the afternoon and you'd run out of words, so then you'd have to pantomime the rest of the day. So being very intentional and selective about what you say instead of saying the first thing that pops into your head and keep going and going and misleadingly thinking more is more. The people who demonstrate the greatest gravitas are the ones who are able to have a lot of impact in a short period of time. And that is all about preparation. There's no question about it. If, if you're going into a meeting, and even if you don't think you're going to have a speaking role in this meeting, go in with a game plan of, what are you going to say? If somebody at that table wheels around and says, Bill, what do you think of all this? You do not want to be flat footed when that happens. You want to go in with a clear, concise point of view. And most people are not prepared. They think it's going to magically come to them in the moment, because they think great communicators are good on their feet or great off the cuff. There is no such thing. The people who are great commuters are relentless preparers, and they never, ever allow themselves to be blindsided.

Steve 28:50

This is going to reveal something about me that I don't care. I'll reveal it. I watch a lot of like Married at First Sight, 90 day fiance. That's like my relaxing thing these days lately, and my guilty pleasure. I love it, though, but so I watched a lot of people get married on TV the last few years, and when it's time to sort of do the vows right to each person with the vows, I think sometimes they get up there and they just go off the cuff. And, you know, in the biggest moment of their life, up to that point, right? They're going off the cuff. They stammer around, and they say some silly things, and they stumble, they get a little emotional, right? The people who do a real good job at it reach into the pocket or the wherever on the dress, you keep things and and take out the little card or the piece of paper and read them, and they do so much better at it, in my opinion; but that's a matter of saying, Hey, I've prepped. I've written this down. This is really what I want to say in this very important moment, and I'm comfortable. I'm gonna read this right now. And so, yeah, that's how I think that. I don't know if you agree or disagree, and something like that, but the matter of preparation, though, is really why I brought. That up, right? It's I've prepared for this to the point where I wanted to meet you. These are the things I want to say in this moment, whether it's a big boardroom meeting or a wedding or some other thing, right? So, yeah, I think, I think that there's some element there of preparation. I think that runs through those scenarios.

Bill McGowan 30:16

Absolutely. When I was really early in my career, I was asked by my high school alma mater, because I had had a production company, and my high school alma mater asked me if I would do a branding video for the school. And I thought, great, you know, I know the school well and and as part of the video, I wanted to shoot commencement. And Diana Ross was the guest speaker because her daughter was in the senior class. And I, I love Diana Ross. She's a legend in the music industry, and it's hard to find somebody more talented than Diana Ross, but she got up there that day totally unprepared, and it was one of the most cringy experiences I've ever seen live, because she essentially 7, 8, 9, times, apologizes. Saying, "I don't know this is really not coming out the way I wanted it to," because she didn't have any notes in front of her, I think there are people around famous people who are enablers and and sycophants who tell famous people, oh, you're great. You don't you don't need, you don't need to do what mere mortals do, and prepare and have a speech. And everybody does. It doesn't matter if you're a legend. Steve Jobs practiced every product keynote speech 70 times 70. Just imagine that. Because he wanted, by the time he hit the stage, he wanted to have all the moves he wanted to there, there was nothing left to chance. So the really great people are relentless, rehearsers.

Trish 32:09

I think they come across like it is not from memory, right? That's the beauty of it. When you think about, I know in the book you mentioned, Barack Obama is like that, one of the best speakers, because he comes across so relatable in his style and but he's also another one that is very, very prepared. I happened to work when he was running for president. The first time. I was working in HR for the advertising agency he worked with, and so he wasn't there that day, but he was he they said he would come in all the time and practice, like, at this podium. And I'm getting to, like, stand at the podium, and I'm thinking, okay, rub off some of this goodness on me. No, yeah. I would think, in my mind, maybe prior to that point, I was quite young still, but I was thinking, wow, I didn't realize he would be practicing that often. They said, oh, all the time, and that was just for one element of his campaign.

Bill McGowan 33:03

It's interesting because, obviously, in my practice at Clarity Media Group, I coach a lot of people on giving important talks, and you will come across people and say, "Oh, I've got this, I've got this, and I've done I've done this a million times," and I tell them the story of Barack Obama in his first debate of the 2012 presidential campaign he was running against Mitt Romney. And there's a interesting account of this from David Axelrod, who was one of his senior advisors, who apparently put files of information on Obama's desk. He put a stack of tapes that showed Romney performing in the Republican debates, and he noticed two three days later that it hadn't been touched. And so he went up to Obama, and he said, "Mr. President, just checking, is there anything I can do to help you focus? Because you don't seem engaged in getting ready for this." And Obama said, "Don't worry, David, I'm a game time player. I will show up at game time." And he got his butt kicked in that first debate, and I tell people that I work with, if that guy can't mail it in and just pull it out of thin air, there is no hope for the rest of us.

Trish 33:59

So now we know the rest of the story. I love that, knowing that he had to fail. So that's maybe a good lesson, right? You have to fail no matter who you are, sometimes, in order to realize we all need to practice. We can all improve at whatever level we are speaking, whether that's into a large group to a million people on TV, right?

Bill McGowan 34:53

I think there are lots of little things about presenting that will go wrong and you now make a mental note to yourself saying, "next time I won't get caught like that." I was giving a presentation at a graduate school here in New York, just a guest speaker kind of thing; and I don't know what happened, but like a feather through flew down my throat, and I started uncontrollably coughing, to the point where I I couldn't resume talking, and I looked around the room, there's not a single bottle of water. There's no water fountain. I had to actually, physically leave the room and go to a water fountain in the hallway. And from that moment on, I have always in presenting, it doesn't matter what venue it is, I know where the water is.

Steve 35:42

Yeah, that's a great tip.

Bill McGowan 35:44

Because you may need it.

Steve 35:46

Bill, we've kept you for a while, so we're not going to have time to go through, say, all of, you have a great set of tactics you call the Magnificent Seven, which you cover in the book. We probably can't dig into all seven of them. You also spent a good chunk of the book, that or first half of the book, talking about humor and the importance of humor and presentation, but also, like going against some of the, you know, the old kind of chestnuts we've heard of presenting, or someone might have told you over the years, like, start get up there and tell a joke. You know, that's a good way to loosen up the audience. And you say, That's a terrible idea, right? Unless you're a professional joke teller, which most of us are not. So maybe from that, whether it's humor or maybe a couple of the seven tips, like using analogies or using metaphors, what are one or two things you say if you if you're gonna pick one or two, I get a presentation next week. You know, maybe start here and look to build upon your skills. What would you what would be your favorite couple things to recommend to folks?

Bill McGowan 36:47

Well, I agree, don't start off with a joke. That's that advice is about as good as picture the audience in their underwear, which I don't know who, who created that one, but it's definitely not to be followed. You know? I think there are, there are seven, as you said, devices in the book that I think make for memorable lines. And in a world where everybody is messaged, I think being memorable is much more important to have a line that sticks with people. I was, I was coaching a group of hedge fund investors at this conference, and they were on stage. They were going to be on stage the next day talking about Brexit, which could be a really dry topic. It could be very hard to be memorable around that. But one of the guys got up and we had worked on this line together. He said, I mean, listen, let's face it, before the last Prime Minister left office, she was the chess player with only the King left, and she was just moving it around one space at a time till she got checkmated. I don't know. I can't remember anybody else who's, on that panel that day. I don't remember what anybody else in that panel said that day, but I still remember that guy? Yeah. And he gave in that analogy, he gave everybody in the audience his little seven second mental vacation. He allowed them to visualize a chessboard just for seven seconds and and then they got a little mental refresh, and then they were able to come back and re engage on the topic of Brexit, or, you know, as I know you and I, Steve, were talking earlier, and there was another topic of supply chain, which makes people's eyes roll back in their head, especially the topics that are really dense and not not understandable. If you can use an analogy which helps explain it by comparing it to something common to everybody's experience, it can be great. So to explain the supply chain bottleneck, we were talking about it being like a six lane freeway merging into a one lane country road. Yeah, yeah. And maybe nobody understands what all those ships out of anchored off ports means, but everybody's been stuck in that traffic, and they've had to squeeze into that merge. Everybody understands that, and that's how you get people to relate to things.

Steve 39:16

That's great. I remember one. I don't remember who the speaker was. It's a while ago, but it was a financial topic, similar like Brexit, if you will, or supply chain. But it was about like the the yen carry trade, which is some sort of foreign currency trade that you can, you know, you can make some money on it, or you can lose your shirt, right? And, and his point was, hey, if you this trade now is no good anymore, and you're going to get destroyed, like you're going to lose your money. So instead of saying, Oh, if you the yen carry trade was wildly unprofitable in q3 you know, he said something like, the yen carry trade, like, broke my heart and destroyed everything I love, you know, he said it that way, right? Yeah. And he's like, Oh, wow, yeah, that was a bad trade, right? Yeah, your heart is broken and everything you love is now dead, right?

Bill McGowan 40:03

Or if something, if an idea is outdated, you could say, you know, this is, this is now past the sell by date, right? Everybody's picked up something in a supermarket and looked at it like, oh, this thing is about to go bad, because the sell date is, yeah, tomorrow. So I think if you could tap into those everyday experiences, and metaphorically refer to them. That's great.

Steve 40:28

Those are great tips and there are so many.

Bill McGowan 40:31

Warren Buffett is great at this, you know, when he talks about people who really don't have talent investing, but they've done really well because the market's going gangbusters. He said, You know, when the tide goes out, you see who's been swimming naked. And, like, everybody knows what that means.

Trish 40:49

That's so true.

Steve 40:52

And I guess in a bigger picture, it's okay to be a little bit humorous and I'm not talking about inappropriateness or anything like that, but just you talked about, like, it's okay, you know, room full of financiers or hedge fund people, like, it's, you can do that, and it can work. You don't necessarily have to, oh, my god, I can't. You should not be afraid to have a little bit of personality. You want to be memorable, right? It's the name of the book. Speak memorably. It's not, you know, have the, have the most accurate chart, necessarily, right?

Bill McGowan 41:22

Right. Well, they've done some really interesting studies at Sanford that show that when you use levity in public speaking and presenting, that engagement and retention shoot way up. And so it's a really powerful tool to have your story land and stick. They've also shown that humor releases endorphins within the audience, the feel good hormone that can cut anxiety, that can actually make people physically feel better. So wielding it in public speaking is enormously beneficial. They've also done interesting studies that show people remember more facts around news stories when it's presented by John Oliver, Stephen Colbert, Jon Stewart, than it does from any of the nightly news anchors.

Trish 42:18

I would believe that. I will say to Steve's credit, he's very good at injecting humor into all of our very dry presentations that we have to give on tech trends. So thank you, Steve for being our go-to humor guy.

Bill McGowan 42:34

one humor everybody should be a little wary of, though, is self deprecating humor. You can push that too far. That's best served in moderate little helpings, because too much of it undermines your credibility and your authority.

Steve 42:50

Yeah, you're trying to make, you're trying to be credible, authoritative. But also, yeah, especially in a professional, like conference type setting, if you're doing those kind of speeches, like they're bringing you in to be, you know, no an expert. No one wants to hear, Oh, we flew this person in from, you know, Timbuktu to talk to you about this. Oh, yeah, I don't really know what I'm doing. Or, you know, all the ways you've screwed up that morning, right? There's, yeah, there's some level to that. Then there's so much in here I can, you know, I can't recommend this more highly for professionals, certainly for public speakers, but not just people who make a living speaking, but people just part of your job is to effectively communicate, which is all our jobs, right? We, you know, we talked a little bit in the pre show about, you know, in a world full of AI and tools and technology, what's going to make you stand out, and a lot of what we're talking about and speak memorably is that that's what's going to distinguish you and make people stand up and say, Oh yeah, that person's really, you know, that made me think, or that moved me, or that that helped me understand something in a way that just technology can't do right now. And I think that's probably the biggest, I think, value of this, of this book, and why folks should read it.

Bill McGowan 44:03

I appreciate that kind feedback. Steve, you know, AI runs the risk of having us all get trapped in this conformity zone, because it is an amalgamation. Chat GPT is an amalgamation of just everything that's out there on the web. So it's a little bit of a mash up about what everybody else is doing. And I think generative AI is going to make it that much more necessary for, as you said, for us to show our personality and things and make everybody in the audience sit there and think there's no way he could have used Chat GPT in this, no way.

Steve 44:42

For sure. I love it, yeah.

Trish 44:44

I think too, you were talking about, you know, showing your personality. But in the book, you had given an example of the Microsoft CEO who had kind of famously jumped all over the place when he came out for a speech. So I was thinking, yeah, right, yeah. Ballmer, yeah. In terms of, it's good for people who might already be in leadership to reevaluate our skill set right and continue to grow and refresh. But it's also I was thinking, you know, Steve has a son in his 20s. I have two kids in my 20s, in their 20s, and I would give this to them as a way to start your career right. They're giving presentations now, high school, college, you know, trade schools, whatever. So it would really be helpful, really, for someone of any age to improve the way that they're showing up and being memorable, especially in the age of AI.

Bill McGowan 45:33

It's interesting, for two years in a row, a LinkedIn survey has identified communication skills as the most in demand skill.

Steve 45:40

There you go.

Bill McGowan 45:40

And there's also a Harris poll that shows that the effectiveness of communication among leaders has dropped 12% over the last couple of years, with poor communication being cited for $1.2 trillion of loss because teams don't communicate well, a lot gets lost in the message. So it's a real bottom line kind of thing, no question about it.

Steve 46:06

Yeah, this is this book is going to be super helpful to so many folks. And I've already like done I'm telling you, I'm changing my next presentation already based on stuff I've read in the book. Great.

Bill McGowan 46:17

Let's practice it together, Steve.

Steve 46:18

I've been doing a lot. I present done presentations a ton, right? I'm not new at, right? Oh yeah, he's right. That's better do it that way, right? So I, like I said, I can't recommend it enough. I hope folks get, get connected to you, Bill. The work, obviously, the books coming out soon. Any anywhere else we want to direct people to you or to what you're doing at Clarity Media Group? What's the last thing you like to last thing you'd like folks to know?

Bill McGowan 46:43

Yeah, we have a whole digital online academy that you can sign up for, one minute videos on presenting, on how to start, how to finish, and that's at Clarity Media Group.com, so that's something worth checking out. And of course, you know, I've trained 1000s of 1000s of people, one on one, but at all levels, people just breaking into the work the work field, and CEOs of companies, as you mentioned earlier, so I get tremendous enjoyment at both levels.

Trish 47:19

Well, thank you. You've at least trained two more that you can add to your add to your list.

Steve 47:24

We're new fans, for sure.

Bill McGowan 47:26

I really enjoyed this chat. I appreciate you having me on.

Steve 47:31

Yeah, this was great. So Bill, thank you so much. We'll put links in the show notes, to Clarity Media Group, to the content there, how you can get to the book as well. Trish, good stuff. I hope to be better next time after having read this, right? So you can judge me on that. You'll see my next presentation somewhere, and we'll, we'll find out. Terrific, awesome. Thank you both. Thank you, Bill. Thank you so much. Thanks, Trish, thanks to our friends at Paychex and Workhuman. Thanks for listening to the show. Remember to subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. And my name Steed Boese, and we'll see you next time. And bye for now.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai