



Breaking
the Ceiling



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PUBLIC SPEAKING

COMMUNICATION TRAINING MODULE



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1. Introduction



Communication is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact in an appropriate and creative way in a wide range of social and cultural contexts; in education and training, at work, at home and in leisure.

One of the modes of communication is verbal communication and a skill closely related to verbal communication is **public speaking**. Rhetoric is the process of conveying information to an audience and involves several communication skills that enable the speaker to connect with that audience. Public speaking skills are qualities that help candidates maintain a positive presence, engage with their audience and communicate clearly to get their ideas across.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, public speaking, also called oration or oratory, is 'the act or process of making speeches in public' and 'the art of effective oral communication with an audience'. A good oratory consists of three components:

1. style
2. substance
3. effect

There are many different types of public speaking, but five are the most common and are as follows:

1. ceremonial: for special occasions or events
2. persuasive: usually to call to action
3. entertaining: to amuse the audience
4. informative: to educate the audience about a particular subject
5. demonstrative: to show the audience how to do something

This module is about public speaking as a skill, in the workplace and in relation to women in the labour market. It is also about the reasons why women reject public speaking, the gender stereotypes associated with this skill and strategies, and tips and tools for developing public speaking skills in the workplace.



2. The module in the professional environment



Public speaking plays an important role in the context of women in the labour market. The ability to speak in public can greatly influence a woman's ability to succeed and advance in her career. This communication skill also plays an important role in women's career development as it enables them to advance professionally, exert influence, expand their network, improve their communication skills and overcome gender bias.

By improving their public speaking skills, women can increase their visibility, credibility and influence in the workplace, paving the way for long-term success and leadership opportunities. Public speaking in the work environment is valuable and influential in advancing women's professional skills in several ways:

1. **Boosting self-confidence:** public speaking provides women with a platform to develop and boost their self-confidence. By regularly participating in public speaking, women can overcome self-doubt and imposter syndrome and recognise and showcase their professional competencies.
2. **Improving communication skills:** public speaking enhances essential communication skills for professional competencies. Women who excel in public speaking often become adept at communicating their ideas, presenting complex information clearly and engaging with diverse audiences.
3. **Promoting thought leadership:** public speaking gives women the opportunity to establish themselves as thought leaders in their industry. By sharing their knowledge, insights and innovative ideas through speeches and presentations, women can position themselves as experts in their field.
4. **Networking and visibility:** public speaking engagements provide women with valuable networking opportunities to expand their professional contacts and increase their visibility. Through effective speaking engagements, women can attract the attention of industry peers, potential mentors and influential people.
5. **Leadership development:** Public speaking is a springboard for women to develop and demonstrate their leadership skills and women who excel in this area are often seen as strong and capable leaders.
6. **Overcoming gender bias:** public speaking enables women to confront and overcome gender biases in the workplace. By demonstrating their competence, expertise and mastery of the subject through public speaking, women can challenge stereotypes and preconceived notions about their abilities.

3. Impacts recognized through gender stereotypes



For the purposes of this project, it is important to note that women may face particular challenges when it comes to speaking publicly in the labour market. These challenges can include gender bias, imposter syndrome and societal expectations. To overcome these barriers, additional support, training and opportunities may be needed to build confidence and develop public speaking skills.

According to Nancy F. Clark, a presentation trainer for more than thirty years, both men and women are nervous and affected when speaking in public, although some men seem to hide their nervousness more easily than women. There are also some reasons why women reject public speaking, such as the view that 'I am not an expert, I do not deserve to speak', the harsh judgement of the audience and more.

Public speaking can have a great impact on women's professional and personal development. Below are some examples of the impact public speaking can have on women's professional and personal development and how it can help them:

Professional growth:

- a. Career advancement
- b. Communication skills
- c. Leadership development

Personal growth:

- a. Building self-confidence
- b. Self-development and self-empowerment
- c. Personal branding

Networking and influencing:

- a. Professional connections
- b. Thought leadership

Overcoming obstacles:

- a. **Breaking stereotypes**
- b. Empowering others



There are also some important benefits of being a good public speaker, such as increasing audience engagement, having a clear message received by the audience, increasing self-confidence, improving critical thinking and debating skills, etc.

4. Good practices and tips



Public speaking skills develop over time and with practise, and often women face various challenges as speakers. By implementing the following strategies, female professionals can improve their public speaking skills, increase their influence and make a lasting impression in the workplace.

Strategies for public speaking in the workplace

- Prepare thoroughly by researching your topic, organising your content and focusing on **practicing**.
- Connect with your audience by understanding and engaging them with stories and interaction.
- Seek feedback and continuous improvement by asking for constructive feedback and taking every opportunity to analyse.
- Make the most of technology by using visual aids and familiarise yourself with presentation software.
- Value authenticity, stay true to yourself and your speaking style, and embrace your unique perspective and experiences.

Quick and useful tips for developing public speaking skills in the workplace

1. Start small
2. Identify your audience: understand their needs, interests and level of knowledge
3. Start with stories: incorporate personal anecdotes, stories, examples, etc.
4. Practise body language and vocal variety: pay attention to your body language
5. Control your nervousness
6. Take opportunities to grow: be open to new speaking opportunities, volunteer for panel discussions, etc.

Helpful tools for developing public speaking skills in the workplace

- **VirtualSpeech**: VirtualSpeech offers virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) platforms for public speaking training.
- **Toastmasters International**: Toastmasters is a nonprofit educational organisation that focuses on developing communication and leadership skills.
- **TED Talks**: TED Talks provide a vast collection of inspiring and engaging speeches delivered by renowned speakers.

5. Conclusions



Public speaking is the process of conveying information to an audience and involves various communication skills that enable the speaker to connect with that audience. There are also many different types of public speaking, such as ceremonial, persuasive, entertaining, informative, and demonstrative.

Public speaking is important for personal and professional lives, but female professionals sometimes face particular challenges, such as gender bias, harsh criticism, social stereotypes, etc. Overall, public speaking offers women a powerful tool to improve their presence, influence and success in the labour market. By using these skills effectively, women can assert themselves as strong performers, leaders and decision-makers in their respective industries.

The value and impact of public speaking in the work environment to enhance women's professional competencies lies in the development of **confidence**, **communication** skills, thought **leadership**, **networking**, leadership potential, the ability to **overcome gender bias** and **encourage** both themselves and others. By using public speaking effectively, women can improve their professional skills, advance their careers and contribute to a more inclusive and diverse work environment.

Removing the barriers that prevent women from becoming public speakers requires a collective effort to overcome gender bias, provide equal opportunities and support for women in the public sphere, and create an inclusive environment that values diverse voices and perspectives. By breaking down these barriers, we can level the playing field and empower women to break the glass ceiling as speakers.

By implementing some strategies and tips for public speaking in the workplace, such as practise, feedback, interactivity, etc., female professionals can improve their public speaking skills, increase their impact and leave a lasting impression in the workplace.

There are also some tools or platforms such as VirtualSpeech, Toastmasters International, etc. that can be valuable resources. Consistent practise, seeking feedback and actively seeking speaking opportunities in the workplace will ultimately help you develop and refine your public speaking skills as a female professional.

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