

Adam Grupper, founder of Act Professional, gave a well received and somewhat provocative presentation on “Acting Techniques to Improve Presentation Skills” on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Adam is the founder of Act Professional. As a presentation skills trainer and consultant, he has assisted many organizations including Estee Lauder, Unicef and Lighthouse International. He is also an actor (*Law & Order, Guys and Dolls, La Boheme* among many others), an audition technique instructor at NYU and the holder of a BA in psychology from Yale.

A highlight of the presentation was a demonstration done by three Informs volunteers. It was an enactment similar to the show “To Tell The Truth.” The volunteers were requested to pick and then narrate in relay style an experience that had happened to one of them. After the recounting, the other attendees questioned them and then voted for the person they thought actually owned the experience. No one voted for Leon Schwartz, the actual owner. Adam said that he has yet to have a group pick the “real” person.

Adam described the difference between authority and expertise. He noted that authority is often independent of expertise and that “authority is a performance that can be developed.” Experts often think that their expertise is sufficient, but Adam stated and demonstrated that the way information is conveyed is also important.

Here thanks to Keith Ralph are his notes from the talk:

#### EFFECTIVE ACTING:

##### A. Actors Have:

###### 1. Internal Characters:

Internal characters reactions,  
ideas, mind-sets, and motivations  
that has been established from  
past situations; whether successful  
or otherwise.

Sometimes, Internal Characters  
interfere or may seem incongruous  
with the acting situation at-hand.

###### 2. External Character:

Is aware of the situation / topic  
Is attentive to audience reactions.  
Is animated and enthusiastic:  
Uses facial expressions,  
movement, body language,  
enthusiasm, and shows motives  
that match the setting.

##### B. Actors select the best character from a patchwork of both internal and external characters:

###### 1. Study the situation / topic:

- . Know the details of the topic
- . Be enthusiastic about the topic
- . Be confident with the topic

- . Be sincere about the topic,  
avoid the dogmatic type of approach
- 2. Select or create the most fitting  
character for a given presentation  
from observations of others in  
a similar situation.
- 3. Select internal personal qualities,  
values, and reactions from within  
Yourself that seem to match the  
motives of the character being acted.
- 4. Select personal qualities that  
seem most engaging to Your audience.
  - . Make eye-contact with individuals  
within Your audience
  - . Try to establish a rapport  
or sense of direct personal  
communication with the audience
  - . Move around, use Your hands,  
animate Your facial expressions,  
gestures, and voice.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Keith Ralph

Here is the Act Professional Key Takeaways document (retyped from the handout):

**Content is not the only important element** when we present ourselves-the *way* in which we convey that content is at least as important as the content itself.

**Preparation for the presentation must go beyond content.** In addition to all the standard elements of preparation (assembling data, creating PowerPoint deck, etc.) presenters need to establish who their character is and develop both decisive body language and proper vocal technique to be most effective.

**Authority is often independent of expertise** –authority is a performance that can be developed.

**Defining the motivation for presenting** can have an enormous impact on the presenter's performance. Possible underlying motivations (beyond just desire to convey information) include:

- . To share passion about subject matter
- . To demonstrate pride in depth of knowledge
- . Enjoyment in making presentations
- . Desire to learn more about the audience

**The presentation works in both directions.** Presenters must work to establish connection with their audience the way actors connect with scene partners.

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