

LEARNING THE HARD WAY OR GETTING OFF ON THE LEFT FOOT!

by
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I gave my first key note address in Butte, Montana At the time, I was feeling pretty proud of myself. I hadn't been speaking that long and yet this group saw my incredible talent and saw fit to have me keynote their convention! That was how I felt until the introducer literally said:

"You all heard how wonderful Joe Blow was at the national convention, well, we tried to get him here but he was busy so someone told us about Patt (is it Schab? Schwap?) and not only didn't she have anything to do tonight, but she was lots cheaper - in fact she's the reason we were able to upgrade the dinner from turkey noodle bake to Chateaubriand. So let's hear it for Patt!"

One of the most significant things I learned my first year as a full-time professional speaker is the importance of starting off on the right foot. The most frustrating part is that the right foot is so frequently on someone else's leg - the introducer who has just met me 30 seconds ago.

Case in point, I was to give an after dinner speech to thirty elderly Seattle, Washington, millionaires, all of whom made their millions in the junk and recycling trade. (I knew they were millionaires because they repeatedly told me so.) In retrospect, it was notable, that although this was a dinner speech, the group did not invite me to dinner!

Their president introduced me as follows: "Before we have tonight's speaker, I think we should have a moment of silence out of respect for old Maury who died last week."

Now, I speak on humor in the workplace. This is not quite the warm-up you want before a talk on a light subject! The president then forgot my name and introduced me as "Ahh, . . . Les Schwab's sister." (Not only is Les Schwab, a local tire dealer, no relation, he is also substantially older than my father!)

It was at this point that I learned about the Prepared Introduction. I wrote a dandy - pertinent, funny, short. When a friend begged me to donate my time for a fund raiser for which she was responsible, I gave it to her a week ahead of time. I also brought one the night of the program.

I arrived to find no podium or microphone and my name on the program listed simply as "A Chatt with Patt". The audience had never heard of me and had no idea that my topic was Humor in the Workplace.

Demonstrating an unusual ability to balance on two left feet, my friend ignored my prepared introduction and gaily announced: "This is Patt Schwab. She says she can be funny, I think it's a joke, but let's see if she can!"

Needless to say, I didn't think it was funny!

This was when I learned the importance of repeating the affirmation, "I am a gracious person and I don't kill my friends!"

Recognizing the unpredictability of the speaking profession, I expect my learning, and my affirmations, will continue!

(516 words)

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