

Secrets From the Stage 2: Bomb-Proof Presenting

Professional Techniques for Reliable Memorization & Effective Rehearsing

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Overview:

Nothing sinks a talk like getting lost, drawing a blank, or fumbling with notes. Conversely, when we know our material inside out, we can respond to the room, are relaxing to hear, and are thus more engaging and influential. In this session, we look at time-tested techniques from the performing art for learning material quickly, memorizing reliably, and rehearsing hyper-effectively: the keys to comfortable, natural sounding, "off-the-cuff" presenting.

Bio:

Iain Duncan's transformative sessions on the intersections of performance and business combine deeply researched content with exciting performing demonstrations and engaging comedy. In the *Secrets From The Stage* seminar series, Iain draws on his experience on stage and in the boardroom to help audiences become more confident, eloquent, and influential public speakers. Iain has been performing as a circus entertainer, musician, and variety comedian for over 25 years, and has worked for 15 years in software, as a consultant, manager, sales person, and start-up director. His background uniquely qualifies him as a trainer and speaker able to bridge the worlds of business and soft skills. Participants learn, improve, and have fun!

Learning Objectives:

Participants will examine the role and importance of memorization in natural and influential delivery, and why this is critically important to the public speaker. They will learn how memory works, and the ramifications this has on how we should rehearse and memorize for the stage. Finally, they will be introduced to three powerful rehearsal techniques from the performing arts to enable them to memorize more quickly, robustly, and such that errors and surprises can be handled gracefully. Participants will leave with tools to get them speaking comfortably and confidently without the aid of notes or slides, and they'll learn how to get there fast.

Technical Details:

The session may be presented as either a talk, round-table discussion, or interactive workshop, with length ranging from 1 to 4 hours depending on format. The content in the detailed outline will be adjusted as needed for session length; the outline targets a 1.5-2h presentation. Slide projection is optional as participants will receive a paper hand-out with notes, exercises, and further reading.

High-Level Outline

- **Introduction**
 - Overview and purpose of the session, Iain's background and work
- **Performing Demonstration**
 - Circus skills demonstration and discussion of memorization in routines
- **The Goal of Preparation**
 - Elements of a successful talk and the role of memorization in achieving natural delivery
- **The Wrong Way**
 - Rote memorization is difficult, fragile, and inflexible - when to use it or not?
- **Composition, Improvisation, Memorization**
 - Finding the right balance between them for eloquent and relaxed presentations
- **How Memory Works**
 - Inside your finicky memory, improving recall, and mnemonic techniques
- **Technique 1: Outside-In Memorization**
 - A highly effective technique from the performing arts for robust, bomb-proof memorization
- **Technique 2: Linking Backwards**
 - How to memorize content rapidly by working from the end back to the beginning
- **Technique 3: By Memory, Now!**
 - The surprising power of delivering content by memory, before you're ready!
- **Conclusion**
 - Handling problems, improving long-term, and using memory techniques in the rest of life

Detailed Outline

- **Introduction**

- Purpose of the session
- Iain's introduction, his work in the performing arts and in business
- Iain's training and education in performing arts of various disciplines

- **Performing Demonstration**

- Circus skills performance and demonstration
- Discussion of routine memorization, why listen to a performer
- Iain's approach to helping speakers deliver confidently from memory

- **The Goal of Preparation**

- Elements of a successful talk: the one-way rhetorical conversation
- What is "natural delivery" - what are we responding to as an audience?
- The illusion of "off-the-cuff", and why it's effective
- Why memorized delivery makes for more powerful and influential talks
- The importance of flexible memorization for natural delivery

- **By Rote: The Wrong Way**

- Why might we want to use rote memorization of a script?
- Why rote memorization is difficult, fragile, and inflexible
- Advantages and disadvantages of scripted delivery, when to use it
- What can we do instead?

- **Composition, Improvisation, Memorization**

- A look at different degrees of improvisation in content delivery
- Advantages and disadvantages of each
- Finding the right balance for eloquent yet relaxed presentations
- Moving smoothly between scripted and improvised delivery, how to practise

- **How Your Memory Works**

- Short-term and long-term memory, what's going on neurologically
- How we form memories and how to improve recall
- Mnemonic techniques, a brief look at how some work and why
- Ramifications for learning speaking content

- **Technique 1: Outside-In Memorization**

- Rehearsing and memorizing from a map, outside-in
- Why this works and how it is more robust and error proof
- The connection with improvisation, how to practice

- Examples from the performing arts
- **Technique 2: Linking Backwards**
 - Why starting at the beginning is not very effective!
 - How to most effectively build up memorized content
 - Advantages of working backwards, why is it so effective?
 - Examples from the performing arts and athletics
- **Technique 3: By Memory, Now!**
 - Delivering without a net
 - Why we should rehearse without notes right away
 - What happens when we recall without notes
 - The surprising power of delivering content by memory, right away
- **Conclusion**
 - Handling problems, what to do when things go wrong
 - How to improve over the long term
 - Using memorization and rehearsal techniques in the rest of life