

## Flow State versus Rehearsed Performance

by Cathy C. Bonczek

One of my clients recently told me that the reason he didn't like to rehearse is that he didn't want to disrupt the "flow state" that happens when he presents. As you can imagine, this particular client is an excellent presenter and is very engaging when on stage.

From Medical News Today: **"The term "flow state" describes a mental state in which a person is completely focused on a single task or activity.** They are directing all of their attention toward the task, and they do not experience many thoughts about themselves or their performance. Some people refer to this informally as being "in the zone."

The term was coined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who was known as the world's leading researcher on positive psychology. When a person is in flow state they have heightened focus, a lack of self-consciousness, enjoyment and persistence.

So what is the benefit of rehearsal for those communicators who can "wing" it effectively and want to achieve the flow? It's a different level of control.

The trick is to use the ability to achieve flow state communication and combine it with the concept of "hitting the mark." For stage aficionados, you'll know that's the lingo describing the act of walking on stage, making it look as if you've just entered the space naturally, and ending up standing on the exact (often marked) spot that gives you the best spotlight and/or interaction with others on the stage.

So there's an understanding that some places on the stage are more advantageous than others, and rehearsal allows the individual to walk, saunter or run – their choice – to land where x marks the spot.

For the business communicator, the rehearsal would allow you to rehearse your key messages, and edit them down to powerful, well-crafted phrases. You could determine how long it takes to deliver all of your key messages, and then whittle them down to the most important ones, depending on the allotment of time you have.

**The more you rehearse, the more you are able to converse.** You can be spontaneous and natural, and still line up your messages to clarify your concept, and even end on time. The presenter should hone their skills before any stage or large forum outing in order to keep on time, be succinct, and yet, still be in the flow.

It's like the jazz musician who has studied the technique of his horn, keyboard or other instrument, has conquered the basics of keeping time and reading music, has recognized the value of listening to his fellow musicians at all times when performing, and has worked hard to connect with the audience. After all that mastery, then the musician is able to improvise and create something exciting, dynamic and original.

And so it is with great communicators. **You should rehearse messages, technique, gestures and movement to add meaning.** Then you will free up your brain to connect with your audience, let it happen somewhat naturally, and dare I say, actually enjoy the moment.

