

## Nine things Business Leaders Can learn from Actors

by Cathy C. Bonczek

People often ask me if I'm asking them to "act" when I talk about prepping for a conversation or presentation. I say, no – but that we can learn quite a lot from actors.

1. Charisma can be learned. Eye contact, attention, movement and posture all contribute to how you feel confident or display confidence.
2. The body matters when delivering a message. We need to know how to control our pace, movement, stance. People take in all of us when we are speaking – not just our words.
3. You do better when you are healthy. Getting enough sleep, exercising and eating nourishing food will help you have energy, flex the voice, think sharper.
4. You can breathe life into words that you say over and over. There are some things that must be said. Actors must say the words that the writer put on the page. They then imbue those words with meaning and intention. Business leaders often find themselves on the road delivering the same message over and over, introducing the firm or a product. It's worth thinking about how you make it sound conversational and "just thought of."
5. You don't have to say anything to get all eyes on you. Being still or being quiet has a great deal of power. Your energy still exudes from you. The actor wants to contribute to every scene whether they have dialogue or not. Often they do this by silently reacting. Your presence at a board table matters.
6. You have to be in the moment, and sometimes improvise. Really great actors listen to the other actors on the stage or scene. It's not about just saying words in turn. Sometimes, the words come out differently than what was scripted, and the other actors have to react and bring the scene back.
7. Your voice conveys much of the emotion of the message. Lullaby or scream? You can choose from everything in between. Why have we decided collectively that it's professional to be monotone and dry?
8. Rehearsals are mission-critical to being prepared. Rehearsals are the place where mistakes happen. Rehearsals are where happy accidents and experiments take place that change everything. The best rehearsals are run with permission to fail, as well as permission to dazzle. Refinement comes after repetition. This is time well spent because it helps you ready yourself for the actual performance. Why do we, in business, expect ourselves to be perfect without this trial and error? Usually, this is simply a time-decision – we don't have any extra minutes in the day.
9. Courage can be cultivated. The more you act, the better you become. Feedback – both positive and constructive – helps the actor make changes and grow in skill. Walking onto a stage, or onto a movie set, can be very intimidating because all eyes are on you. You should speak every chance you get.

