

Softball New Zealand acknowledges Tony Burns for allowing it to reproduce the following article. Developing communication skills is an important part of the development of the complete umpire. Here is the latest in the series of Effective Speaking Tips

" IT'S NOW OFFICIAL - THERE IS NO BODY LEFT IN NEW ZEALAND TO THANK" (Billy Crystal - 76th Academy Awards)

The Oscars are a great opportunity to compare a number of people giving speeches. And they're also an opportunity to see how to be effective (or otherwise) with the limited time you have available.

More is Less - Many of the speakers seemed to be trying to thank everyone they knew. To do that they had to speak so fast that, although they managed to name everyone, there was no feeling expressed in their words. It was a mention - not an acknowledgment. So the real message got lost. Where did they go wrong? They tried to include too much.

The speeches that worked - The winner mentioned a name, they said what this person's role was, and then they said why this person was being thanked - what this person had done which warranted them being mentioned. For us in the audience, it gave the words meaning and relevance.

For example - Charlize Theron thanked her mother saying "You've sacrificed so much for me to be able to live here and make my dreams come true". We got a real sense of Theron's sincerity and the story behind the acknowledgment.

What can we learn from this? - We need to use our time to tell our audience **WHY** we are saying what we are saying. They sometimes even need to be told what to do with the information. eg, "I'm telling you this so that you can make a decision whether or not to...etc". So often they just don't get it – and even if it's not our fault - it's our problem.

If we go through our points like a shopping list, our audience is far less likely to understand what we're saying. Better to pick just a few key points and provide their relevance and meaning to the audience.

If you're speaking and running out of time - Don't panic - Don't talk faster - Don't drop your conclusion. The trick is to edit - severely. Leave out a decent size chunk so that you can finish calmly. Your conclusion creates a lasting impression. So deliver a final line that gives the audience a sense of satisfaction rather than a sense of "I've run out of time - I don't know what I'm doing - I'm panicking". If you finish your talk in a controlled way, the audience makes that mean that you are a credible expert. Don't sacrifice this impression by trying to include too much material. And to ensure that you don't run out of time - rehearse your talk, out loud, with a stopwatch.

And the Oscar goes to...the person who says less but conveys more.

"I'm sorry for delivering such a long speech today - I didn't have time to prepare a short one".
(Winston Churchill)