

Softball New Zealand acknowledges Tony Burns for allowing it to reproduce the following article. Many of you I'm sure have encountered the **Fortune Teller** when under taking a clinic or business presentation or whilst working a ballgame.

### Managing the Fortune Teller

I was recently delivering a Presentation Skills Coaching Clinic which helps people to dramatically improve the way they deliver a presentation. Often during this seminar I talk about a type of internal dialogue or self-talk which I call the '**Fortune Teller**'. The Fortune Teller is that voice inside our heads that says things like "you're going to make a mistake" or "someone's going to ask a question you can't answer". It's usually at it's loudest just before we get up to speak and it helps create all those symptoms of nervousness and anxiety that can sabotage our presentation.

Usually the **Fortune Teller** soon goes away - that's because we're too busy concentrating on our presentation to notice it any more. And that's why so many people seem to relax and become more confident a few minutes into their talk.

But the **Fortune Teller** can come back while we are delivering our presentation. It busily monitors our performance for errors and it scans the audience looking for signs of approval and disapproval.

During this presentation, my **Fortune Teller** noticed one particular audience member. She didn't seem at all engaged with my presentation. In fact it would be more accurate to say that she was obviously uninterested and unimpressed. She was not looking at me and several times I noticed her whispering to the person next to her. My **Fortune Teller** had a field day. "She hates it!" it clamoured. "She hates your presentation and she hates you. She thinks you're shallow and she thinks your talk is boring."

Fortunately, I've learned to manage these sorts of internal comments and that's one of the things I teach during the seminar.

You see, if you take notice of this voice, you're doomed to have your confidence and energy take a dive. So I just tell myself to accept that not everyone is going to like what I'm saying and to keep up my energy for those who are enjoying the talk.

However I got a real wake-up call. A few days after the seminar, I received an email from this person. She told me how much she had enjoyed my talk and told me she was interested in having me run a course for her staff. I was absolutely flabbergasted!

I had been absolutely certain that my perception of her had been correct - but I couldn't have been more wrong. I was just grateful that I hadn't taken any notice of the **Fortune Teller** at the time I was giving the talk.

### Here's my advice in order to prevent this irrational voice from sabotaging your talk:

1. Remind yourself that the **Fortune Teller** is usually wrong. Its predictions are hugely exaggerated and generally untrue.
2. Anticipate that they'll be at least one person in your audience who will seem disinterested in your talk. Remind yourself that you can handle that and then you won't be fazed **IF** you're right.
3. Commit yourself to delivering your talk with energy and enthusiasm no matter what the **Fortune Teller** tells you. It's not the audience's job to provide the energy - it's yours.

Unfortunately the **Fortune Teller** never goes away. But so long as you don't take it seriously and refuse to believe what it says, you don't have to be sabotaged by it.

Like to know more Email: [tonyburns@effectivespeaking.co.nz](mailto:tonyburns@effectivespeaking.co.nz) or visit [www.effectivespeaking.co.nz](http://www.effectivespeaking.co.nz)