

# 57. 3 things you need to knock any presentation out of the park

## SPEAKERS

Vanessa

**Vanessa 00:00**

Welcome to coaching for Latina leaders, the only podcast dedicated to the advancement of Latinas at every level of life with your host, Dr. Vanessa Calderon, a Latina with over 20 years of leadership experience, Harvard grad physician, and mother of two.

**Vanessa 00:21**

So today, I'm going to talk to you about the three things that you need to knock any presentation out of the park. Why? Because I want you to show up to every presentation you give like you're delivering a talk on a TED stage. Now, let me share something with you. I do a lot of public speaking. So I do a lot of teaching. I do a lot of corporate events. I do a lot of events in hospitals, for example, I stand on big stages and give keynotes, I give capstones, I do workshops, and I love it. I love to connect with the audience. I love to influence. I love to teach something new. I love to inspire. But now if you would watch me giving a speaking event or speaking engagement, you would think that wow, she's awesome, is she unnatural, but she's really good at it. And I will tell you this, I was not a natural. In fact, I, you know, a very, very long time ago, some of you know this if you've been listening to the podcast, but I was a community activist and an organizer before I went into residency, I took a year off of medical school, many years ago, I moved to Washington, DC. And I took a job as a community organizer organizing around healthcare justice and other social justice issues. And part of what I had to do is organized and speak in public and teach. And I was so nervous, I would get on stage and my palms would get sweaty, and my heart would start beating really fast, I would start speaking really, really fast. I didn't know how to present my slides appropriately.

I didn't know how to prepare, I didn't know how to knock these out of the park. And it took, you know, almost like 10 months of me standing up and falling and doing it wrong. And having people telling me, that was interesting information. But I could barely understand you, you were speaking so fast. Because when I got nervous, I spoke really fast. And it took a lot of that. And you know, I learned a lot by trying. But then I wanted to really improve the skill, I wanted to get really good at it. So I immersed myself in a bunch of courses. And I took some public speaking seminars and I took some workshops. And I stopped certified as a public speaking instructor, I read some awesome books on how to speak like you're delivering a talk on a TED stage. And I just put myself in that space. And I kept standing up and raising my hand and doing more speaking engagements. And now I'm at a place where I love it. And I love it. Because I think it's just such an effective way to deliver a message when you can really speak to somebody's heart. And so I just really enjoy doing that. And connecting with people when I do it. So what I want to share with you today are the three things that you need to prepare to knock any

presentation out of the park. And this comes from my experience of failing a lot. And in my experience in all of the workshops, the teaching that I've done, and the books that I've read, this comes from all of that. And I've essentially simplified it to only three things and I realized that when I focus on these three things, I deliver a really strong message and I think you can do the same. Okay, so the three things are number one, mindset. Number two, is non-verbal communication. And number three is verbal communication.

So I'm going to share each one with you. And we'll talk about it in detail. Okay. So as you know, mindset is everything, especially when it comes to public speaking. And there are two things to prepare for when it comes to your mindset. Okay, the first is intentions, and the second is your emotions. So when I say intention, what I mean is when you're going to speak in public, whether you're giving a keynote event, you're leading just like a meeting with a small group or you're delivering a workshop, you want to first get super clear on your intention. And you can just ask yourself, what is my intention? Okay, are you trying to connect with your audience? Are you trying to inspire action and influence change? Or are you teaching something new and your intention is for the audience to learn and retain the information? Now, when you get really clear on the purpose of your event, and you set your intention, you prime your brain to work for you and help you deliver the message that you want to deliver.

Now, I do this at the very beginning, before I even start brainstorming what I want to say or creating an outline, I asked myself when I get when somebody asked me to give an event or speak at an event, what is my intention? And once I am super clear on my intention, I essentially inform the rest of my preparation. For example, let's say your intention is to just connect with your audience. So your brain is going to start saying, Okay, what do I need to connect with my audience? I need to be authentic, I need to feel comfortable being vulnerable, and I need to share stories. What if your intention, let's say is to inspire, then you're going to want to speak to the why of the issue, you're going to want to come from the heart. What if your intention is to influence then you're going to want to connect with shared values? What is it that matters to them, you're going to want to create a when, when, and the stories that you're telling to help influence the other person? And what if your intention is just to teach I do a lot of teaching, then what you want to do is essentially simplify the message and distill it down to the simplest form, you're gonna want to speak really clearly, you're gonna want to leave time for questions.

Okay, so that's what happens when you first focus on your intention, you get clear on it, and it helps your brain get primed to do what you want it to do. And you do that at the very beginning. Okay, number two, for mindset is emotions. So one of the biggest mistakes that I see all of the time, and I have been 100%, guilty of doing this myself, is not fully preparing for the normal nervous system reaction when it comes to speaking in public. When you are about to speak in public, your fear center, and your amygdala in your brain gets triggered. And the reason why you feel nervous is that your fear centers getting triggered. So your heart might start to beat faster, you get sort of that funny feeling in your stomach, and your palms may get cool and sweaty. Even if you're someone like me that likes to speak in public, the odds are that you still get that kind of funny sensation in your body, because your fear center is still getting triggered. You know, I've been doing this work for over 17 years now. And I still get triggered, I still feel those feelings every time I'm going to speak in public.

So I want you right now to just take a second and to think about how does your body react? How does your body respond? When you're about to speak, it's sometimes it can be as small as raising your hand in the meeting, too, all the way, you know, to delivering a keynote event. Even for me when I'm raising my hand and in a meeting to spend, depending on the type of media, who else is there, I still get a little bit nervous. So what is your body do? My body, for example, my palms will get cool and sweaty, my heart were stalled to be really fast. And I get that kind of funny feeling in my stomach. Those three things happen to me consistently.

**Vanessa 08:28**

So what I want you to know is, that natural nervous system response that's happening, that's not a problem. That's just happening. The problem is when we feel those sensations in our body, and then we start to think, Oh, something is going wrong. Because as soon as we feel those sensations, and we engage with them, and we start thinking something's gone wrong, what ends up happening is that our brain gets flooded with worry, with nervousness, and a bunch of negative thoughts will start to take over. That's such as what if I mess up? I'm going to humiliate myself, what if I'm not prepared? Instead, what you will need to do is you need to just know that the nervous system is going to be activated. That's what the nervous system does. That's what the human brain does. And when it does, just know that's a normal reaction, expect to feel nervous before you're going to speak on stage. That's what I do.

So every time I'm going to give an event I'm going to speak I just expect myself to feel nervous. And when I expect myself to do that I create space for it. I say okay, there it is, again, there's my heart beating really fast. There are my palms getting cold and sweaty, okay, I'm going to allow myself to be nervous. That's what happens. Because when you try to resist it, remember what you resist, persist. So when you try to resist it, what you're doing is saying Nope, this is not right. I shouldn't feel nervous. And when you say I shouldn't in your brain, even if it's a subconscious thought, you're automatically making it wrong. And it just gets stronger in your head, because then you just start judging yourself for feeling nervous. So here are some helpful thoughts to help you think when you get activated. So for me, I think, okay, you know, there it is, again, that's okay. That's it simple. Or you can think it's uncomfortable to feel nervous, and nothing's gone wrong. Or, I'm feeling nervous right now. And that's normal. So you choose a thought that's going to support you when you start getting sort of that negative activation, that nervous system activation in your body. Because when you prepare for that nervous system activation, you normalize it, you can welcome it in, you can breathe through it, and you can still deliver a really strong presentation. Okay, number two,

**Vanessa 10:55**

so that was a mindset. Now we're going to shift to non-verbal communication. Your nonverbal communication is equally important to your verbal communication. Your nonverbal communication creates your presence or your aura. And regardless of your initial intention, whether you are intending to create influence, connection, or to teach something new, what you want to do is you want to exude confidence. Now, you don't want to exude arrogance, there's a difference between arrogance and confidence. You want to exude genuine confidence. And the reason why is because you want the audience to trust you. And when you're exuding confidence, what the audience takes in and this is because of mirror neurons, which is scientific with the audience takes in is that you are confident, which

must mean that you know what you're talking about. And that's essentially what you are trying to create with your nonverbal communication.

Now, I'm gonna give you a few different ways to do that. Okay, so first is with your eye contact. Now, eye contact keeps your audience engaged and has them feel like you are directly speaking to them, it's possible to do this in a room of five people, or a room of 300 people. I know I've done it in both. And when you're speaking to a large crowd, a good way to think about it is you give one person or one side of the room eye contact for as long as about a sentence. And then when you end the sentence, you can then move to another part of the room. Now what I do when I'm on a large stage is I will walk to one side of the room and deliver one to two sentences. And then I will just shift my body slightly to the middle part of the room, for example, just slightly to the right. And I will give that part of the room eye contact. And then I will shift over to the right again. And I'll take a few more steps. And then I'll deliver a few sentences to that part of the room.

Now what you don't want to do is pace back and forth on the stage, you want to stop, pause, deliver, deliver eye contact to that side of the room and deliver a message, shift your energy slightly deliver to another side and then shift again, maybe take a few steps and then deliver another message when you stand there still. Now if the crowd is smaller, you can hold your eye contact with one person, again for about a sentence. Or if there's a natural break, think like a comma in a sentence, you can then shift your eye contact. And a good way to think about it. And the way I think about it is I look at them just long enough to see and register their eye color, or to notice a facial feature on their face. And then I shift my eye contact when it's a small group, all you need is about six seconds. That is long enough for the audience to feel engaged and like you're speaking directly to them. Excuse me, I'm gonna get some water here.

#### **Vanessa 14:06**

Okay, so let's talk about your hands. Now you want to keep your hands steady and in place. The reason why is very first thing to get fidgety when you get nervous is your hands. And the more you can practice keeping them steady, the better you will become and the more confident you will become. If you're standing up delivering a talk, you want to keep your hands down and to your sides. That's it super simple. You stand up straight, you keep your hands down and to your side. If you have to hold a microphone, hold your microphone with one hand and keep your other hand down and to the side. If you are sitting and delivering a message sitting at a desk or at a table or in a boardroom, for example, you keep your hands directly in front of you. And I sometimes just fold them in front of me and keep them directly in front of me. If we're gonna use hand gestures, which I recommend that you do if especially if you're giving a big talk in front of a large stage, you want to be really intentional about your hand gestures, and you want to use them and practice using them ahead of time because what you want to avoid is flailing your arms back and forth, which is what we do when we get nervous.

You want to avoid fidgeting with your hands in front of you, which is another thing we do when we get nervous, or picking, for example, at your skin or your nails. Okay, let's shift now to facial expression. Now, what you want to consider is you want to consider creating a neutral face, or what I call a gentle smile. Now, what I recommend you do if you've never done this before, is practice in front of a mirror or record yourself on your phone, delivering a one-minute talk or a speech. And just watch what your face

generally does when you speak. The first time I did this, I was blown away at the facial features I would make I was making a wide variety of facial features, I would lift my eyebrows a lot when I talked or I would smile or when I would get nervous, I would have this special twitch. And so just watch what you do, so that you can practice keeping that gentle face or that neutral smile. Okay, let's talk about your posture. Posture is simple, you essentially want to just if you're standing to stand up straight and tall, things you look out for and you want to avoid include leaning to one side, we often do this, we kind of put all of our weight on our right leg or a left leg or crossing your legs. When you're on stage, you want to just stand up straight and have tall hands chairside. If you're sitting down, you want to sit up straight and tall with your hands in front of you. That, again, is a really strong executive presence. You don't want to slouch, you definitely don't want to rock or wheel around in your chair, which is something that we do when we get nervous. You want to sit up straight and tall with your hands in front of them.

Okay, so again, we talked about walking on stage and what you do when you're with what you do with your hands. So just lastly, if you have a large stage, it's okay to walk across the stage. But do it purposefully make sure you're giving eye contact and do it slowly. Again, you don't want to be pacing back and forth. Okay, let's shift now and talk about verbal communication. Now there are two things to think about with verbal communication. Number one is your tone of voice. You want to speak slow, clear, and loud because your tone of voice is going to elicit that same emotion in the other person. So imagine when you're talking to someone and they get angry or upset and they start speaking in a rush tone of voice, what do you feel, you start feeling a little anxious and you start feeling a little rushed. And that's normal, that's your mirror neurons going to work telling you something might be wrong, it's turning on your stress response, it's turning on triggers inside of your own brain. So instead, what you want to do is you want to make sure you're delivering a message that's low, that's clear, that's loud enough for the back of the room. That is how you can make sure that you're going to connect with your audience and deliver a message that will resonate with them. If you have a small group feel comfortable being personal and congenial. When I'm in a small group, I have a smile on my face. If I know the people, I'm talking to them by name.

So make sure you're paying attention to your tone of voice against speaking slow, clear, and loud, with intentional pause and repetition. Okay, so this is something that it can be really impactful, especially if you have a statement or a quote that you really want to get that message across. If you have something like that. If you want to create an intentional pause after you're done to let it sink in, you can consider repeating that same statement or part of the statement for emphasis. For example, one of my favorite quotes is Victor Frankel's quote that goes between stimulus and response, there is a space in that space is our power to choose our response. And in our response lies our growth and our freedom. Now when I'm delivering that quote, on stage, I'll say hit just like that, slowly, I'll take those pauses in between. And I'll even say, for example, let me see that quote, again, because it was so powerful. between stimulus and response, there is a space and in that space is our power to choose our response.

And in our response, lies our growth and our freedom. In our response lies our growth and our freedom. Do you see what I did there? I went back and repeated that last statement for emphasis. Okay, so those are that's it. Those are the three things that you need. You need to be super clear on your mindset because the mindset is everything, especially when it comes to public speaking. And with mindset, you

want to be clear on your intention before you speak. And you want to get really clear and prepare for those emotions that are going to come up for you. You want to know your nonverbal communication and you want to exude that level of confidence. And that executive presence, again, not arrogance, but confidence. And you want to practice your verbal communication, your tone of voice, that intentional pause and repetition.

So I'm gonna give you a few other bonuses for you. Okay, so bonus number one is practice. If you want to deliver a high-quality presentation, take time to practice, you want to practice your talk at least three times. If you have slides, you can even buy a slide advancer from Amazon, for example, I purchased one a long time ago. And it's awesome. Every time I'm going to give a presentation, it connects via USB to my computer. And I'll just stand in front of a mirror, I'll give my presentation and I'll forward my slides. Like if I'm actually on stage, you want to practice your talk and move seamlessly through your slides. And that right there practicing your talk moving seamlessly through your slides. That's the difference between an average presentation and one that belongs on a TED stage.

Okay, so let's quickly talk about any slides and handouts. If you're gonna have slides, make sure that you follow, you know, the best practices that are out there. For example, each slide should contain very minimal text, just enough to get your point across. And the font of each slide text on the slide needs to be large enough for the person in the back of the room to read. If you're going to have any font that's small enough, and that nobody can read in the back, don't include that at all, it's actually just a distraction. If you're going to have images use high-quality pictures, because if your slides get projected on a larger stage, for example, a larger screen or at home now that people are doing virtual presentations, low-quality images have that pixelated kind of effect, and you want to avoid that. So make sure you're using high-quality images. And you can get a bunch of free stock art, Google free stock art, and there are three different websites that will show you free stock art that you can just use, please avoid clipart we are way past the age of clipart. So do not use clipart in your presentations. And if you're gonna have images, consider having some sort of theme across all the images to carry the story through.

If you're going to use videos, I use videos a ton in my presentations, because I like how it differentiates the person's mind that's watching how we're going from me talking to me teaching to a video just to kind of stimulate different parts of the person's brain, my audience's brain. So if you're going to use video, I recommend that you embed the video into your presentation whenever possible. And you can do that on PowerPoint, for example, as opposed to having to open a whole nother window for your video. Please do not do that, it's such a distraction, there are a bunch of ways for that to become a mistake. So don't do that. And make sure of course that you test your audio and your video to make sure it all works before your presentation, you're going to have a handout.

So know this, if you're going to have a handout that once you give a participant that handout or your audience a handout, they're no longer going to pay attention to anything you say they're just going to start flipping through the handout. And the human brain is really bad at multitasking, as much as we think we're really good at it turns out we're not. So if you're going to have a handout, you can do one of two things, pass out the handout only when it's needed, and you're ready to reference it. And if you don't have the luxury to do that, because for example, you'll be on stage or it's only you in a big room,

what you can do is you can pass out the handout early, which I've done before, and just presents, I'll just say, for example, you have a handout in front of you. And we're going to speak about it thoroughly in the future. So there's no need to look through it now. Or you can say there's a handout in front of you. I'm going to give you a few minutes to flip through it if you'd like but I'd like for you to put it away because we're going to come back to it later. That way you give people the time to do that and they don't have to multitask with their brains. Okay, so now you are prepared, you are prepared to go out and deliver a fantastic presentation.

Okay. Remember, mindset is everything. Prepare your intention and your emotions ahead of time. In non-verbal communication, you want to exude that executive presence, and your verbal communication. You want to make sure that you have practiced your tone of voice, you're speaking slowly and clearly. And you've practiced that intentional pause and repetition. If you want to have it in your presentation. Practice, practice, practice your talk ahead of time. Make sure you prepare your slides and handouts if you're going to have any to meet those best practices. Okay, my queue days I hope this was helpful. Best of luck. I have no doubt you're going to deliver an impactful presentation. either yes

**Vanessa 24:59**

or no Hey, if you love what you're learning, then you've got to check out my free Ultimate Guide to stop people-pleasing, where I teach you a simple five-step process to stop saying yes. When you really want to say No, you'll be so glad that you did. There's a link to the guide in the show notes. I'll see you next time.