



THE ACADEMY FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVES  
*Experiential Business Learning®*

*The*  
*A-Z*  
*of becoming an*  
**ACADEMY SPEAKER**

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*You really* **don't** *feel*  
*alone* *have to* *feel*  
*at the top*

Meet the Board you could never afford®



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**Audience** – never overestimate Members knowledge or underestimate their intelligence. Find out as much as you can about the Group you will be working with and meet the Chairman if possible. Briefings via the telephone are useful – make sure that you are not in the car for this as you will need to make notes. Find a quiet time and place for the conversation. You need to know what Members’ needs and expectations are including those who, at the moment, may have little interest in your topic.

**Breakfast** – get to the host venue early so that you can enjoy the breakfast and use it as an opportunity for mingling and further research.

**Chairman** – remember that the Chairman is your customer. S/he will pay your invoice, not the Members. Make sure that you know how to meet and exceed their expectations as well as the Group’s. Ask the Chairman what s/he intends to say about you as part of their introduction. If you are unhappy, in any way, then come up with suggestions to ensure that you get off to a flying start.

**Content** – your Academy sessions will have a life of their own and will rarely be similar. When planning your content you may like to put your material in to three categories – things you must cover, things you should cover and things you could cover (if there is time). This will ensure that, in the event of your session running behind time, you can quickly identify the topics that you must cover.

**Credibility** – Members will have little interest in your CV but they do need to hear that you are credible.

**Disagreement** – don’t worry if Members disagree with your point of view. Disagreement is preferable to indifference so welcome the challenge. Your worst critic will help you more than your best yes-man ever will.

**Empathy** – a good Academy speaker has great empathy with his/her audience and can see things from their point of view. Empathy is about being able to “live in their world” and understand their problems, pressures, priorities, hopes and fears for the future. Use inclusive language that is at the same “level” as your audience.

**Encouragement** – being a Chief Executive can, at times, be a very lonely job. Members will need your encouragement and support. They need to know that they are on the right track. If they are not on the right track they will need your support to manage the change process back at work.

**Energy** – keep an eye on energy levels throughout your session. Short breaks will re-energise the Group, of course, but don’t forget the value of changing the senses to maintain energy levels.

**Enrichment** – Members will be looking for personal and business enrichment. They will want their imaginations back richer than they were at 8.30!



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**Evidence** – be prepared to support any claims that you make with research data, facts and figures. You can also use examples of “best practice” to support your comments.

**Facilitation** – the primary role of an Academy Workshop leader is not to speak – it is to facilitate a process that adds value to the Members. It is as much about active listening, being sensitive to group dynamics and being flexible and amending your session in light of feedback. They will, of course, be interested to hear about other organisations but Members love to talk about their own businesses and to be able to raise their questions and issues - what they really want to hear is you talking to them about themselves!

**Fun** – Members will want to enjoy themselves and many will be looking for a “show” rather than a training course.

**Getting off to a flying start** – presentations are like aeroplanes – at their most dangerous during take off and landing. Rehearse your first 60 seconds. Make sure your objectives are clearly stated and motivate your audience by explaining what they should get out of it. “Signpost” your session by explaining where you are taking the Group, what lies ahead and how you want to work with them.

**Halves** – there are two of them, either side of a coffee break. Plan what you want to achieve in the “two halves of the match”. Canvass the group for feedback during the break and talk to the Chairman also. After the coffee break, formally check to see if Members are happy with the first half and if any changes in content or style are required. You may want to ask “what do I need to do to make this a 10 out of 10 session for you by lunchtime?”

**Integration** - if previous Speakers have talked about a topic that is allied to yours then try and continue the story line. For example if you are talking about “customer service” you would need to integrate your session with those covered by other Speakers on Marketing, Selling and Key Account Management. Explain where your topic fits in relation to theirs.

**Involvement** – as the saying says “if people hear, they forget, if they see, they remember but if they “do”, they understand”. As a general rule, make your session as participative as possible. Lots of group work, feedback, quizzes and exercises etc. However, don’t use breakout sessions as padding – they must support your objectives.

**Irritation** – you will want to be perceived as a motivational speaker but, occasionally, there is nothing wrong with being an “irritational speaker” who disturbs comfort levels and established frames of reference. Good speakers know when to be supportive, caring and nurturing and when to “put sand in Members’s beds”.

**Jargon** – avoid it! Members have little interest in the latest management-speak. They are looking for good, simple, solid ideas that can add value the following day.



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**Jokes and humour** – we all know the value of using humour during presentations but don't use it if it is not "you". Keep your humour safe and politically correct. The best humour to use is humour at your expense!

**Keywords** – don't use scripts and don't use your slides as prompts. Try keywords written in large writing on cards – each word should "let you in" to another 100-200 words in a natural, conversational way.

**Local issues** – some parts of the country are fiercely proud of their regional culture. Make sure that you ask the Chairman for an update on any local issues that effect your audience.

**Members** – in addition to the briefing check out some Member websites as part of your research. The more you know about them, the more they will respond to you.

**Name dropping** – this doesn't go down well. Comments like "When I was in LA last week" and "I was saying to Richard Branson only the other day..." will induce a yawn and alienate you from the Group.

**Output** – Member output is more important than speaker input. The most important hour of a three-hour presentation is the fourth hour! Help Members to experiment and implement your ideas back in their real world. Be hard on yourself – ask yourself "If I was arrested and charged with adding value to this Group would there be enough evidence to convict me?"

**Perfectionism** – this is an illness, not a quality. Don't over-do your preparation. If you do, you will concentrate on only delivering your message and may miss vital verbal clues and body language.

**Questions** – encourage them - they are signs of engagement. Plan how you would answer the five types – a relevant question on a topic that you have already covered, a relevant question on a topic that you have not yet covered, an irrelevant question that is harmless, an irrelevant question that is hostile and a question where you don't know the answer.

**Retention** – as we all know, research over the years suggests that audiences will forget 80- 90% of a presentation within a few days. Use physical aids like handouts and mental tricks of the trade like mnemonics and acronyms etc to improve the retention of information.

**Selling** – avoid the hard sell. Don't promote your other services, sell your latest book or answer questions by saying things like "I usually cover that on the second session". By giving a brilliant session you will attract enquiries and sell more.

**Speaker** – you will not talking to 500 people from the stage - please return to "Facilitation"



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**Stories** – people love stories as well as theories and concepts. Where possible, try and tailor your stories to the Academy’s SME audience. Stories about Coca-Cola, BA, ICI and HSBC may be interesting but they probably won’t be relevant to a typical Member’s world. A variety and good mix of stories is the best bet here.

**Takeaways** – Members love things to takeaway from the session. Tools they can use, booklets, CDs, tapes etc will all be well received. If you have any downloadable items on your website you may want to refer Members to these also.

**Unity** – if you have deliberately aroused some lively discussion and controversy also find time to unite the Group. Identify where views and proposed actions are similar, not different.

**Visuals** – they improve retention of information but avoid “death by powerpoint” and keep slides to a minimum. If you go into double figures it is probably too many.

**Winding up with impact** – recap on your objectives to remind the audience what you set out to achieve, then recap on the main points that you have covered. Thank them for their input, answer any final questions, then finish on a high with a memorable ending. Give Members something to remember you by. They will probably remember first what you said last!

**eXit** – before you leave the Group, agree with the Chairman how you will receive detailed feedback. Arrange a time for a follow up call within the week.

**Your learning** – ask yourself “What went well?” “What could I improve next time?” “If I could put the clocks back what would I do differently?” How did this Group compare to others I have worked with – where were they similar and where were they different?

**Zero–ten evaluations** – all Speakers will have a healthy interest in their scores but the single most important score is their score, not yours. Many Members will want to translate your three hour session into measurable improvements in profitability and performance. Good speakers motivate a process that starts after they have gone. An Academy session does not stop with the scores – in many ways that’s when it starts.

### **Phil Jesson**

*In addition to being The Academy’s Director of Speaker Development, Phil has been an extremely successful Academy Speaker himself - for many years! Learn more about Phil at:*

*[www.philjesson.com](http://www.philjesson.com)  
[www.business-pulse.com](http://www.business-pulse.com)*