

Transcript - John-Paul Flintoff - How do I give an (adequate) presentation?

🕒 Wed, 02/07 15:15PM · 40mins

Ross G 00:07

Hello, you're listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast, developed to help you build your leadership and management skills. I'm Ross Garner.

Nathalie 00:14

I'm Nathalie Nahai.

Ross G 00:15

This week we're asking how do I give an adequate presentation? How should I think about structuring my presentations? And are there any differences to presenting online versus offline? To answer these questions, we're speaking to writer, performer and illustrator John Paul Flintoff, a former writer and associate editor on The Financial Times, The Sunday Times and other papers and magazines.

Ross G 00:36

He's also the author of six books in 16 languages. I don't think you'd wrote every language yourself, John Paul, did you?

John-Paul 00:42

No. I'm afraid not.

Ross G 00:45

Including the book, A Modest Book About How to Make an Adequate Speech, which is, I think, a reassuring bar from which to frame this conversation.

Ross G 00:53

How are you doing, John Paul?

John-Paul 00:55

I'm really well, thank you and thanks for having me. And I hope that I will be an adequate guest.

Ross G 01:02

You know, I hope I am an adequate host. I was saying that to myself just before I came in. It really takes the pressure off.

John-Paul 01:08

It does. That's what I'm talking about. So it's not like aiming to be less than adequate. Adequate is good enough and good enough is good enough. So I hope I'll be good enough.

Ross G 01:20

Oh so that's the title of your book and maybe that's a good place to start. I wish... Why only an adequate speech? And I suppose where did you come at this from?

John-Paul 01:30

I come out of having had a breakdown four years ago and making friends with someone who happened to be a literary agent and telling him some of my, as it were, war stories about public speaking engagements that often went tremendously well, I'm happy to say, but sometimes went really horribly badly.

John-Paul 01:49

And I was just interested as a friend and a human being talking to him about them. And he was astonished when I told him that I actually got myself allowed out of psychiatric hospital so that I could go and give a talk at an AGM, which went very well.

John-Paul 02:04

Everything else about the trip was terrifying, like getting my tickets from the ticket machine, but going to the AGM and giving a talk there turned out to be really easy. And my friend, who is now actually my literary agent, said, why don't you write a book about this?

John-Paul 02:19

And my first thought was, and forgive my language, but this is what my first thought was. Oh no, that would be an awful book full of manipulative lies. And I didn't even use any bad language I was going to, but I forgot what that was.

John-Paul 02:35

But I didn't want to write a bullshitter's guide, that's what the word was, I didn't want to write that. And he said, well, don't then. And I went, oh, right, okay, what you mean, I can write a straightforward book about how to give a talk.

John-Paul 02:47

And I thought I'd sort of trick him and I said, I'll do it if I can call it a modest book about how to make an adequate speech. And I thought he'd say, no, we'll never sell that. But actually, his eyes really brightened up.

John-Paul 02:59

It's all that most people want is to do it adequately and be good enough, not aimed to be the emperor, empress of Ted universe. Just do it well.

Ross G 03:12

Well, I mean, it's all people want. I think a lot of people out there listening probably do not want to ever put themselves in this position. So I am curious why you decided to do so again after your breakdown.

John-Paul 03:23

Well, the truth is that on that occasion, I was more worried about foregoing the fee for which I'd already been paid, so then going to all the way to Sheffield to give a talk. And so that's why I did it.

John-Paul 03:35

But we did talk just before coming on air about some of the things that have gone wrong and the difficulties. And I've really gone through the gauntlet. When I was writing my book, I was thinking, what are all the worst possible things that could happen when I'm giving a talk?

John-Paul 03:51

And although not literally every single one of them, like turning up on stage naked or something, most of it's kind of the fundamentals of what those mean, like just being really embarrassed in front of people.

John-Paul 04:03

All of those things have happened. I've lost half of an audience by people walking out and not all at once, but bit by bit. And that was really painful. Yeah, that's probably worse. But actually, I know what I was doing right and wrong on those occasions because I've been through it.

John-Paul 04:21

So I wanted to share that experience with people and say, it's really, it's really, really okay.

Ross G 04:26

Yeah, and you are really, like remarkably candid in the book about, you know, the fears and the nerves and the humiliations that you've experienced. My worst one was I've been presenting and seeing someone in the front row look at their watch and do this big sort of, you know, puffed out their cheeks like, when is this going to end?

Ross G 04:42

Kind of like, totally threw me for the next 30 minutes. I just wanted the thing to be over. Nathalie, you're a keynote speaker in high demand. How do you feel when you're presenting?

Nathalie 04:56

Always nervous. I can count on my fingers probably two times when I wasn't feeling really nervous. One of them I was... Actually, I think both of them. I was horrifically either jet lagged or hungover, which happens actually very rarely for me.

Nathalie 05:09

But both times it actually went surprisingly well because I just wasn't in the headspace of worrying. And I think, you know, John Paul, to your point about the things that we fear being something which often then, if we let it to sort of become the focus, it gets in the way of the things that we want to say.

Nathalie 05:26

And so I think that's really the thing is how can you turn down the dial? I don't think you're ever going to get rid of it completely, but turn down the dial on the fear and the anxiety while retain that kind of aliveness that you get because you care so much and you want it to be something that you're happy doing, that people feel happy receiving.

Nathalie 05:48

So, yeah.

John-Paul 05:51

Yeah, I totally get that. And for me, I would think it was a bad sign if I didn't have that liveliness, which often feels identical to fear or nerves. It's just that kind of thrill, that, you know, butterflies in the stomach thing.

John-Paul 06:05

And I've learned to recognise that it's quite right. It's quite good to be like that. I'm not being a zombie, sleepwalking through this event. I'm actually here alive with some real people right now.

John-Paul 06:17

And this is the unique occasion on which I would say these things to those people. Even if I met them all again tomorrow, I'd say it's slightly differently. Or if I did the same talk tomorrow to a different group, I'd do something differently.

John-Paul 06:28

It's always an absolutely unique blessing actually to talk to a group of people in a unique moment of time and to be given the opportunity to do that. And so for me, the best way for me to take my mind off, am I being good?

John-Paul 06:46

Am I being bad? Which is always a bad question to be asking, either of them. Because if you think you're being good, you're probably not. And if you think you're being bad, you probably are. So I always just think, don't think about myself.

John-Paul 06:59

Think about these people and what do they want? What do they need? What can I do to read the signs as much as that's possible? And to adjust accordingly.

Nathalie 07:10

And I think also there's a big difference between things going cataclysmically wrong, which hopefully doesn't happen to many of us very often. And things kind of being hiccups. You know, I remember reading early on when I was researching one of my first books, the Prattfall Effect, which is when you do something like a mistake or you trip up, whatever it might be, that it can endear you to people.

Nathalie 07:30

And so I remember thinking early on, if I make a mistake, if I joke about it. But if you know that, then you suddenly realize that actually it humanizes you. And again, it takes the sting outfit. I remember once I was giving a talk, I think it was in Turkey.

Nathalie 07:44

There's a massive event. It was almost entirely men. And I was one of very few women speakers on the stage, quite young, was in my 20s. And my heel got stuck on the stage. I was like, oh, shit, what am I going to do?

Nathalie 07:56

Anyway, so I tried to yell and get out a few times. And then I just kind of got to the point where I just thought, I'm just going to have to do this bare foot and it'll be fine. And I'd made a joke about it, managed to actually get it out.

Nathalie 08:06

And in the end, people were very sweet and they came up and talked to me in a way that they probably wouldn't have had that not happened. And so I think there's also that question of being in it with the people that are sitting there listening to you.

Nathalie 08:18

They want good for you almost. So yeah, I don't know.

Ross G 08:24

No one wants to sit through a bad presentation. No one is sitting there hoping to get bored and disappointed.

Nathalie 08:30

Well, yeah.

John-Paul 08:30

I think a huge amount of that, for me anyway, is the idea that you're just being honest. It's not about, and when I say honesty, it's not about sharing all your inner secrets. It's about just not faking.

John-Paul 08:44

And so if your shoes come off, just don't pretend that it hasn't. Or got, you know. So always just be real and be alive. Because otherwise the audience will be going, why is this person in front of me pretending there's no problem with the shoe when we can all see that.

John-Paul 09:00

So what they want is that moment when what they're feeling and recognising is acknowledged by you. And then it's like, yeah, ding. And everyone sort of chimes together and feels like this unspoken thought is now a spoken thought.

Ross G 09:15

So a lot of our audience are, they're not going to be giving keynote speeches in Turkey. Certainly not next week or in the week after that. A lot of them will be presenting probably in their day to day jobs to smaller rooms, maybe four or five people, often on Zoom or teams or wherever it might be.

Ross G 09:33

Should we think of these kind of presentations differently or do the same techniques apply to the five person presentation versus the 5000?

John-Paul 09:42

I think really the fundamentals are exactly the same. You're here to do this extraordinary, paradoxical thing, which is to say what you want and need to say in such a way that it's helpful to people over there.

John-Paul 09:57

So when I was, I said when I was researching the book, I was trying to think of all sorts of different ways to chop into this subject. And one of them was I drew myself a pseudo scientific graph of what makes an effective talk.

John-Paul 10:10

So if you imagine a graph with an up axis on the left and a cross axis at the bottom, and then there's a curve that starts on the bottom left and goes up in the middle and then goes right down on the right.

John-Paul 10:22

And so the most effective bit is up in the middle. That's my theory. And what's happening on the left is when you're saying something just to please yourself. So it's not very effective. And what's happening on the right is when you're saying things just to please the audience.

John-Paul 10:35

That's not very effective. If you somehow have to say something that's true and important for you, allow the audience to find something valuable in it. And so it's a really interesting balancing act.

John-Paul 10:48

There's never any one moment in a talk when you're doing both of those things. You're constantly adjusting. It's very dynamic. A talk isn't a painting in the National Gallery. It's a moving thing which develops with time.

John-Paul 11:00

And at right this second, although people listening can only hear, I can see you both and I can see your expressions and I'm thinking, what's this going down? Are they about to come up with a question?

John-Paul 11:11

Are they going to agree with this? So I'm trying to be alive to the fact that you exist. It's not just me broadcasting. And when you mentioned earlier, Ross, having the experience of seeing in the audience someone yawning, one of the best things about being an experienced speaker is it's trained me not to be such a dumb member of an audience.

John-Paul 11:36

Try and be polite and be helpful as a member of the audience. I won't go to someone else's talk and turn my camera off if I can possibly help it, because I know how hard it is to give a presentation to a black screen.

John-Paul 11:47

So I'm not saying that I'm perfect, but I try to be a better audience member in order to become a better speaker.

Ross G 11:52

I think you can create space for that as well. One of the techniques that I have observed people doing at conferences is, you'll see at the start, if this session isn't for you, it's okay for you to get up and walk out.

Ross G 12:03

And then if that happens then it doesn't seem like an insult or a critique. It just seems like something that we've reasonably agreed on beforehand. And it's nothing to be embarrassed about because the speaker's already acknowledged it.

Ross G 12:15

So I always like that technique.

John-Paul 12:19

I think there's so many things that we can plan for. If we think about who is this audience, what's their expectation likely to be, then we can plan for things like, well actually they want to get up and leave because they feel a bit trapped in a room where they think, oh no, this isn't my thing and I've got whole hours stuck here.

John-Paul 12:36

So it's good to predict what the audience might be worried about. Another one is clearly, members of the audience might be desperate to ask you questions. So if you say at the very beginning, you can ask me a question at any time, but if you want to wait till the end, I'll answer any questions you still have then because I might have answered it.

John-Paul 12:54

So if you're setting the terms of your presentation at the beginning in whatever way you like that you think meets the needs of that particular audience, it works just like you said, they can get up happily and wander off and you don't feel slighted.

Ross G 13:09

Now the way that you talk about it's, you know, you talk about being dynamic and reacting to the room and that sounds like the kind of things that a very experienced presenter would do. Now you both are very experienced presenters.

Ross G 13:19

So I am intrigued by the extent to which you obviously go out there and you know what you're going to say. So how do you plan your presentations and to what extent do you allow yourself to flex within that?

Ross G 13:32

And then, sorry, long question. Has that changed over time? Maybe Nathalie, you might want to go first.

Nathalie 13:38

So I think as John Paul alluded to it, I think each individual probably has very different ways and distinct ways of giving their talks. I've tried early in my career various different ways like the storytelling Ted way, which is just not a way that I like to give presentations.

Nathalie 13:54

It works really well for some people, but for the...

Ross G 13:57

I think the world's turned against Ted's approach. Maybe. I think it's almost become a cliché, maybe.

Nathalie 14:03

I think it depends again on the needs of the audience. So for instance, the audiences that I speak with, often they want thought leadership pieces. They want to come away having understood something which is a principle that maybe they didn't know before, finding a way to link it to their own lives so that's more meaningful and feeling like something that they maybe didn't understand is now open to them.

Nathalie 14:23

And so my conversations or presentations tend to be quite action packed. There's a lot of principles, lots of examples. I will often pause every sort of 20 minutes of service a longer one to get people's interaction.

Nathalie 14:36

And at the end, they usually tend to be longer Q and A sessions because that's when I find people have the chance to kind of reflect on the points that were relevant to them, ask for clarification on things that maybe they didn't understand or I didn't explain in a way that made sense.

Nathalie 14:49

And then in terms of the dynamism, I think if you're seeing a lot of head nods for certain tones or for certain speeds, obviously if you're talking to international audiences, one of the key things is to make sure that you're speaking a bit more slowly so that people can listen in their second or third language.

Nathalie 15:08

I think those sorts of things, that dynamic response has to be there, whatever your presentation style. But in terms of the content and the interactivity, I think that varies greatly depending on who's doing the talking and what the audiences needs are.

Nathalie 15:21

John Paul, you're nodding. What are your thoughts on the matter?

John-Paul 15:24

I really, really agree with so much of what you said. And well, I don't disagree with anything of what you said. And I remember occasions when, so for example, there are certain types of format like the TED format, where there are certain kind of rules that you sort of have to mix, you have to do this thing.

John-Paul 15:42

You have to stand on their red carpet, as I remember. They have a little red carpet, so you don't move around. So the cameras get red dots. And then there's a clock at your feet and lots of things that, yeah, you're doing that kind of talk now.

John-Paul 15:56

Whereas somewhere else, you might do a different talk and there are different rules that apply. And one of the things that I encourage people to do if they're not that used to doing this is to draw up a list of what I call the five W's and the one H, which is what, where, when, what, why, who and how.

John-Paul 16:15

And just think about all of those as a starting point for your presentation. Like, what is this thing? Who am I talking to? Who am I to them? Who are they to me? There's all these things very little.

John-Paul 16:27

Yeah, are they my boss? Am I their boss? What are the relationships? So if you ask all of those questions and where might be, am I doing it in a big room or am I doing it on Zoom? And if I'm doing it on Zoom, what opportunities and what downsides does that present?

John-Paul 16:42

So for example, one of the things I've discovered in lockdown is the wonderful added value of a Zoom talk, especially when I'm talking about mental health issues, which as you've heard, I do sometimes, people can send me a direct private message and I can read it out, but without saying who it is.

John-Paul 17:00

And I've had people in the chat box saying that they're in a really fragile, I mean, I'm not saying what they're saying, but the things that they've said are really shocking. And I've been able to read it to the other members of their workplace, which is

incredibly warm and bonding thing, but with anonymity preserved.

John-Paul 17:18

And that comes from thinking about the where of this occasion. If I think, what can I do with Zoom that I couldn't do otherwise? What can't I do? Just thinking of those questions very quickly is sort of second nature to me now.

John-Paul 17:32

So Ross, coming back to your question, I don't go through quite the same hoops as I used to because it's a bit more instinctual. And I tend to be much more responsive to what's going on in an audience.

John-Paul 17:45

There's no right or wrong way. You can go to an event where someone's the first time speaker and they've memorised it and they're not going to be deviated and they've absolutely rehearsed every hand movement.

John-Paul 17:54

And that's great. And the next person might be very flexible and do something different. That's great too.

Ross G 18:02

Memorisation is something I wanted to talk about because you, I mean, so you have a model for this that will get into the invention, arrangement style memory and delivery, but you brought up memorisation and I think it's one of the things that's different about presenting online.

Ross G 18:14

Certainly it's one of the things I do is I have a lot more extensive notes when I'm presenting online because no one can tell. So I've got a lot of notes in front of me now in a way that if I was holding three sheets of A4 paper when I'm presenting in person, that's a bit more obvious.

Ross G 18:29

How important do you think it is that you're not referring to notes or reading?

John-Paul 18:35

I honestly believe it's fine to do the thing you know is the least slick and professional to read. But if you're absolutely going to read from notes, then look up when you're speaking, then look down and look at the notes, then look up when you're speaking.

John-Paul 18:50

So that gives a sense of engagement. It's like you're really there and you really see these people. Audiences want to feel seen. So I don't think it matters to read things, but there are techniques that I've learned from, for example, I've trained in theatrical improvisation for a long time with a really good guy.

John-Paul 19:07

And that taught me how embodied our thinking is. So for example, if you think about the times when which probably doesn't really happen anymore, thanks to Google Maps. If you ever ask someone for directions, they'll say,

Ross G 19:22

That happened this week. I was absolutely astounded. And I said, let me check Google Maps for you.

John-Paul 19:27

And once you'd seen Google Maps, I have a question. Did you then sort of mime the turning right and the turning left?

Ross G 19:35

Yeah.

John-Paul 19:35

Your body sort of moves, doesn't it?

Ross G 19:36

Of course, How else do you do it?

John-Paul 19:37

Because, well, you could just say turn left. But if you actually physically move, you encode it in your own brain and it becomes visual for them.

John-Paul 19:46

So this is one of the ways in which I would memorise. You would think about saying it out loud and watching it. You two can see my arm moving right now. Other people can't. But like, why am I doing that?

John-Paul 19:57

What does that mean? And by encoding it physically, which you also do when you hand write something, it's like doing a mini dance that you will remember. The handwriting of your talk is a little miniature dance.

John-Paul 20:10

It's like learning the waltz or something. You have learnt that thing now. And so physically encoding is good. And for other people, or also for many of the same people, just say it into your phone, listen to it, say it into your phone, listen to it, say it into your phone.

John-Paul 20:27

And you will learn what it is in your memory, just as surely as you learn the sound of every song that you've ever heard on Spotify.

Ross G 20:38

How do you keep that energy and spontaneity when you've practiced so much? Because this is something that I find is I've sometimes been bored by my own presentations and have to pretend that I still find it.

Ross G 20:51

I know hard as it is to believe, Nathalie, because I'm such an energetic and engaging presence normally. See you all. But when I'm presenting on stage, I've practiced this 10 times and now I just do not care anymore.

John-Paul 21:03

I really hear you. I think it's important for me anyway to try to find a way to make it new and fresh so that I really do care. I can't really, I don't want to take the psychic cost of repeating it. It feels like it would wear me down.

John-Paul 21:20

So I don't want to do that. But I can see that some people really have to. So I really try to think, like how today do I think I care about this? In what way might I make this something that I could really feel is important and necessary and fresh?

John-Paul 21:35

So I would take a moment to think about that. As for the, there is this sort of paradox and other of those paradoxes that you either, it might be said that you either memorise something perfectly so you know exactly what you're gonna do and that means being ready or you don't know what you're gonna do.

John-Paul 21:52

But I would say that they're both forms of ready because you're ready for anything in the second one. And what you really want is to get to the point where you're ready for both. You have prepared. You do know what you'd do if it all went according to plan, but you're also completely ready to do it entirely differently if it doesn't go according to plan.

John-Paul 22:10

And that comes, that second form of readiness comes from trusting that you're okay. You basically know your stuff. You might make mistakes. If people ask you things you don't know, you promise to come back to them and you will come back to them.

John-Paul 22:25

You don't look at the audience as nasty people but you look at them as people who actually have something about them that you find interesting and even attractive. Just look at them and just don't try and force it.

John-Paul 22:35

Just go, yeah, they actually, yeah. Quite interesting and attractive. And that helps because to me anyway, that advice that you should look at your audience and imagine them naked just feels like an act of violence.

John-Paul 22:48

Like why would I wanna do that? That's like, I hate them. I don't wanna hate my audience. And so I try to look for what's interesting and attractive in them and it sort of amplifies it. Has a kind of nice feedback effect.

John-Paul 23:01

They like me back and then I like them even more.

Ross G 23:05

I guess the picturing the audience naked is a way of forcing them to feel vulnerable. And in so doing, you're kind of acknowledging your own vulnerability. You're like doubling down on how vulnerable you feel by projecting that on others.

Ross G 23:19

So now we're just a room full of scared people. Yeah, it's the fear, isn't it? Because you're interested in one another. Yeah. Sorry, Nathalie, you were going to say something.

Nathalie 23:26

I was really interested by, John Paul, what you're saying about the forms of readiness that we can have. And one of the things, again, I'm sure this depends on personality as well, but one of the things that I find really helps me to land and to be able to riff with the audience is to make sure that I've got just the first four or five minutes nailed.

Nathalie 23:48

Like, if I can nail that and I'll do it ten times, make sure I've got it. It gives me enough time to just land, pace myself, and to know that even if the slides go blank, which they did once, that I can still start the talk.

Nathalie 24:01

And then it gives me permission to kind of riff because I feel like the first bit's gone well, and so then the rest of it, I've built the confidence in. And I don't know if that's a useful heck for other people listening, but sometimes it's not the whole thing that you have to remember.

Nathalie 24:15

It's just, how can I give myself the best chance of landing, relaxing, establishing that kind of paste rapport, and then be like, okay, I've got this. I can do this like a little present to yourself almost.

John-Paul 24:30

Yeah, I totally, I love that tip. And it's one that I have definitely benefited from. And I remember for a long time, my greatest fear was that I think I'm fine. I think I know this thing off by heart, but what if when I go on stage, I go completely blank?

John-Paul 24:44

Oh yes, oh yes. And then like, what do I do? Like, how, what will I do then? And so I think that thing that you just said about, I know that I'm gonna start with this word. And I'm fairly sure that the following word is this one.

John-Paul 24:56

It's like picking up the first pebble in that story about the children who make their way out of the wood, picking up pebbles. It's like, yeah, I know what comes after this one. And you do. So it is actually a question of, I think Nathalie, I heard you saying confidence a second ago.

John-Paul 25:12

And one of the things I love about confidence is that the word means with faith. And faith is never faith if it's a certainty. Faith is always a leap of faith. So you're always gonna have to take a leap of faith to be confident.

John-Paul 25:26

So it's always a choice. It's a commitment, a decision that, okay, I'll try that thing. I can't know that it'll be perfect. In fact, it will never be perfect, which is why I talk about aiming for adequate.

John-Paul 25:39

Because if you aim for perfect, you know you're gonna be disappointed. If you aim for adequate, you might be substantially better than that.

Ross G 25:47

So maybe it would be useful to jump off for you to walk our listeners through the approach that you outlined in the book, so the invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery.

John-Paul 25:56

Sure. Thank you. I wish I could claim credit for it, but it's essentially the fundamentals of classical rhetoric, which have been proven for well over 2000 years.

John-Paul 26:08

But the mistake that a lot of people make is to think they should do step two first. So I'll come to step two. Arrangement. Yeah. Step one is known as invention. It really just means the thing that we've already talked about, which is like, what on earth is this occasion?

John-Paul 26:25

Who are these people? What am I trying to say? So it's about finding your purpose. If your purpose is simply to keep them from getting wet in the rain outside, that gives you a very low target to aim for.

John-Paul 26:37

It's fine. But at least you know that's your purpose. If your purpose is to sell them a zillion dollar machine, well, you need to know that, don't you? So finding out very clearly what you intend to be your talk.

John-Paul 26:51

That's step one. Step two, which a lot of beginners jump into immediately is arranging your material. And that will vary from one person to the next. What that actually is, it could be facts, it could be lots of emotional content.

John-Paul 27:05

It could be a massive list of your achievements in the past. It varies. Step three is really just about taking that arrangement and polishing it up. Style is finding a wonderful figure of speech that summarises your your key points so that it's really memorable.

John-Paul 27:22

An example that I think is a really very effective figure of speech, whether you like it or not. I'm just going to tell you that when Boris Johnson was arguing for Brexit, he used the phrase, oven ready Brexit.

John-Paul 27:36

And it's just incredibly successful at conveying exactly what he wanted people to understand, which is that this is going to be quick and easy and who doesn't like food? And so it just in two words summarises everything.

John-Paul 27:50

So if you can find the right figure of speech, you can really have a big effect. Four is memory, which we've talked about already. And five is delivery, which is all sorts of different things. But we've touched on my my favorite, which is this idea of looking at your audience and just noticing that they seem to be quite pleasant bunch.

Ross G 28:11

So there's quite a lot in that answer. So I think we could put a short summary in the show notes. And then if anyone is interested, of course, they can buy the book, which will be a link to that in the show notes as well.

Ross G 28:21

And since you ended on delivery there, I wonder if you might onto how you prepare physically for presentations, by which I mean, a lot of us, myself included, will feel like we want to be sick and are pouring with sweat.

Ross G 28:36

So how do we transition from that to feeling a bit more comfortable with going in front of people?

John-Paul 28:42

Great. Yeah. I think it's perfectly normal is the first thing to say. And that can be a really big relief because part of the thing that makes us want to feel sick is that we think we shouldn't feel sick.

John-Paul 28:53

So then we feel even more sick because we're doing it wrong in some way. But if you go, oh, I feel sick. Oh, well, that's probably right. And stop fighting it. That's a that's a big start. And then I would suggest that you do just some three deep breaths in and out.

John-Paul 29:09

It's just that. And just have the confidence that if you vomit, everything will still be all right. I don't think you're going to vomit, but it will be all right. So you're going to make that that choice.

John-Paul 29:22

I do tend to do some some squats or some opening my arms up and just moving my body around. So I'm not feeling very stiff, but it's not like a tremendously important thing. I actually probably it's as much as anything a way of discharging some of the excited energy.

John-Paul 29:38

It's not that I have to be limbo and flexible. It's just that I'm full of all this kind of. So I just want to get rid of some of that.

Ross G 29:46

I mean squats are a good tip just throughout your life, apparently. If you want to do one exercise in your entire life, do squats because if you can still get out of a chair when you're 80, everything else is much easier.

John-Paul 29:57

A doctor told me when I was just coming out of psychiatric hospital if I got really anxious I was to just do tons of press-ups. And so I've done that. It's like bloody hell I'm knackered now and I'm not anxious anymore.

Ross G 30:07

You can tell.

Nathalie 30:08

That upper body strength.

Ross G 30:13

Nathalie... How do you prepare physically? Because you've done this a lot.

Nathalie 30:17

So I do something quite similar in the sense, I do tendy breaths because I've got a very, very active mind and it helps me to just keep focusing on the numbers as well as the breath. And sometimes if I'm super energetic, I will actually do some star jumps in the women's toilets.

Nathalie 30:34

But not too much because obviously you don't want to be out of breath. And I will just visualise myself going on stage and this feel, I'll visualise kind of what it feels like to feel joyful because I find it very energising being in front of people.

Nathalie 30:51

Yeah, so those are some of the things that I do.

Ross G 30:54

Excellent and then let's end on....

Nathalie 30:56

What about you? Do you do any?

Ross G 30:58

I don't do it, I really...

Nathalie 30:59

I'm kind of intrigued to see if you do anything, Ross, with your... Okay, just sort of... Get the extra deodorant and hope for that.

Ross G 31:06

I mean, I saw, I really don't speak very often in front of crowds. I have done podcast live a few times in front of maybe a hundred, something like that. And I've spoken at a couple of conferences. I think the only thing I could share really is I, before recording these podcasts, I will listen to another podcast.

Ross G 31:25

Because I think you have to be more energetic on audio than you would be in everyday life. And so listening to other energetic people, I find helps lift me up. But that's maybe more of a psychological space than a physical space.

Ross G 31:38

I'm standing right now because I find it more energetic if I stand when I'm doing this than if I sit down.

John-Paul 31:44

Yeah, and I definitely I can see that there's something very containing and and slightly imprisoning about feeling that you you couldn't stand if you wanted to. But I just remembered that I also would feel really stuck and imprisoned if someone tried to talk to me too much in the few minutes beforehand.

John-Paul 32:01

So I have to sort of excuse myself and just disappear. So like Nathalie can hide in the loo or something. It just I don't want to be bothered in the last little while I want to clear my head. And I suppose I mentioned that because it's important for people to plan for that.

Ross G 32:16

Yeah, actually, so that one of the few times I have presented Live to a room of 100 people, I was in charge of hosting the event and someone came up to me as I was turning my microphone on and said, there's no gluten free option, what are we going to do?

Ross G 32:30

And I was like, it's honestly not the right time, I'm going to leave that one for you to solve. On that note, I think we'll wrap up. So, Nathalie, what would you be taking from this conversation, do you think?

Nathalie 32:46

Honestly, I think it's just this wonderful sense of warmth and well-being, that John-Paul, you use in your approach. It's just very loving, very compassionate, and it's a very generous approach that I think will speak to a lot of people.

Nathalie 33:02

And this sense of readiness and also the confidence being something that we hold faith in. That for me was really powerful. So thank you. Yeah, your kindness infuses your words. Yeah.

John-Paul 33:15

You're welcome, thank you.

Nathalie 33:16

How about you, Ross?

Ross G 33:17

I was actually thinking about the graph that you were talking about, John Paul. Now I realised that a graph is not the ideal format for an audio medium. But trying to get that sweet point between things that you're interested in and things that your audience are interested in not leaning too hard either way.

Ross G 33:35

I know that sounds really obvious, but I have certainly done the former, particularly in sales pitches where I've talked about things that my audience might not care about. So yeah, trying to position myself far enough along that scale to engage the audience, but not so far that I don't care and I'm bored.

John-Paul 33:55

Definitely.

Ross G 33:57

So, John-Paul, if you had done one idea you listeners to take away from this conversation, what would that be?

John-Paul 34:03

It would be to trust themselves to aim for adequate. I know that it sounds like a kind of a gimmick or like I might be trying to flog my book or something, but the point is, I'm not, the point is trying to be perfect will just really stress you out.

John-Paul 34:20

So aim to be okay, aim for average. If you don't want this word adequate, aim for good enough. Whatever it is for you, just think, what would be good enough? And once you've actually identified what that is, you're there basically.

Ross G 34:36

Yeah, that's great. Thanks very much for coming to speak to us today. And of course, we'll put a link to the book in the show notes. It's got a very long title. Remind me again what it is. I'm just glad to get it right.

John-Paul 34:47

It's a Moderate Book About How to Make an Adequate Speech. Thank you.

Ross G 34:52

I didn't want to get it wrong.

John-Paul 34:53

Thank you for doing that. It would be quite nice, bearing in mind what I'd be saying, if you did get it slightly wrong, and then everyone would have to sort of try and work it out somewhere where the book is.

John-Paul 35:03

But you did a very kind job of interacting with your other person. Yeah, thank you.

Ross G 35:10

Yeah, thank you very much. [♪ Outro Music Plays] And there's just time before we wrap up to finish with our regular feature, one thing I've learned this week.

Ross G 35:21

Uh, Nathalie, would you like to go first, about you?

Nathalie 35:24

Sure. So I watched a very intriguing, very short video of bees dropping out of the sky when it gets dark. And I was thinking to bees just not fly in the darkness. And apparently, because you know, you have to research these things, there are two species of bees that do fly in the dark and several that are crepuscular.

Nathalie 35:41

Love that word. But most of them don't because they can't really see very well in the dark. So bees generally prefer to avoid flying at night. There you go. That's what I learned this week. John Paul, what did you learn this week?

Ross G 35:55

No no no, don't move on too quickly. Do they literally fall out of the sky?

Nathalie 35:56

No, no, it's not like they're suddenly... No, no, no. No, no.

Nathalie 36:00

No, it's just that they're not very well adapted to see at night and so only a certain number of bee species are actually able to fly even under low light, so whether it's crepuscular or it's moon, but most of them are just like, we can't see what we're doing.

Nathalie 36:14

Let's go to bed.

John-Paul 36:16

My policy too.

Ross G 36:18

Hehehe. John-Paul, what have you learnt this week?

John-Paul 36:21

Wow, that's it's very interesting how sequencing in a series of talks affects things because now I can't think of anything I've learned about bees as if that's me doing something wrong. But it's just because I'm following Nathalie.

John-Paul 36:33

And I think one of the things that that really delighted me and I know it sounds really pathetic, but we had a car for 18 years and we've just got a new car. And I've learned that we have heated wing mirrors.

Nathalie 36:46

Oh wow.

John-Paul 36:47

Yeah, so like we can see even in the winter.

Nathalie 36:52

What a revelation.

John-Paul 36:54

I know it's pathetic isn't it? Sorry about that.

Nathalie 36:56

That's brilliant. Modern technology.

Ross G 36:59

I was going to ask why you would want heated windows, but I see what you mean.

John-Paul 37:04

In the winter they can get very frosty.

Nathalie 37:06

Indeed.

Ross G 37:07

Yeah, for sure. Well, I don't want to say that you're both of what you shared is relatively mundane. Go on. I was reading about the history of time zones because that's the kind of fun stuff I get up to in a race to the bottom of obscure trivia.

Ross G 37:28

It was sparked by a tweet from George Takei of Sulu and Star Trek. Oh, yeah. Asking, why don't we just get rid of time zones? And I was staring at it and I was like, why don't we just get rid of time zones?

Ross G 37:43

Because I absolutely hate and I work with clients all around the world scheduling meetings. It's so difficult and I could never get my head around it. And you know like daylight savings and stuff. I'm so confused every time because I've only just learned the time zones of where everyone else is.

Ross G 37:57

So I looked up why these things exist. Actually, relatively recent, goes back to the late 1800s. Basically, every town in the US had its own clock and that dictated the time zone for that town. And that is a problem if you want to run a continent-wide rail service.

Ross G 38:13

So in 1883, the US was split into four time zones. And then in 1884, the International Meridian Conference was organised. Sounds like a fun of a fun event. And they split the world into 24 time zones.

Ross G 38:26

It was adopted globally by everyone with a weird exception for the French. Of course. Which I'll put a link in the show notes. You can look up why the French. Decided to do things differently. But that's where we are now.

Ross G 38:37

I don't think the reason, you know, I don't think those reasons still exist. I think we should have a one global 24 hour time. And it's the same time everywhere. The only problem is we'd have to argue over where who gets to keep the current time zone.

Ross G 38:50

I worry it would be Britain. And that that might be historically a mistake.

John-Paul 39:00

This is less humdrum than my Skoda wing mirrors, but yours introduces a great big problem that mine doesn't.

Ross G 39:09

Aw you're very kind. Is there anything that you want to mention before we wrap up, John Paul, your website for example?

John-Paul 39:14

Yes, sure. I'd like to mention that it's been a great pleasure to be here and I will mention my website which is flintoff.org That's flintoff like the cricketer who is my fourth cousin once removed.

Nathalie 39:26

No, way

John-Paul 39:27

Yes way

Ross G 39:31

That'll be a thing I've learned. Yeah, exactly. And that's it. You've been listening to the Future Talent Learning podcast with me, Ross Garner, and with Nathalie Nahai. Our guest this week was John Paul Flintoff.

Ross G 39:45

Until next time, bye for now.