

CMBES MEMBERS: EMBRACE PUBLIC SPEAKING. HERE ARE SOME REASONS WHY.

Going through school, was your goal to become an effective communicator? Probably not.

I studied Biomedical Engineering. My goal was to design cool medical devices.

I eventually learned that being a great designer wasn't enough. Those who truly benefit in organizations are the ones who communicate the best.

At my first job, I was a research associate. No public speaking required, which I didn't mind! It wasn't until my second job did communication and public speaking become something I had to address. I was a product development engineer at a medical device company. I was also a project lead, which involved having to give monthly presentations in front of senior management.

Those first few presentations were absolutely horrendous.

The uncontrollable sweating made it seem as if I had just stepped out the shower!

Getting better at public speaking was an absolute necessity.

Still need some convincing? Here are a few reasons to make improving at public speaking a priority.

1. Who can explain your work better than you?

During my first job, I did a lot of experiments, wrote up the results, and my boss would present them to management. It's easy to pass along your work to someone else to talk about. But do you really want someone else to talk about your area of expertise? They may butcher it! It's unfair to expect someone else to be able to communicate as effectively as you on a subject in which you're the expert. Your organization will be more productive and profitable if you're the one talking about your work.

2. Pay raises and promotions

Ever been passed up for a promotion? Were you the person who thought that, if you excelled at your job, people would take notice and give you what you deserve? That's an unreasonable expectation to have. Those who are the most technically proficient aren't always the ones who get promoted. More often than not, those who speak well and network with decision-makers reap the rewards. Improving your communication skills gets you in front of the right people. Not improving your communication skills leaves you in your cubicle updating your LinkedIn profile while somebody else gets the job you want.

3. Getting out the box

You work as a biomedical or clinical engineer. You're going to work as one forever, right? Maybe not. I host a podcast, and I interview countless people who started off on one path and ended up somewhere completely different. You want to be ready if you decide to change course. A way to get ready is to

improve your communication skills. It makes you more flexible so, if you decide to change careers, you can communicate why you're a suitable candidate to others. This is especially important during job interviews.

There really are no downsides to improving your communication skills. It can open up opportunities, fatten your bank account, and make you more relatable to others. Want to know how to get started? Seek out speaking opportunities both at work and outside work. Practice makes progress. Video yourself giving presentations to assess what you like and what you can improve. Also, ask for feedback, remembering that you can reject it if you don't agree with it or if you receive conflicting feedback.

Now get out there and make it happen!

Neil Thompson is the founder of Teach the Geek, working with technical professionals so they communicate more effectively, especially in front of non-technical audiences. To learn more, please visit teachthegeek.com