

Inside Trump Tower

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Issue 27: Learn to Think on Your Feet

[Pressure Breeds Success](#)

by Donald J. Trump
Chairman, Trump University

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[Tips for Impromptu Talks](#)

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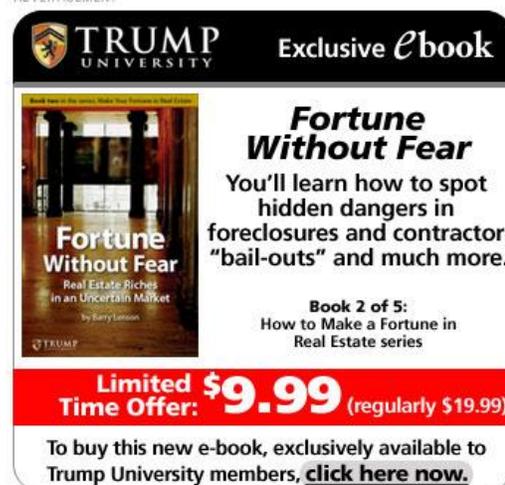
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This Issue: Learn to Think on Your Feet
Issue 27: January 3, 2006

Pressure Breeds Success

by Donald J. Trump

The best way to have an edge is to live on one.

-- Donald J. Trump

I've already written about complacency and how it can ruin your chances for success. It's the same as being in a rut and deciding to stay there. That's why I advise people to live on the edge. It's the opposite of complacency; you have to learn to think on your feet.

Ever notice how your senses are heightened when you are in challenging situations? You're experiencing an adrenalin rush that gives you extra energy. If you see every day as a challenge, you'll be surprised how efficient you can become, and how much can be accomplished. People often say they "hit the ground running," which is another way of saying they did their prep work and were ready.

One recurrent lesson on *The Apprentice* teaches candidates to think quickly. They are under a time constraint, but it's important that they also have a Plan B in line. If Plan A doesn't work, they're prepared for it and they won't lose much time. They are learning to think ahead, to be prepared, and to cover their bases. These are basic ingredients for success in business.

When I started out in business, I spent a great deal of time researching every detail that might be pertinent to the deal I was interested in making. I still do the same today. People often comment on how quickly I operate, but the reason I can move quickly is that I've done the background work first, which no one usually sees. I prepare myself thoroughly, and then when it is time to move ahead, I am ready to sprint.

Being able to think on your feet is the result of training and discipline. You can't sprint unless you have built up the stamina to do so. Building stamina is up to you. If you don't work at it, it's not going to happen by wishful thinking. You have to dedicate yourself to it every day. In other words, set a goal and work towards it. Athletes know that no one else can do the training for them. Business people should have the same discipline. You have to be self-reliant.

Have you ever said to yourself, "I wish I'd thought of that!"? One way to learn to think on your feet is to ask yourself what you should be thinking of this very moment. Do it right now. You'll be surprised how many good ideas you might have, if you'll give

yourself the chance to think about them. Thinking takes time. It's the preparation for being able to think on your feet. First things first: First we walk, then we run, then we sprint.

Thoreau said: %know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestioned ability of a man to elevate his life by conscious endeavor.+That is not only an encouraging statement, it is also an empowering one. It means you can accomplish a lot by applying your brainpower and then moving forward with it. Thought without action won't amount to much in the long run. Those great ideas you have will remain great ideas unless you actively do something with them.

Don't wait for dire circumstances to test your quick-thinking ability. Test yourself daily. Be alert at all times. As Napoleon said: %A leader has the right to be beaten, but never the right to be surprised.+See yourself as a leader--starting right now. It will mean you are self-reliant and responsible, and you won't be unpleasantly surprised by the vicissitudes of life, whether you are in business or not. Being prepared cannot be overestimated, and if you want to hit the big time running, you'd better be able to think on those feet of yours. So let's get going!

Donald J. Trump is Chairman of Trump University.

Tips for Impromptu Talks

by Adam Eisenstat

It takes three weeks to prepare a good ad-lib speech.

-- Mark Twain

First impressions, even final decisions, are often made based on impromptu conversations in meetings and conferences. You can learn to think on your feet and become a compelling extemporaneous speaker. If you are frequently or even occasionally called on for impromptu remarks, the exercises necessary to develop the skill are worth the effort.

In an impromptu presentation, you can do a quick assessment of the audience by simply looking around the room. Organize your remarks by making a quick mental outline or, if time permits, jot down a few notes. It is possible, with practice, to train yourself to do a commendable job of ad-libbing with less than Mr. Twain's recommended three weeks' preparation time.

There are two types of extemporaneous speaking situations: times when you choose or feel compelled to contribute and times when, out of the blue, you are called on to contribute. The latter is, by far, more difficult, but there are a few tricks to help you with both situations.

The two problems most people face in an impromptu talk are (1) not knowing how to organize their thoughts quickly and coherently, and (2) not knowing when to stop talking. There are guidelines that will help you formulate a fast mental outline.

- Limit yourself to no more than three topics
- Use a chronology: past, present, and future
- Discuss the pros and cons of the theme or argument
- Don't lose your cool

Your mental outline should include your conclusion, the primary message you want to leave with the audience, presented as a strong, positive statement. Inexperienced extemporaneous speakers often simply forget a closing statement and just stop speaking. Resist the temptation to ramble; say what you have to say and either sit down or call for questions.

If called on unexpectedly to say a few words, stall for a moment or two to collect your thoughts by thanking the chair or speaker for giving you time to speak and possibly reiterating something said previously. Asking a relevant rhetorical question is also a way to buy a little time and can serve as your opening.

Practice in spare moments by picking a topic, taking a minute to prepare a mental outline or make a few notes, then standing and speaking for a couple of minutes. Increase the speaking time as you become more comfortable with the exercise. A practice shortcut is to make quick mental outlines of topics while reading the newspaper or watching the evening news. In training yourself to speak extemporaneously, the thought-gathering process and the speedy organization of those thoughts are the keys; the topic is almost incidental.

Adam Eisenstat is Director of Communications at Trump University.

Improvisation and the American Character

by Adam Eisenstat

The art of improvisation is quintessentially American. In our individualistic, action-oriented culture, being able to think on your feet is a real asset. Our most American folk heroes--the pioneer, the outlaw, the self-made millionaire, the bohemian freespirt--were masters of improvisation. Our capacity for improvisation is what distinguishes us from autocratic and authoritarian societies. Rigid hierarchy and inflexible tradition are the antithesis of America's ideals.

A look at the military culture of authoritarian regimes, such as North Korea, offers a vivid contrast to the American military's emphasis on individual initiative and its essential component, improvisation. The military cultures of such countries stress rote learning and a centralized, inflexible chain of command. Field commanders and lower-ranking soldiers are actively discouraged from innovative or independent thinking. The realities of war, however, demand quick-thinking under stressful conditions. In the fog of war, one's survival may hinge on the ability to improvise. In the American military, extensive preparation, an emphasis on combat instincts, and a high regard for innovation converge to produce a potent force that epitomizes the value of improvisation.

On the illicit side, there are the legions of mountebanks and carpetbaggers who plied their dubious trades amidst the relative anarchy of the Wild West and the south during Reconstruction. The wily operator who makes it up as he goes along is an American archetype with a rich variety of incarnations.

Artists at the forefront of new movements like Bebop pioneer Charlie Parker and writer Jack Kerouac, founder of the Beat Generation, created innovative work that was rooted in improvisation. Parker and Kerouac, along with their peers and acolytes, romanticized the idea of going with the flow and being in the moment. They championed an artistic and spiritual domain ruled by instinct, whim, and spontaneity.

Improvisation, backed by some degree of training and study, reveals your inner character. Your decisions and actions define you as a person and direct the course of your life. It's about using what you know to affect the outcome of complex situations in which you are just one part. Essential to this idea is that of *amor fati*--love your fate, that is, embracing the aspects of your life

over which you have no control--like the circumstances of your birth or happenstance . It means responding to fate in a deliberate way, and engaging in a constant effort to creatively integrate randomness in your life and work.

Entrepreneurship is a realm where improvisation applies in a much broader and deeper way than anywhere else in business. A start-up company might be called the business equivalent of bebop, where improvisation is the dominant mode. In a start-up, all the surrounding creative energies of the company are geared toward making products or services happen and getting them to market. To this end, people in start-ups perform many roles, some of them less than familiar, and encounter problems that may be new to them or simply new, owing to the fact that entrepreneurship often involves navigating uncharted territory.

Business, like the rest of life, rarely comes with an edited script, and sometimes there's no script at all. Your success in business rides on your ability to improvise. Mastering improvisation is a sure fire way to become better at everything you do.

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