

Speak for Success trains managers

Class helps conquer public speaking fears

By Heather Chambers
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OCEANSIDE — It's a fretful situation with undesirable symptoms like sweaty palms, a quivering voice and shaking knees.

The desire to perform well on a presentation in front of co-workers can cause a person anxiety like no other, but local help exists for those in need.

Dana Bristol-Smith, founder of Oceanside's Speak for Success and author of a book on the subject, has been teaching managers how to keep it cool during a big speech, or a small one, for 13 years.

Companies like Honeywell, Agouron/Pfizer and the U.S. Navy have applied her coaching skills to their training programs.

Beginning Monday, March 7, she will facilitate "Business Presentations for Professionals" at Cal State San Marcos [CSUSM].

The class will concentrate on how managers can improve their public speaking skills with simple exercises, like watching themselves on videotape.

Bristol-Smith said she realized her own fear after a job with an educational company required her to address 150 fifth and sixth grade students during an assembly.

The company never mentioned she would have to give presentations previous to her



Dana Bristol-Smith photo

Dana Bristol-Smith founded Oceanside's Speak for Success, an organization that helps people communicate effectively, in 2001. She has been training business professionals to confront their fears of public speaking for 13 years.

employment, she said.

"The day of, I was thinking, 'I hope I don't have a heart attack and die,'" she said.

Bristol-Smith said she came to realize others had the same scary feelings she felt before walking onto the stage.

"Most people in business today are required to give a presentation as part of their job," Bristol-Smith said. "And most, like me, had no formal training, so we make mistakes along the way and learn from those."

Studies show people would rather jump out of a plane, swim with sharks, play with snakes — anything — before speaking in public.

A famous line from comedian Jerry Seinfeld questioned why people would rather be dead in the casket than alive

to deliver a eulogy.

"Usually 90 percent in class say their biggest concern about giving presentations is the fear and anxiety they feel," Bristol-Smith said.

She said managers often fear sounding unprofessional or forgetting the words to their speech.

"People are most afraid of looking bad in front of other people," she added.

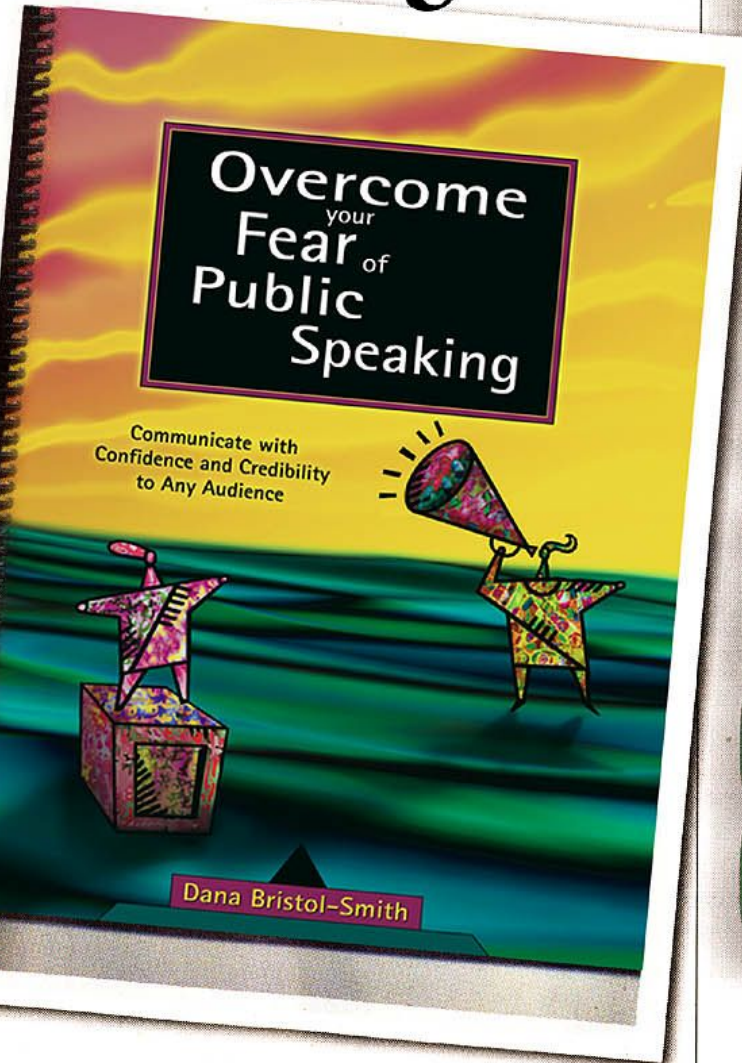
As a solution, Bristol-Smith said she asks class participants — usually managers — to write down the worst possible scenario.

Most of the time, she said, people realize the worst scenario really doesn't seem as awful as they imagined. She also suggests exercising the morning or night before, taking deep, slow breaths before a presentation and watching caffeine intake beforehand.

"People have to know what their own caffeine tolerance is and if that helps or hinders them," Bristol-Smith said.

Other complications can occur with audiovisual equipment if a person doesn't understand its uses, she added. "The tool most business professionals use is PowerPoint," she said. "PowerPoint helps presenters stay on track."

Bristol-Smith said her class at CSUSM will begin with fundamentals — handling nervousness and anxiety — teach people how to develop persuasive presentations and then



handle more advanced skills.

"This is a learned skill and most people haven't had formal training and education," she said.

Bristol-Smith said, with practice, any manager can face his or her worst fears.

"I give people a safe environ-

ment through positive coaching and support," she said. "I know if I could do this, anyone could."

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