

International Publicity for Border Crossers

Interview With Peter Legge, MA, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame

Submitted By Naomi Rhode, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame and president-elect, International Federation of Professional Speakers

Q What a privilege to bring to you, my professional colleagues, one of the 'best of the best' in our profession, Peter Legge, MA, CSP, CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame, to share his awesome experience as an international ambassador, entrepreneur, publisher, speaker, author and member of NSA and CAPS.

Share with us a brief summary of your tenure as a professional speaker and the specific international platform presence you have enjoyed.

A My career as a professional speaker is now in its 20th year. While the majority of my speaking is in Canada and the United States of America, I have had the privilege of speaking in the United Kingdom, Austria, Israel, Korea, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Mexico, New Zealand and Australia.

I was hired by Canadian organizations for the Asian countries and, therefore, any cultural tips that I have might not be applicable to these presentations.

Q Wow—impressive, Peter! Now, what makes those presentations really work? What are the keys, the non-negotiables that we can creatively apply to our opportunities internationally?

A My own experience is that I truly believe I have personally benefited from the travel to these rather exotic locations, perhaps even moreso than my audiences have. To be able to see the sights and experience the culture of different lands is without question rich and rewarding in itself.

If an international opportunity arises, it is in the best interest of the speaker to accept that engagement, simply because of what the speaker will learn and broaden his or her horizon. There really are no negatives to this kind of

experience.

Q So much practical reflection and advice, Peter. What about the 'never/nevers' of international platform presentations?

A You must be extremely cautious when using humor and any North American colloquialism, as it seldom crosses borders with the same impact. If you haven't checked out your humor stories with one or two locals and get their approval, it is best to avoid humor altogether.

Q Are there any specific cultural tips that would cap off the sensitivity factor that is so very important when traveling and speaking?

A In the spring of 2004, when I was speaking in New Zealand and Australia on leadership, motivation and success, I was not aware of the expression "Tall Poppy Syndrome." I had not presented my success stories with humility and sensitivity. People in that part of the world generally get chopped down and are seldom praised for their successes, and they call it the "Tall Poppy Syndrome." In Australia, I learned very quickly that while they like the American way of life, they do not like to be compared to Americans.

Q Very practically, can you offer any ideas on customization internationally?

A Certainly research to the specific customs that various countries subscribe is essential. It can be as simple as knowing to put out two hands when offering your business cards to someone from Japan. My experience has been that your wardrobe should be very smart, yet conservative. When you use your North American stories, attempt to draw comparisons to similar companies in that country. This can be expressed with phrases such as, "My experience has shown me..."

Q Great information Peter! Is there an example, an experience or an 'I will never forget' presentation that you would like to share?

A Speaking in Wales at the beginning of my career, I had decided to use stories on kids (to illustrate various points). I hadn't checked the name of the town I was in and at the break I was dismissed. Why? The town was called Aberfan, and a few years earlier, a coal mine collapsed onto the local school, killing 116 children and engulfing some 20 houses. This was almost every child in the town. My lack of sensitivity and research earned me a quick trip out of town—one I will never forget. You must know where you are speaking and any major events occurring in the previous five to 10 years that could affect your presentation.

Q In conclusion, Peter, share with us the "why" of international presentations. Why should we be interested in the international venue for sharing our messages, our lives?

A To me, the "why" of international presentations is how it helps me grow as an individual, how it helps shape my messages for my main market, and how I appreciate the great freedoms that we so often take for granted in North America. In many markets we are envied, but unless we portray a sense of humility and compassion using our skills as orators with a great heart of love, we will truly miss out on the opportunity to influence those international audiences.

Q Truly one of the rewards of our collegiality, Peter, is this kind of sharing of experience and advise. You are a wonderful example and ambassador of the "Cavett Spirit." Thank you, Peter! Thank you!

Peter Legge, CSP, CPAE, lives his life dream as a professional speaker and president and CEO of Canada Wide Magazines & Communications Ltd. His presentations are based on his everyday experiences as a community leader, husband, father and CEO. His seven books have motivated many people towards positive change.

