Public Speaking 101

Want to start speaking at events, but not sure where to start? Then this is the workshop for you! Our community needs new speakers, and we want to help you become one of them.

This hands-on workshop will help you work through a series of exercises:

1. Owning your expertise
2. Brainstorming ideas
3. Drafting a proposal
4. Drafting a bio
5. Researching meetups and conferences

Ground Rules

The first three of these are from the [Hacker School User's Manual Social Rules](#).
- **No feigning surprise**: Don't act surprised when people say they don't know something (e.g. "What?! I can't believe you don't know what *the stack* is!").
- **No well-actually's**: A well-actually happens when someone says something that's almost - but not entirely - correct, and you say, "well, actually…" and then give a minor correction. Almost all well-actually's in our experience are about grandstanding, not truth-seeking.
- **No backseat-driving**: If you overhear people working through a problem, you shouldn't intermittently lob advice across the room.
- **Be constructive & helpful**: Be nice and give useful feedback. Constructive feedback describes what occurred (without personal attacks), the impact, and offers suggestion for improvement.

Exercise 1: Are you an expert?

We'll practice owning our expertise.

> expert – (*noun*) a person who has a comprehensive and authoritative knowledge of or skill in a particular area.

We are all experts of our own experience. Sharing our path, passion, and knowledge inspires others. We don't need to know everything about a topic to have something valuable to say!

Solo

Spend two minutes thinking of **professionally** related expertise that you possess. You'll be introducing yourself to a small group as an expert with 2 - 3 sentences that describe your expertise.

If you're stuck, consider the following:
- Technologies you know
- Soft skills
- Professional accomplishments
- Area(s) of focus
- Non-profit work
- Special skills

Group

1. Split into groups of 8.
2. Introduce yourself as an expert to the group.

   Hello, my name is _____. I am an expert [in|of] _____.

   Provide 2-3 sentences with more detail.

3. If you have more time after introductions, discuss the following:
   a. How did it feel to call yourself an expert?
   b. What was effective in the introductions you heard? Ineffective?
   c. Did you use your last name? If not, why?

Exercise 2: Brainstorming

Solo

Work through the following questions by yourself and consider technical, product management, and/or design topics that interest you. You could focus on things you know very well or things you want to learn. You can draw on lessons learned from a specific project or industry observations.

Things you work on a lot (e.g. what you do at work, subject you study):

Topics you are excited about:

Things you work on sometimes (e.g. side project, open source work):

Topics you wish more people talked about:

Other

Group

Discuss your ideas with a group of four. Ask questions and encourage each other to dig deeper. Add new ideas as they come to you.

Pick one topic for the next exercise.

Exercise 3: Preparing an Abstract

Solo

First you'll need a title. Just like books and movies, you want a punchy title that will catch the eye (but make sure that it's professionally appropriate).

Title:

The abstract doesn't need to describe everything in deep detail that you're planning to cover. Think of it as a movie synopsis. It should be short and to the point, summarizing only high-level ideas in your talk. Try to answer the following questions.

What is the talk about?

What will people get out of it?

Why is it important?

Who is the target audience?

Abstract:

Pair

Swap abstracts with someone from your group. Review each other's abstract and give constructive feedback. Ask questions for clarification.

Exercise 4: Writing a Bio

Solo

What's unique about you or a unique perspective that you bring to your community or your topic?

You can be pretty high level here and keep it short. Think elevator pitch, not cover letter. You've already brainstormed some points you could share in the first exercise so use them here!

Example:
> Corey Leigh Latislaw (coreylatislaw.com) is a Google Developer Expert in Android who has written many apps and led teams at companies large and small. An American in London and technical lead at TAB (The App Business) who speaks internationally, authors videos and books on Android programming, and sketchnotes every day.

Bio:

Pair

Swap your bio with your pair. Review each other's bio and give constructive feedback. Ask questions for clarification.

Exercise 5: Research Events

1. Find at least two industry-related conferences or meetups that you'd like to submit to. Armed with your abstract and bio, you can submit to them today!
2. Find future events you might want to submit to and add the dates for the CFP (call for papers) submission dates to your calendar. If a date is not given on their website, you can email organizers directly.
3. Submit your abstract to the CFP.
4. If accepted, write the talk!

Tips

- **Abstract == MVP**: You only need the abstract up front. No need to write a whole talk if there's no place to give it.
- It's often helpful to start speaking at local events to build up confidence. This also helps you work on presentation skills and slides.
- Practice is the only way you're going to get better. It is hard at first, but does get easier.
- You don't need to write a new talk every single time you speak. You can speak at several conferences using the same talk.
- Rejection is normal and doesn't reflect on the quality of your talk idea. There are many factors including too few seats for interesting talks, types of talks submitted (e.g. 30 Android talks), and choosing talks to fit a particular theme. Try other venues.

Attribution

Write/Speak/Code inspired the Own Your Expertise exercise.