

Foreword

I was skeptical. That's why my first impression of Lisa Bernard is a vivid one.

By the time I met Bernard and sat in her public speaking course at Queens College in 2012, I had already landed my first sports media job with Newsday, completed three highly-competitive internships and I had a two-year run as editor of the school's student newspaper. I viewed myself as a unique senior at the school, and one who didn't *need* to take a public speaking course. I thought I was already a strong, confident speaker who knew how to woo a crowd. What's more, I initially thought, "Some of this material is extremely cliché!" I was referring to some openings of speeches Bernard had presented to the class. These speeches opened with words like, "Welcome, fellow sportswriters." My nose was in the air from Day One. It didn't take long for Bernard, who reads people better than anyone I've met, to notice.

I kept coming to the class during the early stages of that semester, despite my reservations, mainly because of the way Bernard presented herself as professor – she's a pro and if you've met her, you don't need me to explain. Yet one day in the middle of class, my skepticism, though not verbalized, was obvious. At least it was obvious enough for Bernard to look me in the eyes and say, "The oratory world is different from the print world. Respect it as its own medium. Trust me here. I know what I'm doing." She was speaking to the entire class, but she easily could've been speaking directly to me.

I'm not easily convinced and I also don't conform easily – these two traits help me succeed in my industry. But Bernard's words were enough for me. Maybe it was because what she said was so obvious and so very true. Maybe it was because I soon learned that regardless of what the topic is, if you apply Bernard's components of a good speech, you will deliver. I would know, considering I performed a speech about paper – yes, paper – for my final project in her course and received an A.

Because of Bernard, I was able to deliver the eulogy at my grandmother's funeral when I was asked to "say a few words." I was able to present sports awards on behalf of Newsday in front of crowds of more than a few thousand people. I was able to toast my best friend and his bride at their wedding. More importantly, however, what you'll learn through Bernard's building blocks for good speeches is how to persuade, motivate and inform. Do yourself a favor: skip the step I took because there's no reason to be skeptical of whether or not Bernard's teachings work in the practical world. They do.

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