

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Hey there. It's Sam, and welcome back to On Your Terms. I'm so excited that you're here. So, I'm really excited because for the next couple of weeks, I'm running something that I'm calling Online Marketing Summer School. So, I'm going to be airing a series of episodes that are all geared towards helping you bump up your online marketing game this summer.

So, I'll be real with you, as always. I am taking a little time to recoup this summer because I just lost my mom. My mom just passed away. Yes, you heard that right, both of my parents. I have lost both of my parents in the past year. So, as you can imagine, it is very tough, very overwhelming, and I need a little bit of space.

And I know that I've already given you hundreds and hundreds of episodes of this show, and thousands of emails and blog posts and social posts, and I know that there's so much waiting for you that you might just not have had time to catch up on yet. So, I decided to put it all together for you, call it Online Marketing Summer School. And I am really excited to bring back some of my favorite episodes from my and also from your favorite teachers here that I've had on the show to help us bump up our marketing game this summer.

It's such a good time to revisit your marketing strategy or to create one if you haven't yet. Don't worry, I won't tell anybody. But it's such a good time for you to do that because you can get some things set up this summer to maybe do some sort of promotion in the fall or just have a better half of the rest of 2023. So, I invite you to kick back, relax, listen to the next couple of weeks of episodes all about online marketing.

And I hope that you'll send me a DM on Instagram, @samvanderwielen, or leave a review of the show wherever you listen to let me know if you've liked these episodes. Hopefully, if you've never heard them before, I'm introducing you to something new. And if you're listening to them again, take a note from my mom, who was a brilliant, brilliant woman and would reread so many books throughout her life. Like, she reread the book *Flow* and *Tipping Point* and so many different books throughout her life. She would

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On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

reread them in different parts of her life, and she would always walk away with something new, and she would always put in the notes what year she read it and what she learned that year versus the other years.

So, there is nothing wrong with re-listening to things. I re-listen all the time. So, I hope that if you've listened before, you take away something new from this great episode. So, I'll see you on the other side. Please send me a message, let me know how you liked it. Thank you so much for listening.

Hey, Mike, thank you so much for coming on On Your Terms.

Mike Pacchione: Sam, my new friend. I am stoked to be here.

Sam Vander Wielen: I'm so happy that you're here. I was telling you before we hopped on that I have never gotten so many questions for a guest speaker, so I'm really excited. Why do you think that people ask more questions about public speaking than any other guest I've had before?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, that's so funny because I would have a million questions about, like, accounting or legal. But, you know, I've thought a lot about speaking as a practice and how most people don't like it. And I'm like, "Well, why do most people not like it?"

And I think there's this illusion that the best speakers just roll out of bed, put on their pants one leg at a time, make gold records, and then go out on stage and clean up. And I think most people don't realize that it takes a good amount of work. So, if you don't know that, then you just kind of fall down the cliff of, "Oh, I'm not good at this." I call this the feel bad for me's, like "I'm not good at this. Someone else is better. Feel bad for me."

There's a lot that goes into it. And I think a lot of people don't know that. A lot of people wonder about practices for feeling less nervous. And then, once you get beyond that,

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On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

then there are all these questions about like, "Well, how can I get better and better and better?" And what's really exciting is when people start to like it, and then it's like, "How can I excel at this thing?" And that's the best.

I always tell people this, I stopped playing sports a long time ago. The last time there was any applause for me playing sports is when I was 22. And when I say any applause, that was, like, eight people on the sideline. It's one of the only places after you graduate college, unless you're a pro athlete, where you can feel the adrenaline rush of performance and applause. And once you move beyond being frightened of it and start to understand what you're doing a little bit, I mean, it is the best.

And the feeling of nailing a speech, walking up the stage, and not sitting there saying, "Oh, I forgot this" or "Oh, I should have said this" or "Oh, I was too nervous," the feeling of not having any of that and just walking off the stage knowing that you accomplished what you can accomplish, that is the best. And I love more than anything coaching people to do that.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah, that is so cool. I mean, I feel like that about speaking. I'm the same way, I get a thrill out of it, so I understand. So, speaking of helping people do that, can you tell everybody about what you do and how you help people?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, totally. You, listening to this right now, you've got a great idea in your head and I help you get that idea out of your head in a way that snaps, and crackles, and pops with the audience. And it doesn't just pop at them, but motivates them to do something. And I help you do that better than you can imagine than you could.

So, I help you with figuring out creative ways of bringing that idea to life and how to pair that creative idea with slides. Your slides should not be your notes, which a lot of people do that, like slides are treated like a big note card. Your speech should go with the slides and then we try to coordinate the delivery with that too. And I help people with all

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

three aspects of that. I help you understand it so that you're not just on stage trying to be Mike. It should be you presenting. It should be Sam presenting. It should be whoever you are listening presenting. Not me. But I help you do that to the best of your ability and I help train you for that so that you can keep doing it again and again and again.

I'm happy to help people more than once, but the idea is that you work with me one time and then after that maybe you need a clean up, but you're good to go.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That's awesome.

Mike Pacchione: And it's the coolest thing. I'm thinking of my guy Neil. Neil Dhingra came to me, and this guy is, like, a multi-millionaire. And he's so boring when he starts, and he told me that. He's like, "Yeah. I have no life in my presentation." And these days, like this giant conference and brings Gary V. in, and people love Gary V., but they also love Neil, and he's on the same stage and he's not intimidated. And it's the coolest thing in the world to see. So, I'm babbling a little bit, but I love helping people so much.

Sam Vander Wielen: No, that's awesome. I love that you love what you do. And you've helped a couple people here and there. I was joking on Instagram the other day, I said, "This guy is really up and comer. He's doing all right. He's helped a couple people." But tell me, like, what were you doing before this? How did you get into speaking and coaching?

Mike Pacchione: A lot of people have speech anxiety. I never did - let me rewind. The only times I ever had speech anxiety were times when I didn't put the work in. So, to me, it wasn't fair to blame public speaking for that. It's the same as not studying for tests. But if I had to then take the test in front of everybody and everybody's watching me try to BS an essay, it's the same feeling, it's just not public.

So, to me, I never blame public speaking for that. When I was in third grade, I used to do show and tell and everybody looked forward to me. I don't want to overdo it, it wasn't

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

quite hushed tones, but people were like, "Oh, Mike's going on now. Let's pay attention." All the way through college, I experimented with public speaking in different ways of doing it, and storytelling, and I always loved it.

I never knew it was something you could do for a career. So, to me, the best thing I could do would be to be a professor or to be a teacher and be really interesting. When I got to college, I had this really, really awesome teacher, still teaches there. I went to University of Richmond, Dr. Scott Johnson. And he came into class and he was funny. Like, he would make the content come alive with jokes and stories. And I was like, "Oh, you can do that." And I mean, that was freshman year.

And from that moment on, in the back of my mind, I was like, "Maybe I should be a college professor," so I went to grad school for that. I learned pretty quickly that being a college professor has little to do with teaching.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yes. That's my husband's life.

Mike Pacchione: Oh, I did not know that. What amount of time does he spend teaching versus research and grading?

Sam Vander Wielen: Two percent. It's like nothing. He's whole job is research.

Mike Pacchione: When I learned that, I had moved across the country. I moved all the way to Portland. I get there, I'm like, "Is this it?" But I didn't have anything else to do. I mean, I was trying to find a plan B, so I just kept going to school, graduated, got a job. And was an adjunct on the side.

I mean, I had like a God smiling on me moment where there's a guy from Nike who sat in on the class, wasn't even in my class, but I was an adjunct, his girlfriend was there. He comes up to me during a break, he says, "Hey, you're really engaging presenter, would you want to present at Nike some time?" "Okay."

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Did your heart stop? I think mine would have.

Mike Pacchione: It seems like something I should do. At the time, I don't know anything. I don't know, I'm not going to get paid \$100 or \$1,000. Is it going to be zero? What is it going to be? I just knew I should say yes.

I put together a presentation. It was one of the few times I was intimidated by the audience, not ahead of time, but when I got on stage. I distinctly remember being there. I've got a spotlight on me. They had a chair set out. Anybody from Nike could have been there. Phil Knight could have been there. I guess LeBron, if he was on campus, could have been there.

I remember looking out and people weren't, like, smiling and laughing the way college students were. And I just remember thinking, like, "Should I be entertaining them?" It was weird. I had a microphone, you know, all these things I wasn't used to. And I just let the audience defeat me a little bit even though nobody actually said anything. And by all accounts, it went well. But it left me feeling like I could have done more and I could have done better.

So, from that moment on, I was like, "Okay. But that was fun. What can I do about this?" And I did a light amount of research. I found this company in the Bay Area called Duarte. I sent a really good email to the CEO. It was perfect timing. They were just expanding their academy. They needed people who understood story, which was me. And they needed people with teaching experience, which was also me. It was perfect timing.

I worked there for seven years. I went to just about every big company that you can name. I did trainings there. I flew all over the world. And I just loved it. One of the things that I give myself credit for is, because it was the same or a similar script every single time, I felt like, "Okay. Well, I can do the thing where I'm presenting and it's just the

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On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

same every single time and I put no work into it, and it still goes well because stuff's really good." But to my credit, I always tried to experiment with what would make people understand even more and even more and even more than that, and timing things, when to take breaks. If I change the phrasing on this joke, how would it sound?

And from that, I feel like I went in knowing a lot, learned more there. And then, the extra stuff that I did on the side really, really helped me with things like learning how to tell a story, with things like interacting with slides, knowing what people's attention spans were like, and really better understanding what people's pain points were.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's awesome.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. Long answer to your question. But I guess my summary of that is, when I look at my life, I am a pretty indecisive person. But speaking was the one realm that always made sense. Yeah, it always made sense, and, to me, it really feels like a calling.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's awesome. It feels like it speaks to you. And it sounds to me like when you were at University of Richmond that Professor Johnson made you realize how transformative the way that you tell a story. Like, I could tell the same story in a boring way and he could say it in this dynamic way, and you really took something from it. So, it sounds to me like you really took away the power of telling a good story being a dynamic interesting speaker.

Mike Pacchione: Absolutely, yeah. I don't know, if you look back, like, how many teachers did you have all the way through law school, forgetting the content, just them as a teacher held your attention. Do you have anybody?

Sam Vander Wielen: Not many. I mean, there was maybe one in law school - funny, because it actually touches on something you taught us at the ConvertKit Conference. She was my torts professor in law school. And so, in torts, you're learning like what is

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

negligence, what's assault, and battery, and all these kind of fun crimes. And so, she would act them out. She would have us act them out.

Mike Pacchione: What?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. So, what we would learn I remember to this day, this is why I remember. The reason I remember what the self-defense rules are is because she would have two people stand up at the front of the classroom and one person would pretend to slap the other. But then, she would give a toy gun to the other person. So, that's how she taught us, like, if someone slaps you, you're not allowed to shoot them in self-defense. You could slap them back. That's the equivalent of what self-defense is. If someone shoots at you, then you can shoot back. And so, she would have us, like, act this out.

And so, that was the only dynamic law school teacher. Everyone else was like, "And on page 75 -" it was awful.

Mike Pacchione: Totally. That's what everybody does and that's what people do in the court world too.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yes, exactly. Yeah. Exactly.

Mike Pacchione: But that's amazing. How long ago was that?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That was in 2009.

Mike Pacchione: 2009, and that still sticks with you.

Sam Vander Wielen: Always. I always remember slap for a slap, punch for punch. And I just remember everybody was, like, goofing off and pretending to really shock somebody. It was pretty funny.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: But there's not that many teachers who put that effort in.

Sam Vander Wielen: No. Shoutout to Professor Mutcherson at Rutgers.

Mike Pacchione: So, good, because the easy thing is, "Here's what the homework was. Let's slowly discuss this exact thing that you read already, for me to mind whether you should have done the reading anyway if we're just going to talk about it in class."

Sam Vander Wielen: And it's really easy to do that in our business, too, where the people who are listening are experts at what they do. And so, people get into a very teach-y mindset of like, "Here are five things you need to know about Keto. Here are 12 things you need to know about lifting in this way," like whatever. And so, they just kind of teach, but I don't think they keep it more conversational or even interesting. I don't know, it's a little bit flat. It can be flat.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. Can we talk about that for a second? Because this is one of the things I try to communicate to people, there's a big difference between a blog post and a presentation. Because a blog post can be that, "Here are the five things that you need to do." A presentation can also be the five things that you need to do, but you need to come up with a way to make those five things come alive on stage. Otherwise, why didn't I just read the blog post?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. This is true. I can understand that. By the way, why do you think speaking is so important for us? What does it do for us as people or for the people listening or for our businesses?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. I think if you want to live a life on your terms - title drop --

Sam Vander Wielen: Shoutout.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: I think it's one of the best ways to live a life on your terms. I mean, if you think about it, think about the business person that you aspire to be - I guess it depends a little bit on what your field is - but I think most of the time that's someone who is on a stage. And that's not a coincidence because that communicates excellence. If you do well, it ups your perceived value. And, frankly, the financial opportunity that comes with speaking on stage is tremendous.

And I'm not even talking about getting paid to speak necessarily. I mean, that's great. There are plenty of people who get paid 10, 20, or more than that to speak from stage. But a lot of times - let's take ConvertKit. The conference we went to - I don't know how many people went to that conference thinking to themselves, "I need to learn how to present from stage."

But the amount of people that I talk to after my workshop, who then wanted to do it, it's like way up there. And I don't know exactly how much money that'll make for me and I certainly didn't look at that as the reason why I said yes to it, but it'll definitely be five figures. So, did Nathan Barry from ConvertKit give me a check for 10,000 to speak on stage? No. Will I make at least that? Yeah.

That happens all the time. If you're an expert in your field and you're speaking from stage, the perceived value goes up and up and up. And I think we all know that and that's something that can be a career or it can be a really nice thing on the side, but it certainly helps with marketing ourselves, it helps with business opportunity. And I guess the one thing I haven't said yet is it helps with your own confidence.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's true.

Mike Pacchione: Because there's so much happening when you're on stage. There's, "Do I know the content? Do I know the slide order? Am I looking at people? What feedback are they giving me? That woman over there looks confused, should I do

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

something about it? How much time do I have left?" There's a lot going on at the same time, but if you can nail it, it's the best feeling.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That makes sense. I mean, yeah, you put yourself in front of the right people. I think I told you a couple of weeks ago, right before COVID, it was one of my biggest speaking opportunities that I had gotten to date. And I still get customers all the time who say, "I saw you speak at that conference," and they've just been waiting to purchase or whatever, so it's cool.

But I also feel like everybody has different expression styles. And I have both speaking and writing, so I feel like I write differently than I speak. And I write sometimes more personal stuff, especially to my email list. And then, I like speaking. I like being in that position of being a bit more entertaining, but also educating and helping somebody to motivate them. So, it's different. I think people can find their style that way.

Mike Pacchione: So, do you feel like you have a different voice on stage versus in writing?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. It's interesting, as somebody who just really loves my email list, I feel like I'm always writing these kind of more emotional connectedness things to them. And on stage, I feel very excited by the idea of being up there and helping somebody, motivating them to take the next step. I feed off of that energy and I love being in that position. And as I told you, I'm not somebody who likes attention, so I find it interesting that I like to be up there. But I enjoy that for some reason, that perspective.

Mike Pacchione: That's a funny thing too. I like attention probably three times a year.

Sam Vander Wielen: On stage?

Mike Pacchione: Yes.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Yeah. If I, like, win the lottery or something, I'll take that attention. Otherwise, everyone leave me alone. Yeah. Yeah. That's how I feel.

Mike Pacchione: So, actually, that's an interesting thing too. So, you don't love attention, but you're good with being on stage.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Because I'm in a position of authority. And I don't mean a weird, domineering way. I mean, I feel confident when I'm up there speaking. I'm not yelling at everybody. But I feel like I know I'm up there and everyone's looking to me because I'm supposed to be the expert, that's what they tell me. But I find if I know what I'm talking about and I'm comfortable in what I'm talking about, like the substance, then I feel very comfortable. But, like, at my wedding, I ran down the aisle because I hated the fact that everyone was looking.

Mike Pacchione: Wait a minute. We both ran down the aisle at our weddings?

Sam Vander Wielen: You did too?

Mike Pacchione: Yes.

Sam Vander Wielen: I bolted. My poor dad was like, "Can you slow down?" I was like, "No. We are going to get up there now because everyone is looking at me, and I would rather slink away into the darkness." But I can be up on stage and I'm in my element. And I think a lot of people feel that way when they're speaking about something that they know.

Mike Pacchione: Can I say something that's a little bit off topic but give me a good segue?

Sam Vander Wielen: Sure.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: Speaking of weddings, okay, y'all, here's a good reason to rehearse. A lot of people think it's cool to wing it, and I'll just get on stage and I'll see what happens. People love doing that. I think most of the time when people love doing that, it's because, to them, it's like back when you were in high school, you tried to memorize a speech and the teacher is in the back of the room with his or her red pen. And if you got a word wrong, it was minus two. I think a lot of us never dropped that feeling that's in the back of our head.

So, a way to avoid that feeling is just to wing it because then there's no scripts. There's nothing to get wrong. But that is not good for the audience. It's really rare that someone's able to pull that off.

And if I can connect this to weddings for a minute, I sometimes tell this to people, I see a wedding ring, "Did you get married?" "Yeah." "Tell me what the wedding was like," they tell me what the wedding was like. "What about the day before?" "Yeah. We had a rehearsal." I'm like, "Okay. What was the rehearsal? What did you rehearse?" "Walking down the aisle, kissing the bride." I'm like, okay, so if you're rehearsing, walking and kissing, two things that I think --

Sam Vander Wielen: And standing.

Mike Pacchione: Are standing, yeah.

Sam Vander Wielen: Oh, and sitting.

Mike Pacchione: You rehearse those things, right? Do you think maybe you should rehearse this big presentation in front of a thousand people?

Sam Vander Wielen: That sounds like a good idea.

Mike Pacchione: That's my thought.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me. And so, what do you think makes a good speaker? We've talked a lot about good speakers, but what are those qualities?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. So, when you say a good speaker, Sam, actually, are you talking about the words they say, or how they say them, or both?

Sam Vander Wielen: That's a good question. I would say, like the person who reaches the intended effect of the audience. Like you said in the beginning, you want people to leave there motivated, feeling inspired, learning something, paying attention. So, what are the qualities of a person who can do that?

Mike Pacchione: Number one, the ability to tell really good stories. It can't be 45 minutes of stories. You do have to connect that to a greater point and everything. But stories, come on, we know this, these are the things that stick with people. So, if you can tell stories well - and I have a whole thing about that - if you can ramp up the tension on stories, and edit it the right way, and describe people quickly - I love helping people with that - that is thing number one that jumps to mind, for sure.

Thing number two is a delivery thing that jumps to mind. The person needs to look like they enjoy being there. And the advice I always give people is, even if you've given this talk 74 times, try to find that part of your brain that is absolutely amused with your own material. If it's a joke, "Oh, my gosh. This joke is so funny." If it's a point, the mindset that you need to have for that particular point is like, "This is really insightful and helpful to people."

I don't mean that in an egotistical way, but if you have a position of my material is helpful to other folks, then the natural extension of that should be I am excited to share this with you, and looking genuinely or being genuinely enthused about that is pretty

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

huge. One of the things I always try to tell people, if you don't seem excited by your own material, there's no way the audience will be. There's no way.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's a really good tip. I say the same thing about business stuff all the time of people will put out products that they're not super excited about. It's like that comes through in your marketing so easily. And so, I could definitely see that on stage too.

Mike Pacchione: And then, the third thing I'll say that jumps to mind - and obviously I could give 100 - is it needs to be you. So, Sam needs to be Sam. When I work with people, I will often write sections of their talk and I'll say, "Okay. Here's what the intro should sound like, but it needs to be Sam talking, not Mike. So, put this in Sam language." And that means for you, I don't know, maybe that means cursing. So, that might be it.

But it also means some of your quirks are great to share from stage, because then the audience feels like they're getting to know you more. It's the same reason why we love podcasts and all these things. It's not just law, it's law by Sam.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Yeah, you got to do it on your terms.

Mike Pacchione: Yes. On your terms.

Sam Vander Wielen: We're really plugging the show here, except they're already listening. So, I guess on the flip side then, what are some qualities that make somebody either a bad speaker or a bad speech itself?

Mike Pacchione: I think the first thing that jumps to mind is the speech is too much about the presenter, and I mean that in a couple of different ways. So, that can mean the speech is very braggy, which is probably what jumps to mind first. But the other thing that that can look like is more of the speech. You can tell that the speaker has

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

overestimated what is at stake and they've made it entirely about their own performance rather than about how it feels to the audience, and you see that all the time.

Sometimes people will actually say out loud I am nervous or I don't like public speaking. So, it's the same thing, the audience is going to follow whatever emotion you put out there. You just made the audience real nervous.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I have crippling secondhand embarrassment syndrome, so I start to freak out when I see other people are really nervous and are embarrassed. And that actually happened a couple of times at the conference where somebody would say out loud or you could just tell so much from their body language, and I was sweating. I couldn't deal with it. I feel for them.

Mike Pacchione: It's not how you want the audience to feel, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I feel for them, and you want to just be like, "You got this. Just don't say it out loud."

Mike Pacchione: It's so funny, my friend, Brett, once had someone do that for him. I don't think he ever got up on a stage after this. But he was asked to give a speech. I don't remember exactly, I don't know if he didn't rehearse or he just got really nervous what happened. But he just full on froze. Someone in the audience just shouted out, "You've got this, Brett."

Sam Vander Wielen: Oh. That's so nice.

Mike Pacchione: It's so nice. It helped him in that day. And I think it was crippling long term.

Sam Vander Wielen: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Do you think that somebody who's that nervous about getting on stage can overcome it?

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: Yes, for sure.

Sam Vander Wielen: So, you can change?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. On my podcast, I had Viktoria Harrison. So, she's an interesting one. She's married to Scott Harrison. Scott is the founder - I forget what his position is, but he's the founder of Charity: Water. And his wife, Viktoria, worked there for a long time, she was, like, lead designer. Scott is the most natural speaker I've ever seen. And as per Viktoria, he doesn't rehearse. He just stands up there and get it. He's the person who actually is able to do that, whatever he thinks great speakers do.

So, she thought that's just what speakers did. Scott tapped her to speak - I can't remember who the audience was, but like big investors of some sort. Just, "Hey, Vik. Just give an update on X, Y, and Z." She just totally froze. Scott had to get up there and relieve her. She refers to it as "The Incident."

So, she came up with this whole plan afterwards, where she was like, Phase 1: I'm going to stand in front of a group and read to them. That was Phase 1. Church Basement does that for a group. Steadily gives herself a little bit of a bigger challenge, a little bit of a bigger challenge, a little bit of a bigger challenge.

This was amazing, but I actually factored into this because I was speaking at an event. I left early. I was like, "Yeah. I got to go rehearse." She's like, "Rehearse?" So, when she found out that good speakers actually rehearsed, outside of Scott who is a mutant, then she started rehearsing. Now, she loves speaking.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's awesome.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. You can get better, for sure. And there are a few different ways of doing that, one of them is to almost get mad at the version of you that couldn't hack it

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

the first time. That's one strategy. If you're motivated by spite, like, "I'm going to overdo this." But I think, really, just treating it as a challenge and trying to get a little bit better and a little bit better and a little bit better. Here's the thing, most people never do that. Most people just accept their fate when it comes to speaking, "Oh. I'm not good at this."

So, the bar for it is really low. And if you just implement a little bit at a time, "Hey, this week I'm just going to work on sounding a little more interesting. This week, I'll just kind of try to be a little more comfortable. This week, I'm going to try a story." People don't try this stuff. So, if you can do anything at all, you'd be surprised at how quickly you can clear that bar.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I love that. And shout out to Viktoria for working at it, because that's amazing. And I think that will help a lot of people feel better. And, also, I'm always trying to encourage, it's not like manifesting becoming a better speaker. It takes work. And so, you have to say I want the end result, which is to be on stage, or to be a more dynamic speaker, or to start getting paid to speak, or whatever. That might mean that there are some things you have to work on. It's not either you stay at home behind your MacBook or you're like giving a TEDx Talk. So, there's a lot in between and we can work at it.

I also want to encourage everyone to remember that, this is also why I take such a brick-by-brick strategy of everything you do builds on this. Like, getting on Instagram and talking to your camera and worrying what people are going to say to you back to that. Or doing Instagram Lives or starting a YouTube Channel, starting a podcast, writing to your email list, that's all starting to express yourself and starting to get comfortable telling your story and teaching and stepping into authority and all of that.

Mike Pacchione: It was interesting, so don't you feel like Glo is the best speaker at Craft+Commerce?

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. She was so good. Yeah, she's so funny. And also, by the way, she was totally entertained by her own speech. She laughed, like, half the time, I loved it. If that would be me, I would just laugh at myself. And so, yeah, I love that.

Mike Pacchione: I was asking Glo about this, I said, "Did you ever have a bad speech?" And she said yeah. She had a mortifying one.

Sam Vander Wielen: Really? That's [inaudible].

Mike Pacchione: Right. You would never think that because she just owned being on stage, funny, impersonating her mom, all of it. I asked her what made the difference for her, and she actually said something similar to what you just said. She said doing all the coaching on Zoom. Coaching other people and getting used to hearing her own voice and trying to make points and telling stories. That's what made the difference for her. And she's phenomenal. She speaks twice a month, and certainly could speak more if she wanted to. She's also a crazy person that writes a new speech every single time.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That's so wild. That's so exhausting. She was great. And, yeah, she's totally right. I just don't think that people know how much with everything, whether it's speaking or writing content, filming videos, doing podcasts, how many at bats there are, and there are strikeouts, and there are fouls, and there are singles and doubles, and then there are homers. But everybody sees it as either I'm not going to go up to bat or I'm going to hit a homer. There's just so much in between. And I don't think they realize, if you want to hit the homer, there's going to be like a ton of singles for a lot of them.

Mike Pacchione: And I think people don't realize that even those things, Instagram Live and stuff - maybe a Live is a little bit different - Instagram Stories, TikTok, Reels, a lot of things that you see going viral are not the first draft.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That too, yeah.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: So, it's the same thing as speaking where it's, "Oh, my gosh. She's really good at it." You don't know if she's been recording for three hours, post-take 17. But that happens all the time. So, it's singles and it's a lot of swing and miss that nobody else saw.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I could see that. I mean, you see a lot of speakers and people who want to speak more, what do you feel are three areas that typically need to be improved upon the most?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. So, I think one of those is the way that people use their slides. And there's a couple different versions of that. One, I kind of mocked earlier, which is when people put their notes on the slide. I think because of the prevalence of TED Talks and YouTube videos, there's a good population that's begun to see that, "Oh, this is meant to be more than just a note card with bullet points."

So, phase two of that is being a little more creative, a little more visual, using Canva, things like that, also very good. But the master level, which is what I always try to move people towards, is it's not just using Canva, it's not just being visual, but it's interacting with the slide itself. So, sometimes the slide is a character, sometimes the slide can be part of the joke. But the backgrounds of a slide is helping you to tell the story out loud. And if you started thinking that way, instead of just I'm not going to do bullet points or I'm going to find some GIFs - I don't know how you say it.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah, I never know. But there were a lot of them at the conference, I noticed. Like, a lot.

Mike Pacchione: Totally. And it's good. But what's even better is if that GIF is a joke on its own, or if you say something and the GIF answers it. Using the slide as part of the whole act is a really, really good creative one that not many people do.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: I see what you mean. That would be really cool. Yeah. I could see that being very impactful.

Mike Pacchione: Okay. So, let me catch this, everybody says public speaking is the number one fear. I always tell people I don't totally trust those studies. My joke is, I have difficulty believing that anyone in a den of vipers is just looking around and like, "Well, it's not getting the Q3 update right now."

Sam Vander Wielen: If only I was giving a speech.

Mike Pacchione: So, I really doubt that it's actually the number one fear. But I get it, people are nervous. But I think most people, once you become more confident in yourself, that's no longer a thing. But what is a thing is that you're only 60 or 70 percent confident, and you're not 100 percent there. So, said differently, you believe you know your stuff, but you don't believe you're the only person that can give this talk.

One of the things that I always try to tell people, you were the only person in the world that can give this talk. Let's do Sam. You're not the only lawyer. Obviously, you're not the only lawyer from Rutgers. You're not the only lawyer in New York. You're not the only online lawyer. You're not the only online lawyer who does contracts. But you are the only online lawyer who does contracts, born in Philadelphia, and loved her dad that much, and has all those stories. So, that's another place where you have to come alive on stage. But, also, you just have to believe that. You have to believe that you're the right one to give this talk.

And I always tell the story, I was presenting at a conference called Think Better, Live Better. It was, like, four or five years ago. Keep in mind what I do for a job. I am totally confident flying there. I know it's a good speech. I arrived, it's the day before. We're doing the walk through, click through the slides, make sure everything looks the right way. Every other speaker at the conference is selling a book in the back.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: I remember you telling us this. Yeah.

Mike Pacchione: At this point, I don't even have a website. And I was just thinking to myself like, "Oh. I can't do this. I don't deserve to be here." I considered whether I should go to the organizer and ask out. But I really did this. I said, "No. Here's why you're the right one to give this talk. This is my experience. These stories are mine. Nobody else knows these stories. Nobody else can handle them. I've thought through this. I know how to do the slides. I have X number of years experience doing that."

And when you start thinking that way and you think of your specific backgrounds, then you can walk out on stage knowing that you were the right person to present. Because if you're 60 percent confident or 70, 80 percent confident, what that means is if you get a good crowd, you're going to be fine. Sometimes you don't get a good crowd, and you need to be able to believe in it anyway.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. So, the crowd's reaction not faze you one way or the other? Or not dictate whether or not your speech is a good speech, I guess that's how I should put it?

Mike Pacchione: I mean it should phase you, right? I mean, if the crowd's laughing and clapping and everything, that should be pretty great. And if they're bored, that should matter, too, and you should adjust to them. But the first sentence when you deliver on stage, you need to be delivering that with total confidence.

Sam Vander Wielen: So, I was also thinking so much of what you shared at ConvertKit that I thought was really helpful and interesting was about how we use our physical presence on stage, like our bodies, our voices. So, can you talk to people a little bit about what some of your tips were around that?

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, completely. I think whether you're presenting virtually or whether you're in the same room with people, regardless, it's like, "Okay. You're the

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

expert. Right now, I've got this great idea in my head and, again, I'm trying to get it to snap and crackle and pop in yours."

Well, how can that happen? Sometimes, I write it really well. But I can sure help if I use the stage the right way, if I use my voice the right way. If I show the audience, if I highlight with my voice, this is the important part, or if I use the stage.

So, one of the things you can do on stage, if you're contrasting two different ideas, which a lot of time we are, Sam, is contrasting life without contracts and being really nervous and never knowing, blah, blah, blah. Sam should just use one side of the stage whenever she's that character. And when she wants to contrast it to the guy who's smartly paid \$497 or whatever --

Sam Vander Wielen: Hey, it's cheaper than that.

Mike Pacchione: Okay. Whatever the cost is, it'd be worth \$497. But using the other side of the stage to show that same exact person, but now they have a contract and now they can stop exerting all this brainpower on things that probably are not why they got into business in the first place. So, using different sides of the stage for something that's a really big one.

But I think the most effective one and what I guess can just be used as most different types of ways would be your voice. Because that's true whether you're presenting virtually, on the phone, frankly, when you're at a meal, try either making your voice go really loud or really soft. And one of the greatest things is you can make anything sound important if all of a sudden your voice gets softer. And I mean, if you really want to go for it, add a pause there.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I remember you talked a lot about the pause and the timing. That was really interesting.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: Okay. Ready? I love tacos. Tacos is so important. It's the most important thing in the world.

Sam Vander Wielen: I think everyone can agree with that.

Mike Pacchione: But, yeah, pausing is a really big one. Let's talk about that for a second. One of the points that I try to make with people, and this is especially true when you're presenting virtually, people have often been told at some point in your public speaking career, you talk too fast. You got to slow it down. Sam, you got to slow it down.

It's not actually what they mean. Right now, I am guessing you've got a lot of people listening to this podcast and I'm guessing at least some of you are listening at 1.25, 1.5, maybe 2X speed, and they're totally able to track with everything. Well, how can that be the case if I talk too fast, you talk too fast, or one of your other guys talks too fast?

So, here's my point, it's not actually you talk too fast. It's that you don't give the audience a chance to catch up. So, the TED Talk that I always point people to is Adam Driver, and just watch a minute or two of that. Adam Driver is like Kylo Ren from the Star Wars movies. He talks super, super fast, but he pauses and he gives the audience a chance to catch up.

And a good way that you can implement that - what you would naturally do is you would write your speech out or you would write your notes out and you would do it in paragraph form - a good way to force yourself to pause a little bit is to write it more like song lyrics. You're naturally taking a pause every, like, seven or eight words. Because it's almost impossible to speak too fast, but it's possible to lose the audience if you were speaking fast and you're not giving the audience a chance to catch up.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: That makes a lot of sense. Yeah, I remember you saying about pausing, and breathing would be another thing. It's very difficult to breathe while you talk.

Mike Pacchione: Yes. Remember the workshop that we did, I called a couple of people up there to speak, and Grace was the last one.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yes. She was so funny.

Mike Pacchione: She's making me nervous. She wasn't breathing. A lot of people - and for whatever reason, it tends to be women - they don't breathe. And a lot of times you'll see the red blotches on someone's throat, probably because they're not breathing.

Sam Vander Wielen: Because we get nervous, I don't know. We got to breathe. But I thought it was helpful when you said that about pausing between sentences, like taking a breath not only helped us to do that. But I could also see for somebody like myself, like what I talk about with legal stuff, it's not feeling as overwhelming either because people have a moment to digest versus me moving on to the next point and they already haven't digested the first one. And then, I get into overwhelm with people where they're just like, "Oh, there's too much for me to do." And I could see a lot of people listening, whatever they teach about, it being something similar.

Mike Pacchione: And pausing, or I like to think of it as just silence, silence equals confidence. A lot of people think silence equals death. Silence equals confidence, actually. Do you remember the statistic that I shared in there?

Sam Vander Wielen: About speaking?

Mike Pacchione: About silence?

Sam Vander Wielen: No, I don't.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: Oh, what the heck? This was good, Sam.

Sam Vander Wielen: It's in there somewhere. Mike, there's a lot going on up there.

Mike Pacchione: I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. There's a company called Gong out in San Francisco. They do AI that looks at what makes for a successful salespeople. So, they transcribe everything. They look at what makes for successful salespeople versus just regular.

And one of the statistics that they shared is that the best salespeople, after they give a price, are willing to wait, I think, it's 2.1 seconds in silence, versus a more normal salesperson, it's, like, a second or even less. Which makes sense, right? Because we've all done that where we've given a price and like, "Yeah. But if you can't afford it, it's fine."

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. We somehow come up with a refinancing plan in the meantime to fill the silence. We're so nervous about it.

Mike Pacchione: Totally. "\$1,997." "Oh, that's too much." "\$1,200."

Sam Vander Wielen: And they're like, "I was gonna pay that." But it's true, yeah.

Mike Pacchione: It makes sense. Someone who is confident, who knows that they are providing value would be able to say, "And you get all of that for \$1,997." One 1,000. Two 1,000. "What do you think about that?" or whatever that follow up question is.

Silence actually equals confidence. It's really hard for people to pause, usually. It's really hard to be silent. I think a good activity that almost everybody can practice is printout song lyrics. Seriously, song lyrics. Print them, read them out loud in your house, you have to stop at the end of each line, one 1,000.two 1,000, go.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: I could see that being really hard. I think that's a really good tip. And for the sales thing, by the way, since everyone listening probably is having these conversations, literally -I briefly started a health coaching business - in the beginning, I would say the price and then I would cover my mouth, so I physically didn't talk. I was on the phone so no one could see me.

And then, eventually, this turned from covering my mouth to squeezing my hand. It was like a signal to myself to be like, "Just shut up." You know, in Philadelphia, we're not used to being quiet for very long. So, two-and-a-half seconds is like six-and-a-half years Philadelphia time. So, I would be just trying. But, yeah, hot tip for anybody who needs it, don't be afraid.

Mike Pacchione: Oh, I love that. And, you know, that's actually a great speaking tip. Obviously, from stage, you couldn't just --

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Cover your mouth.

Mike Pacchione: ... cover your mouth. So, at places where you feel awkward, it might be the content, it might be naming a price, whatever that is for you, give yourself a premeditated "I'm going to do this so that I don't just sit there and blush or get red faced," or whatever your nervous tell is.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Your nervous tell. That's true. I mean, you could probably do something with your hand, like pinch your fingers or something. Something really small on stage, just a little signal to yourself.

Mike Pacchione: Or, I'm a fan of find someone in the audience that's a friendly face and I pre-meditate that I will look at that person.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's cool. That's a good idea.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: It doesn't have to be someone you know.

Sam Vander Wielen: You better hope they don't turn on you mid-talk, and you're like, "Oh, no. I was betting on you and now you look like you hate me."

Mike Pacchione: When you have people in the audience that you know, do you like that or do you not like that?

Sam Vander Wielen: I like that. But I think, like you, I probably do grab it. I guess you always notice somebody who looks like they're having a good time. They're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's so helpful." You can tell, and then I'll just be like, "We're like dating now and I'm just going to look at you."

Mike Pacchione: Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh. It's so funny. I remember teaching my first class in graduate school, I didn't know how I was going to do it. But there was a student - this is the thing, students don't realize - maybe this changes when you're, like, 63 or something - I'm a teacher and I'm presenting 19 year olds, it's not like I'm fully confident, naturally, unless I give myself a pep talk. So, when students look like they're not enjoying it, your teacher notices that. Anyway - there was a sophomore who seemed to be enjoying my jokes my very first time I ever taught. And I was like, "Yeah, Naomi. Yeah."

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. You just got to lock it. You got to find your Naomi in the audience and just lock in. Now, you guys are best friends.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. Totally.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That's a good tip. I could see that. Actually, somebody asked a really good - well, I'll ask you about it later. But somebody asked me a good question about rituals, but we'll talk about that in a sec.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

I also wanted you to share, I think that there are probably a lot of people who are listening that are like, "This all sounds great and this is something I want. I want to be in this, but how do I get there?" And I know this isn't specifically what you help people do, but in your experience, how does somebody go from sitting on Instagram and TikTok talking on Lives to starting to get on to stage and to try to grow that part of their business?

Mike Pacchione: I would try to get your reps in before a big conference. Sometimes people, their big speaking opportunity is a big conference. It's not impossible to make that leap but it's harder.

Sam Vander Wielen: So, smaller conferences --

Mike Pacchione: Or even go guest lecture at a university. I mean, I will tell you as a former adjunct who those people are getting paid probably \$1,600 to teach that class, they would love to have a guest speaker.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's cool.

Mike Pacchione: And speaking to college kids will be more challenging than adults.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

Mike Pacchione: So, I really think get your reps in. Feel what it's like to have people's eyes on you. Feel what it's like to have people reading your slides instead of looking at you, being on their phone. Think through, "Oh, how am I going to handle this? Someone's on their phone. How disrespectful." Because a lot of people just get mad and let it crush them.

But go through and be a guest lecturer at a college or maybe a small conference or Elks

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Club type events, like little things, low stakes things where you can just feel what it's like before you start presenting at bigger conferences.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah, that makes sense. That's what I started doing in Philly. I started hosting workshops at a cafe that would have this kind of entrepreneurial community. So, I hosted one and then I was like, "Can I do this again?" And I came back, like, two weeks later and they let me host another and it grew. And then, I started doing them, like, twice a month for six, eight months. So, I got all these reps in but also they grew.

And then, because people attended those, they were like, "Hey, I know this person that has this entrepreneur's meetup --" for example, in Philly "... will you come speak at it?" And I spoke at that, it was, like, 40 or 50 people. And then, that girl just so happened to start the biggest conference in Philadelphia at the time for entrepreneurs, so I spoke at that, it was, like, several hundreds of people.

And then, I used that like B-roll to go apply to WELL Summit because there was a requirement that you had spoken to a certain number of people, and that was way bigger, and it just kept going from there. But, also, being on people's podcasts. And I was on podcasts that no one listened to in the beginning. Then, podcasts are a little bit more, and it just kept going and going. And it's like a lot of those reps that we've been talking about.

Mike Pacchione: But it's easier than ever to get those reps. And that was really smart what you did. I love that.

Sam Vander Wielen: I didn't know it, but like I keep saying, if you know that this is what you want to do, I just think there has to be a lot of this scrappy "I know what the end goal. I know I want to be on stage. Let me just try all these different things and see how this goes and get better and better at this."

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: And if you are listening, there's got to be somebody who just maybe freaked out a little because, "Oh, shoot. I'm skipping a step and now I'm speaking at this conference next month."

Sam Vander Wielen: Oh, yeah. You can do that.

Mike Pacchione: You can do that. More than anything else, here's what I would do to prep. Because you're going to work really hard on this talk, and a lot of work into the slides, and the story, and delivery, and blah, blah, blah, you're expecting everybody to have a big smile on their face from the first moment. But that's not actually what people look like when they're learning. I mean, that will happen from time to time, but not everybody in the audience is going to look like that for the entirety of your talk.

So, one of the best things you could do would be to get a picture of someone you know, maybe it's yourself, tape it to a wall in front of you - sorry. Rewind. Picture of them not smiling.

Sam Vander Wielen: Interesting. And be used to giving the talk without relying on that feedback.

Mike Pacchione: Yes.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. The validation.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah. Alternately, give it over Zoom to somebody else, but have them turn off their camera.

Sam Vander Wielen: Oh, gosh. That would be hard. The whole time somebody doesn't have their camera on, on Zoom, I've come up with a whole story in my head about they hate me and they're probably miserable. It makes me so nervous to not be able to see them.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: Wait. Did I tell you this story, my China story?

Sam Vander Wielen: No, I don't think so.

Mike Pacchione: Oh, my gosh. Okay. I was presenting last year to a group in China, and it was a part of China where the bandwidth is terrible, so nobody's on camera. It's China, huge time zone difference. I'm presenting at 11:00 at night. It's a two-hour workshop. My wife is asleep. My son is asleep. My dog is asleep and right next to me. Not a soul is on camera.

Culturally, at least this part of China with this company, and I was warned this like, "You're not going to get very much talking. People are trained to not ask questions or volunteer something that might make them look like they're wrong."

So, Sam, nobody's on camera.

Sam Vander Wielen: It makes me sick just thinking about it.

Mike Pacchione: It's like it's time for Jimmy Fallon to be on. nobody's on camera and nobody's talking. I had no evidence that anyone was listening to me. I remember thinking to myself, like, "You know, this could be a really elaborate joke."

Sam Vander Wielen: No one's even hearing it or laughing.

Mike Pacchione: Is anybody hearing this? What occurred to me is that there are two different ways I can proceed. So, way number one, is, I could be tentative because I don't want to look stupid. Or worse, I don't want to look like I think this matters when it might not matter to them. So, in other words, I don't want to look like I can't read the audience, which, hey, newsflash, I can't because I can't see anybody. So, that's one way to go forward. And I started that way, first half-hour, probably, I was that way.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Two-day workshop, two-and-a-half hours. First half-hour, real tentative. And something clicked for me where I realized I said, "You know, unless I'm willing to just sign out of this meeting right now, there's no version of presenting this where I get to just leave. I have to deliver this." So, I may as well be confident, and that totally changed the virtual game for me. I don't care if people are on camera.

I did a workshop earlier today, and the person hosting was really, really nice and requested everybody to be on camera. There were 152 people in this department. There were maybe four who were on camera. Everybody's tired of being on camera. It's like 2:00 in the afternoon. It didn't affect me at all because I need to believe in what I'm saying and I need to just own it. And I feel like I go back to that a lot, but that's also someone who's been speaking for more than a decade.

So, if it's your first opportunity, the best way to prepare for that is either camera off or a picture of someone who doesn't look that excited to be there.

Sam Vander Wielen: I'm sure the late night comics have a lot to say about this, because during COVID, they were speaking to a camera. Whereas, they're used to getting this live constant feedback. And they were probably just like - I don't know, I remember them just being awkward and quiet and they would just laugh at themselves.

Mike Pacchione: I remember Pete Davidson on SNL saying out loud "This is really weird."

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. It is weird. It's so weird. I mean, it was just really different for them, so I can only imagine. Interesting.

Well, that's super helpful. It's also helpful what I also took away from what you shared, was that you are actively thinking about this as you're speaking so that this is a dynamic that you're shifting. Like, as you're speaking, it's not just like, "Oh, shoot. I got nervous

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

and now it's just all down the toilet." It was like, "I'm going to turn this around mid-speech."

Mike Pacchione: But you also have to train yourself. I wasn't always like that. I think one of the great things about my Duarte years, I get used to every different type of person in the audience. And, especially - it's almost always a dude - this real corporate guys, you can probably think of some boring company, really high up. They've been trained to not have a personality. I don't mean literally there was a training on it, but somehow they've got the message, don't have a personality, don't smile.

And I think at first, it was Tender Mike. It was, "Oh, okay. Well, they must know this already, blah, blah, blah." But where it eventually got to is, I flipped a switch in my brain where when I saw that guy who tried to be on his phone or try to act like they knew this already, I knew that the stuff that I was delivering mattered, I knew I was really good at delivering it, I knew my own background. So, when I saw that, it was like, "Oh. Game on, buddy. We're going to get you paying attention."

Sam Vander Wielen: It's a challenge. And I think because you love it, so it probably feels so natural to you now. But like you said, with a lot of practice. So, I think you gave the rest of us hope, that's for sure.

I also wanted to ask you about the minivan test, because we have not talked about that.

Mike Pacchione: Okay. Sam, do you have friends who have minivans?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yes. I think so.

Mike Pacchione: Do they try to sell you on getting a minivan?

Sam Vander Wielen: Not yet. No.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Mike Pacchione: You'll get there. Okay. So, in your 20s, everybody makes fun of a minivan. Thirties, people start to turn the tide. Forties, it's like half of my friends have minivans. Every one of them sells me on it the same exact way. There are two different words used. Do you know what those are or one of the two?

Sam Vander Wielen: No.

Mike Pacchione: Everybody says either it's so practical or it's so reasonable. I know. Of course.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Everyone knows that minivans are.

Mike Pacchione: Everybody knows that's reasonable.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's not the hang up.

Mike Pacchione: Everybody knows, like, giant white shoes are better for your feet, too. They don't wear those either.

The minivan test is this, when there is a well-documented argument that everybody uses, you got to deliver it in a different way. You can think of political conversations that are this way, just insert topic here. It's just sold the same exact way every single time.

The power of surprising the audience with a minivan pitch that is not just "It's reasonable" is tremendous. So, what if instead I still probably wouldn't buy a minivan? But what if one of my friends, instead of just, "Oh. It's so reasonable." What if it was like this, "Mike, there's going to come a day where you have more than one child, and you have a dog, and you're trying to carry 18 different things out to the car. And you've got your son in one hand. You've got your dog tied around your waist. And you're trying to let everybody in the car at the same time. And you've also got a basketball in there. You're trying to find a place for the cooler. Right now, you're driving an SUV and there is

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

room for those things. But every single time, you have to play a little bit of Tetris to get in, don't you?" "Yeah. I do actually."

"Well, what if you could just slide the whole door open on both sides, and the kids could just get in themselves, and there was plenty of room, and you could stuff things here and here and here?" Like, Sam, that would be a much more effective pitch.

So, my point here with the minivan test when it comes to presenting, if you have a message or if you have a particular point that everybody sells the same way, try to come up with a different direction.

Sam Vander Wielen: I can imagine a lot of people relate to that. How do you recommend to someone that they come up with this different direction? Like, what angle should they think of it as?

Like for me, what you just described with the minivan, I'm thinking, you went from describing just kind of banal features of the minivan to really painting the picture of the problem that you're running into, which is like classic marketing strategy. So, would you recommend approaching it from that point of view?

Mike Pacchione: So, if nothing else, yeah. And that'll work almost every time. When I say work, I don't mean people will buy it necessarily, but people will at least have that moment of like, "Oh," and that's a good point.

Sam Vander Wielen: Connects with it.

Mike Pacchione: So, that'll work almost every single time. Another thing that you can do, though, that's a lot, it just sounds so basic and most people don't ever do it. When I work with people one-on-one, what I will often do is insert topic here and say, "Okay. So, what do people think you were going to talk about in this presentation?"

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sometimes we'll test it. We'll actually ask one of their friends or someone who'd be a typical audience member and say, "Okay. Sam is presenting on stage. Here's the name of her topic. What do you think she's going to talk about? What are some things that you expect to hear in a 45 minute presentation?"

And it's not that that rules out those things, but we at least need to consider whether we need to present that in a different way, or we need to have a powerful example, or we need to pull the rug out and surprise the audience. So, your starting point is just what are they expecting and what would be something that I could do that would surprise them. So, surprise, I think, is the key concept there.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I like that. I like that. That sounds really cool. I'm sure a lot of people are going to come up with ideas from that. Speaking of the people, they submitted a lot of good questions that I want to ask you.

Mike Pacchione: Let's do it.

Sam Vander Wielen: Lauren asked, "What is the simplest way to win over a big audience? And what's the quickest way to lose a big audience?"

Mike Pacchione: The simplest way to win over a big audience is to be either funny or at least likable at the very beginning. So, when I work with people one-on-one, one of the things we obsess over is the very first line. The first line is usually, "Hey, it's great to be here. How's everybody doing? Hey, I'm Sam. I'm from Philadelphia. Have you had a cheese stick before?" You wouldn't say that, but certain people would.

So, we obsess over it. And listen, I'm not saying it has to be this advanced because the second line matters. So, great first line and then you don't know what to do with it is not that helpful. My friend, Joel, I helped with a talk, and his first line was, "So, I was in Antarctica." Whoa.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. That gets your attention.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, that got my attention. My favorite talk that I've given or at least my favorite first line - you're going to like this - I said, "It's a humbling moment when you realize you've turned into an A-hole." And I say A-hole because that's more me. You'd probably curse but -

Sam Vander Wielen: No. I don't curse that much. Just every once in a while to the point where we had to label it.

Mike Pacchione: Explicit. Yeah. You and Snoop Dog --

Sam Vander Wielen: I would be honored to be in his company.

Mike Pacchione: My point there is just, you need to really, really focus on the beginning and doing something that gets your audience to like you. So, if you're not funny - not everybody's a funny person. I wouldn't recommend trying to be a funny person if you're not - just so you know, the key to comedy is commitment. That's what Steve Martin says. If you go out there hoping that people will laugh, oh, man, that's a dicey proposition. Because the next 44 minutes, 50 are going to be tough if they didn't laugh at that first joke.

So, if those things don't work, it's like what is a narrative that you can begin that declares to the audience that I've thought about you. That might be as simple as, here is my topic, what is something that if I were to remove your pain point - and you should actually say what the pain point is - if I were to get rid of this pain point you would now be able to do? And if you can do that in the first minute of your talk, that's a pretty good start. If you can declare to the audience I've thought about you and I'm trying to help you, that's a pretty good start.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: That's really cool. And what do you think is the fastest way to lose the audience?

Mike Pacchione: Talk about yourself, start off with a resume. This is a good metaphor to think of, I had a college friend who, through a strange sequence of events, he got married on the property of a really famous celebrity. Like, every single person listening to this knows who this guy is. Out of courtesy, him and his wife invite the guy, but they don't think he's going to show. Well, I wouldn't tell you the story if he didn't show. Forty-five minutes in, guy shows up.

I wasn't at this wedding. My friend was. He's like, "It was the strangest thing." He said, name of celebrity shows up. Nobody said a word. In fact, the whole room went silent, and it was like the oceans parted, and he just walked to the front of the room. And we just all expected him to give a speech and he did. And he started talking about how beautiful the furniture was, and how old this wine is, and have you taken a tour of the property, and did you see this, and did you see this, and did you see this.

This guy ends up talking for ten minutes. You would think somewhere in there he would talk about - I don't know - congratulations, husband and wife? Nope. Entirely about himself. People don't go to that level at the beginning of a talk necessarily, but a lot of people start with their resume.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. They think they have to establish credibility.

Mike Pacchione: So, I've been doing this for this many years and I've worked with this client and this guy is really impressive, and this, and this, and this. And I get the instinct for that. But there's a much smarter way of doing it, which is to tell a story. And when I say story, I mean like an anecdote or example, or I was working with insert impressive company here or insert impressive person here, and tell the rest of that story. And that way, you get two-for-one, and now that story needs to be about the audience. But if you

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

do that, then you're making yourself likable by telling about something the audience can relate to and you've just declared authority, and that's a much better way to go.

Sam Vander Wielen: That's really cool. Okay. That's helpful. Somebody asked, "How do I not bore people? What captivates better, lots of details or a quick, straightforward story?"

Mike Pacchione: I assume those are about two different stories, right?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. I mean, they're saying what captivates better, like a story that has a lot of details or a story that's really straightforward.

Mike Pacchione: You should do one detail. I mean, the worst storytellers are - no. Not the worst. Like, picture a bad storyteller in your life. You don't have to say who it is.

Sam Vander Wielen: They go off on tangents.

Mike Pacchione: So, what's the tangent sound like?

Sam Vander Wielen: Just all over the place.

Mike Pacchione: Probably what's happening to that person is they are remembering details from that story as they are telling it. So, they're saying, "I was going down the Schuylkill one day and I remember that I had a lemonade in my cup holder, and I heard a hawk go overhead." And as the person listening, you're thinking to yourself, "Okay. Lemonade, that's going to matter later. That's going to matter later." It doesn't matter later. It never does.

So, a little bit of detail is great. It's great to hear the thoughts that went through your head. It's great to hear one detail about the room that you're in. It's great to hear one detail about the person you're talking to. So, one detail tends to be good, maybe two

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

details. But when you start talking about lemonade and I was wearing argyle socks and why did this Pathfinder cut me off, those things don't matter.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. Yeah. Okay. That's helpful. My dad, by the way, was the king of giving directions. He'd be like, "Sam, do you see the Wawa? The Wawa is coming up on your right. Do you see it? Do you see it?" I'm like, "Yeah, Dad. I see it. I see the Wawa." "Okay. That's not it. Keep going." I'd be like, "Well, why did I focus on the Wawa?" Now, I'm all disoriented and got over in the other lane. I was like, "How was the Wawa relevant to the story?" That's always what he did.

Mike Pacchione: My mom, I remember the first time she gave me directions to drive down the store. It was the same thing, like a whole legal pad and it was like, "You will see blah, blah, blah. Do not turn."

Sam Vander Wielen: It's like, "Why do I need to know that? Just tell me where to turn." That's so true. That's really funny. He always did that. I would get so laser focused on this Wawa and would end up being nothing.

Natasha - this is a good one - she asked for tips for combating nerves. Or is that part of what makes showing up so rewarding?

Mike Pacchione: Unless it is a talk that you've given a ton, then your nerves will go away because you've already proven to yourself "I can deliver this." But if it's a talk you're giving the first time, second time, third time and you have nerves, that's not a bad thing. Think about times in your life when you've been nervous, sporting events.

I was nervous when I proposed. Did I think my wife was saying no? I mean, it wasn't like shooting a three. We've got, like, a 25 percent chance. We've talked about it.

And so, my point is just nerves communicate. Your nerves communicate something's at stake. That's good. That's what propels you to greater performance. That said, I get the

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

question. What you need to do is to rehearse enough that you know it. If it is your first time and typically you're nervous, you need to rehearse enough to where you know it inside and out. And this is going to seem contradictory, but you need to give yourself freedom to not say it the same way that you just rehearsed.

So, the rehearsing is just to get it in your brain. The audience has no idea what you're supposed to say. They have no idea what your script sounds like. So, once it's in your head, you're not going to forget it at that point. It's in your head and now you know it well, now you're on stage. And once you're on stage, you can run with it and take it in any different direction.

Here's an excerpt if it's helpful - what's the movie called? Taxi Driver. Jodie Foster was all excited to be in that movie because De Niro was a legend for his ability to improv. She's super excited. She's like, "Oh, my gosh. I'm going to hear all about this." She shows up the first day and De Niro just schools her because he knew the script inside and out day one. It was because he knew it inside and out from day one that allowed him to do all this adlib-ing.

You don't need to know a speech that well, especially someone who's presenting a lot. But if you're first learning it, it would be good to get it in your head in such a way where you're not having to consciously remember the next line while you're looking at all these people in your audience.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. This is like how I learn recipes. I nail recipes so then I know how I can deviate. But if I don't learn the foundation of the recipe first, I don't even know where I can take a detour. I feel like that's kind of similar.

Mike Pacchione: That's so good. Yeah, that's perfect comparison. Sam, when you say when you present, when you're talking to your audience, what is literally going through your head? What is the picture in your head? Are you thinking line to line? Are you thinking --

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: No. I'm one of those not rehearsed people that loves to wing it.

Mike Pacchione: Oh, come on. But you don't wing it, wing it.

Sam Vander Wielen: No. I have, like, a structure of what I know I'm going to teach. But I think especially because of what I teach about, you know, if I'm talking about a contract, what makes a contract or what makes website policy, it's always the same. So, it doesn't really change. The stories can kind of weave throughout. But I've given a lot more of those kinds of talks.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, that makes sense. I think a smart thing that you've alluded to - I don't know if you've literally done this - is having a bunch of stories in your back pocket that you can pull out at any moment, stories and examples. And I think, actually, you know what? Let's add that to the list, Natasha, I think you're the one who asked that question.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yes, she did.

Mike Pacchione: One of the things you can do is to get to something, like when you're writing a talk, start with something that feels really comfortable to you because that will get rid of some of your nerves. A lot of times that's a story.

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. So, a story that you feel comfortable telling or that the story itself kind of puts you at ease?

Mike Pacchione: Well, probably both. But certainly the first part that you feel comfortable telling. Something that you feel confident will just shake you out of the little funk that only happens when you are overthinking how important the talk is.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Okay. That's super helpful. All right. And I think Natasha's last question is a good one to end on, because I can imagine you have some good tips for this for clients that you've worked with. What are your pre and post-speaking rituals or ones that you recommend to people?

Mike Pacchione: When I work one-on-one with people, I always give people a pep talk the night before and I declare to them some of the things we've talked about, why you're the right person to give this talk.

I know you're a football fan, but like just Eagles, or do you know --

Sam Vander Wielen: Packers too. Yeah, I know more broadly.

Mike Pacchione: You know the Packers too?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah, because Ryan's from Wisconsin.

Mike Pacchione: Oh, my God. Okay. So, I worked with this guy, Brandon Bostick. Is that name familiar?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah.

Mike Pacchione: You know who that is?

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah, No, I've heard of him. Yeah.

Mike Pacchione: Okay. So, Brandon is an amazing human who had a bad play. And because of that bad play, he got a lot of hate mail and all these things and stopped loving football. But he's doing great things now. And his talk is about coming out of that. He was presenting at a conference. He had never spoken at a conference before. And he had this little like, "Yeah, but -"

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

So, I still need to do this pep talk thing? This guy's played in the NFC championship, 60,000 people at crazy whatever the Seahawks stadium is called, the 12th Man and all this. And like, "Does he really need this pep talk?" I decided I should give it to him, and he talked about it. The night before, he's like, "This feels like tomorrow is game day." A guy who played in the NFL, been in the NFC Championship game, and he told me that he got a little nervous there.

So, all this to say, if you don't have my coaching, you need to come up with your own reason why this talk is going to go well, why you're the right person to give this talk. I find myself actually repeating those things backstage. I'm also listening to music. I listen to pump up music. I mean, I've rehearsed the night before. I rehearsed with pump up music on. When I say pump up music, I mean like the same stuff I would use on a run because that gets my heart rate up and that gets me excited. Like, you should be excited when you go out on stage.

I'd never watched the person before me speak. Heck, no. But I'm backstage. There have been times I've done the whole Wonder Woman pose thing backstage. Nobody else is back there. Do whatever you want. But mostly I'm focusing on why this is going to go well.

Because the talk will go well. I mean, obviously, if you've worked with me, it'll go well. Sometimes speeches don't go well. They rarely go as poorly as you think they do. It's understandable if they don't go as well as you want them to. But you should still take time to write down the things that you felt were best, whether that's an individual line, whether it's a whole story, a particular slide.

The thing where you felt like you were in flow, that's what you should really focus on after the talk. Sometimes if you're lucky enough, the whole talk was in flow. Sometimes it might have only been 30 seconds. But that's what the focus on and why that happens, so that next time you deliver, we've got a place to start from.

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On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: Yeah. It's like muscle memory. That's awesome. That's really helpful.

Well, this has been so much fun. I could talk to you all day. But I also think it would be helpful for you to tell everybody how they can find you, contact you, where they can learn more from you, and work with you, obviously.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, totally. So, the website is bestspeech.co. There, you can sign up for a free resource that I think is super helpful, where we will send you a series of emails that are the Seven Traits of the Best Speaker at Every Conference. Basically, it's the stuff that you need to nail to be the person that everybody remembers.

I've got a podcast that I love, the Best Speech Podcast. Almost always interviews. One of the things that's kind of cool that we do from time to time is we'll play someone's whole talk and then we'll interview them. It's cool. What were you thinking at this part? Why did you do it this way? Is there anything you wish you had done differently? So, love being able to do that.

I love working with people one-on-one. The other thing that I love that we'll start recruiting again in October is what I call Speech Club. So, that is for people who want to up level their speaking. And the promise at the end of that is you will have a battle tested talk that you've received feedback on already. You've got the stories ironed out or at least you know what to iron out so that you can go on stage knowing already that it's good. Wouldn't that be the best feeling, instead of going out there and you're like, "Oh, I hope they laugh." You already know they'll laugh. I ran it by people already.

So, these are all things that I love. Obviously, I love doing all this. And I have loved talking to you, Sam, my old friend. I feel like we're friends from third grade or something.

On Your Terms Episode 127:
Re-air Episode 59
How to Be a Great Stage Speaker with Mike Pacchione

Sam Vander Wielen: I know. I know. You're the best. I'm just so glad that you did this. I think people are going to get so much out of it. And it's cool that when this episode comes out, then your group program will be starting soon. So, guys, reach out to Mike if you want to learn. But I also can imagine people are going to learn a lot from listening to your podcast because hearing that in real time is going to be really helpful.

Mike Pacchione: Yeah, it's super cool. I love doing this.

Sam Vander Wielen: Thank you so much for doing this.

Mike Pacchione: Sam, thanks for having me. You're the best.

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