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## The Speech Clinic ®

### Speaking Tips # 47 081212

## A self-critical Evaluation

A month ago I had the pleasure to compete in the Continental European Championship in humorous speech. It took place in Bamberg, southern Germany with an audience of approx. 220 and some 15 judges. 8 participants were qualified and my goal was to be at least among the first three. I was not! The question is why? I had my performance video filmed as someone once told me to film as often as possible because you never know when you have a hit. But it is especially a great tool for learning. You can find the live speech on <http://se.youtube.com/watch?v=4ovYeJPElwq>. **See it first and then read on!**

So how could I improve?

Below follows my own analysis:

1. I didn't pause enough when the audience started to laugh. I didn't allow them to develop a real good laugh. The reason was that I was afraid to exceed the time limit of 5 – 7 minutes, thereby being disqualified. Hence I was too fast. It would have been better to trim down the content somewhat and instead allow for those crucial pauses. When the audience is forced to "swallow" their laughs in order to grasp what I am saying next, I kill the excitement of the laughter. Laughter is contagious! This is not to be underestimated. It is used to the utmost by stand-up comedians. Pauses are always important in order to let a message sink in. But they are crucial to allow a humorous twist develop into a roar of laughter.
2. The description of how I leave marks behind could have been expressed funnier. I could have spent more time choosing funny expressions and words when describing the situation. I cannot give specific examples here, but considering the fact that laughs were periodically vague, there is reason to find out what I could have said there instead and which alternative expressions I could have used. In fact there are many ways to describe one's own peculiarities.
3. When I came to the last part about the letter with the attached contract, everything was as it should be. The audience went dead silent after a healthy laughter. But did you notice my mistake when delivering my message and the reason why I repeated it? Most of those whom I asked had not noticed the mistake. I said – "never be even oddly different ..." (quite contrary to what I meant). It then struck me and I repeated with – "never be afraid of being even oddly different to be successful". These things happen. Yet, in spite of the mistake, I actually did the right thing. What I did right was to calmly repeat the message as if nothing was wrong. The few who might have noticed the first mistake probably forgot about it anyway when the final message about hope created a pleasant burst of laughter.

It is always worthwhile using video and then learn by self-critically studying and analysing.

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Speech Tracker AB, Kronhjortsgatan 8, S-412 68, Göteborg, Sweden, Tel. +46 (0)31 7034520, Mob. +46 (0)708 242888,

[info@speechtracker.net](mailto:info@speechtracker.net), [www.speechtracker.net](http://www.speechtracker.net)

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