

Speak like an Executive



Warwick John Fahy

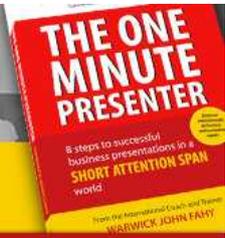
AUTHOR · EXECUTIVE SPEECH COACH · FACILITATOR OF LEARNING

"I help ambitious senior finance executives switch from technical expert to effective executive"

Excellence in Public Speaking: A sprint or an Ironman?



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One of my hobbies is triathlon racing. I enjoy the mix of swimming, biking and running as it keeps training interesting and you meet a great bunch of people at triathlon races. Triathlon races come in different distances. For example, sprint, Olympic, half Ironman and the pinnacle of all triathlons: Ironman. These races can take an average racer from one hour in the sprint to up to 17 hours in the full Ironman. I completed the 2010 Ironman China regarded as one of the toughest races on the Ironman circuit due to the extreme heat of around 35 degrees.

As with any endurance sport, the race is really a race of two; you against yourself. Depending on your current fitness levels you need to choose your race carefully. If you are new to the sport, it makes sense to start with a sprint or Olympic distance race. If you are already a solid marathon runner or long distance biker, you could start training for an Ironman.

We can use the metaphor of triathlon to help you become a better public speaker. If career progression is important to you, public speaking needs to be a core skill you develop over time. Here are three ways public speaking is similar to triathlon:

It's a race. Choose your race. Learn how to race.

To succeed in triathlon you need to know about swimming, cycling, running, how to transition from one discipline to another, managing nutrition in longer races and understanding what equipment will give you the most bang for your buck. In public speaking you also need to combine competency in these various disciplines:

Know your "stuff": Understand your content inside and out without the need to look at notes.

Shape a Madison Avenue or Hollywood message: Learn techniques from the masters of messaging so that your presentation has a clear, memorable message.

Rehearse like an actor: Dedicate sufficient time to focus more on your delivery than on your content. Dress rehearsing should take at least 60% of your preparation time. Most business presenters spend only 5-10% in real rehearsal.

Deliver like performer and entertainer: Understand that in a world of shortening attention spans, simply delivering information does not result in a change of behaviour. If you are intending to influence your audience you need to understand techniques that create a more engaging and entertaining experience for them.

Handle questions like a media professional: Most people are apprehensive about the Q&A session. As a senior manager you need to be always ready to step up and handle even the most challenging of questions. In fact, you should develop this ability so it becomes your most favourite format.

Success depends on how well you know your "race". Become familiar with the components of public speaking and start to master them one-by-one.

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Choose your intensity level

Every triathlete decides how hard they race. For example:

- Just to finish in one piece
- Win your age group [amateurs are divided by age]
- Top 20 in the whole field
- Win the race

This concept of intensity also applies to public speaking. Executives decide how much time and effort they dedicate to improve their speaking abilities. We can see this through the Speak with Executive Presence Pyramid:

0.0 Ineffective

1.0 Competent

2.0 Influential

3.0 Impactful

4.0 Change-makers

5.0 Executive Presence

Executives operating in the “Ineffective” zone just want to get through the presentation without “dying” and don’t show any style. In the “Competent” zone, the aim is to deliver a competent presentation in line with their peer group. Not a stand out but above average. “Impactful” zone executives consistently deliver confident presentations and are “always ready to deliver”. They string together influential presentations. They are the go-to executive when a media interview is called at short notice.

The level of your intensity will dictate how far you can take your influencing abilities.

It's consistency that makes you stronger.

A myth of endurance sports is the “no pain, no gain” approach. If you wish to avoid injury and perform over a long time frame, there is absolutely no need to put yourself through high amounts of pain in your training. When he visited Shanghai, two-time Ironman World Champion, Chris “Macca” McCormack told me that consistent training is the key to success in endurance sports. I need a target, like a race, to get motivated to train. The target of a race helps me plan and execute a training plan over, a typical 20 week build up for a key race.

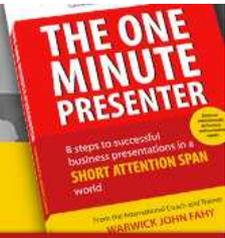
With this target, I scour my calendar for pockets of training time. I find the energy to get up at 5am to get in extra training session, and sacrifice weekend time for a long bike ride of up to 4 hours. Just having the race in my calendar helps me become a better time manager. A 20 week build up consists of four phases:

- *Preparation*; low intensity training with a focus on building up endurance.
- *Base*; start to add in longer sessions and sharpen up technique.
- *Build*; weekly focus on different disciplines and plan nutritional needs.
- *Taper*; reduce amount of time training and switch to shorter more intense sessions. Think through race plan and on-the-day details.

When getting ready for a big presentation, you can take a similar approach. In our workshops we use a 16-step guide which can be divided into four phases:

- *Preparation*; purpose, message and organisation.

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- *Base*; mastering content, flow and critical moments.
- *Build*; rehearsals.
- *Polish*; final mindset and on-the-day preparations.

Effective preparation is the key to upgrading your skills. Pick an important presentation and work on sharpening up your performance at each phase.

In conclusion

Public speaking is like triathlon racing. Both can be painful if you don't prepare correctly, but are extremely enjoyable when you commit to improving your performance over the long term. The takeaways:

- It's a race. Choose your race. Learn how to race.
- Choose your intensity.
- It's consistency that makes you stronger.

Further reading:

What is triathlon? <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triathlon>

Ironman triathlons http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ironman_Triathlon

[SWEP Pyramid](#)

About the Author

Warwick J Fahy

"I work with senior executives working for multinationals in Greater China who lack the executive presence to effectively influence key stakeholders. While these executives are very smart, very knowledgeable and highly capable, a key piece missing. Their executive communication skills need polishing. I help executives build a strong foundation in executive communication so that they are able to better think, speak and act like a leader to set and implement strategy. Recently, we helped a CEO turn his communication style from being nervous and uninspiring into a more engaging, confident and purposeful executive."

Find out whether your executive team is performing to the best of their potential with Warwick's article "*10 Warning Signs Your Leaders Lack Executive Presence*". Email me and I'll send you a PDF version.

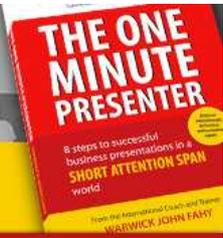
Warwick is the author of "The One Minute Presenter: 8 steps to successful business presentations in a short attention span world". Warwick is author of the forthcoming book 'Speak with Executive Presence in China'. Now available on Amazon.

Sign up to "52 Tips to more confident public speaking" newsletter at

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Executives: Are you struggling to influence your senior managers? Help is here!

Warwick works with high-potential senior finance executives, working in multinational companies based in Greater China, who struggle to get their point across and influence their key stakeholders. Ironically, the skills that have made them excellent finance executives often contribute to this problem. Warwick helps the executive project their message with confidence, which allows them express their opinions powerfully and gain respect from senior managers even when under pressure.

Warwick's coaching programs are helping senior executives through a proven system that allows the executive to quickly organise their thoughts, create a memorable message-based presentation and deliver a presentation that opens with certainty, is structured for clarity and closes with confidence. This flexible system delivers powerful results in formal presentations, conferences, telephone conferences, regular investor meetings and question and answer sessions.

Executives using Warwick's system have reported more confidence when facing senior management, time saved in preparing for important presentations and better results in face-to-face meetings with important stakeholders.

Warwick has been working with senior executives since 2003 to help transform them into engaging, authentic and confidence public speakers. Warwick has worked with the most successful international companies, often leaders in their field, and has a solid record of success that proves our approach and system works. It can work for you as well.

I am always ready and willing to work with ambitious executives who are ready to take the next step in their careers. I am here to support, encourage and facilitate your development. Let's talk soon!

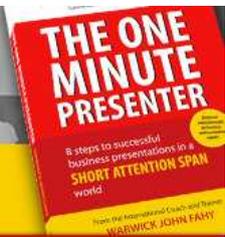
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About Warwick

Warwick John Fahy is an expert in the art and practice of executive public speaking, and is the published author of *The One Minute Presenter: an 8 step guide to delivering successful business presentations in a world of short attention spans*.

Warwick coaches Asia's leading senior executives, business leaders and entrepreneurs who need to influence their clients, investors, board and team members. In particular, Warwick helps finance directors working in multinationals who need to better express their messages to key stakeholders and so expand their influence and enhance their credibility. His role is as a facilitator of learning to not only demonstrate and transfer best practice in interpersonal executive communication skills, but also to allow clients to become more self aware and able to critically assess their own performance with the tools, techniques, strategy and language learned in the coaching.

Below are some interview questions to help you understand what drives Warwick.

How long have you been training people in public speaking and executive communication? What interests you about your field?

Unlike many professional speakers who started young, my journey took a completely different path. As an introverted child, I would do everything I could to avoid speaking in public. I cried in a drama performance when I was twelve because I forgot my lines, I feigned illness in high school rather than deliver a presentation to the school and I steered clear of the debating society.

Even as a sales executive when I was delivering 100 presentations a year to high technology companies, I was still a ball of sweat while presenting. It was only in my 30s when I dedicated hundreds of hours to working on my public speaking skills did I find that I could enjoy public speaking and it became a passion.

Since 2003, I have spoken internationally, authored a book on business presenting and regularly coach senior executives around Asia. What fascinates me about the art and science of public speaking is that despite all the advances in technology, so far nothing has come close to beating the engagement and connection we feel when listening to a story well told. (Note from digital natives: "Well some video games might come close!")

I have found in my experience of working with senior executives that mastery in the skill of public speaking will take an executive much further than technical skills alone would.

So I really see my role as someone who can help executives to go as far as their ambitions take them. To help them share their talents with the world.

What are some contributions you've made to your profession?

For services to the public speaking industry, Warwick was inducted into the Toastmasters International Hall of Fame in August 2007 for his pioneering leadership as chairman for Toastmasters in China. Warwick is the founding Chairman of the Professional Speakers Association of China.

I am the author of *The One Minute Presenter: 8 steps to successful business*

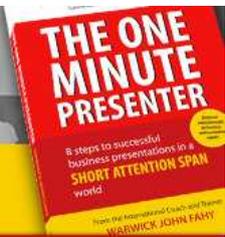
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presentations in a short attention span world, which is a guide and reference for busy executive presenters who need practical and effective tips to improve their presenting skills.

What are some big things you've accomplished for clients.

I put the fizz in the lemonade! My clients are already very intelligent, successful and highly competent at what they do. They have qualities that destine them for greatness. What I do is help them punch their weight by learning how to confidently project their opinions through presentations, conference calls and one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders - like investors, board members and clients - who have massive influence over how their career develops.

I know I have done my job when my clients are able to better engage with their senior managers in regular meetings; when they deliver confident presentations at board meetings; and when they master a question and answer session with zest.

What's unique about your working philosophy and approach to working with clients?

The uniqueness that I bring to my assignments are built on a combination of skill sets:

- * I am an international professional speaker who understands the pressure of tailoring an engaging message and connecting it to an audience.
- * I am the author of a highly acclaimed book on business presentations called *The One Minute Presenter: 8 steps to successful business presentations in a short attention span world*.
- * I am a TV host which means I understand the pressure of having a camera directed at your performance and message.
- * I am an executive speech coach for CFOs including nationals from China, Hong Kong, Korea, Germany, UK, USA, France and many other countries.
- * I have cross cultural experience of working and speaking in China, Korea, India, Dubai, Europe and the USA.

What's other qualifications do you have?

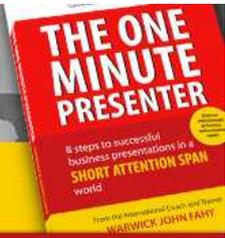
As a Certified Professional Facilitator (CPF) with the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), Warwick facilitates leaders and teams in results-oriented, process-driven executive retreats, workshops and executive boot camps. Becoming a CPF is a commitment to excellence and continuing professional development. Warwick was recertified as a CPF in 2010.

Living in Asia since 1994, Warwick is known for demonstrating deep cultural intelligence, while collaborating with teams across China, Asia, India and the Middle East.

What are your extracurricular activities?

I like a challenge so I am often in the middle of a project to push my comfort zone a little. In 2010, I completed my first Ironman Triathlon in 35degree heat which was probably the hardest physical challenge I have ever done. I also completed a one day 240Km bike ride with my cycle club. I am currently working to repair all that physical damage by learning yoga. I have a long way to go!

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I am also in the middle of completing my Distinguished Toastmasters Award in Mandarin Chinese. I have also been a committee member of The British Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai since 2008.