



NSA/NC:
A Diamond
in OUR MIDST
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Random RoAne Thoughts on Speaking

There are so many thoughts I have that I would like to share which encapsulate my 28 years in this biz. Some worked for me and some are things that didn't. You will find your own path but allow me to save you time, money, heartache and the misery of mistakes. That's the beauty of NSA... we learn from OPE (Other Peoples' Experience).

In no particular order:

1. Become an expert (Diane Feinstein)
2. Assess the advice before you follow it.
3. Have a "dream team" of trusted advisors OUTSIDE of NSA. Make sure your team has people with great BS Detectors.
4. DO NOT sell your home to pay for anyone who preys on NSA members.
5. Don't quit your Day job (Fripp To NSAers and Willard Scott to Al Roker) until it's financially smart and you'll be solvent and profitable.
6. Have a business plan – a real one, not just "goals".
7. Forget the silliness and expense of having an office. There's always a Starbucks or Peets.
8. Most important advice from NSA... *it's not what you earn, but what you KEEP!*
9. Be sure that whatever you do, you can look in YOUR mirror.
10. On my site are articles on *RoAne Unplugged on speaking*. For more RoAne, read them.

11. Follow the Carnegie Hall Plan: Practice, practice, Practice. It works a lot better than the Carnegie Deli plan, which gives you indigestion
12. Do NOT — under any circumstances — Imitate, “lift” or steal. That would make you a fraud and a thief. Be the ORIGINAL you.
13. Reassess, reinvent, recreate. Who knew I'd be blogger for 4 years or have a Virtual Susan: Ro-Annie! (taller, thinner and younger).
14. Don't be afraid NOT to adopt something that makes no sense to you and/or ignore anything I say that doesn't fit.
15. Get great at speaking. Figure out which aspect of the biz works for you. This is the National SPEAKERS Assn and while we all have varying revenue streams, it's NOT the National Consultants, Trainers, Coaches or whatever assn.
16. If you want support, a network, ideas, GIVE THEM to others and be generous, but not stupid. IF people are constantly coming to you for your wisdom and advice, it's fair to attach a fee.
17. HIRE out that which you don't do, don't like or shouldn't waste your time doing. Ken Braly once told me I was smart because I did that. (I have a bookkeeper, accountant, SEO guy and Mary who is net-savvy. And I don't worry about whipping up gourmet delights. There are restaurants who do that so well).
18. A famous NSA saying is that "The Magic is in the MIX"...so have a mixture in the pot and take time to stir it.
 - A. Speak/consult/write
 - B. Direct Bookings mixed with Bureau Bookings. Sheila Murray Bethel..."bureaus only want you when you don't need them".
 - C. Conversation and Communication is a mixture of questions, observations, revelations as well as stories, concepts and facts.
 - D. Email, Call, snail mail.
 - E. Market to corporate, association, non profit. Corporate America may pay more but they cancel at meeting with a day's notice. Not so Assn America.

Facts: The world still pays male speakers more than females and there are exceptions to the rule. There are people who enjoy the "haggling" and want to "get you at bargain basement rates" to feel they have won and there are others who honor our fees. I like the latter better.

Think LONG TERM. Give people who work for you bonuses as they are incentives. My best friend, a CPA for medium size businesses, always reminds me that is 'long term' thinking. HONOR peoples' contributions. Mary added so much to F2F that Lana said I had to give her a considerable bonus and I choked! But I listened to Lana and did it. Mary was surprised, ecstatic and now is learning more to help me run the biz. She created my avatar: Ro-Annie.

Be ready to WALK AWAY. Learned that from the late Bill Brooks. Did that to several clients who wanted to "reconfigure" my fee range. Saying NO can be the best answer if it would do harm to say "yes". One woman offered me a 1/10 of my fee and proceeded to tell me that their keynote had shared a platform with Tony Robbins. NO Kidding. I told her she needed to find an "almost for free" speaker and obviously didn't need a best selling author or national expert. Verbiage to say no: It would not serve my full fee clients to take a fee based date off the calendar

READ, READ, READ. Knowing what is going on in the world, the markets, in the pop culture is vital to our success. I read 3 newspapers daily and *NY Times* online, 4 weeklies, 3 monthlies and two bi-monthlies. And, on occasion, *The Economist*, *Fortune*, *People*, *Vanity Fair*, etc.

BONUS:

DO not act like a DIVA.

BE nice to everyone...

Why? Ya Never know. Have fun.

Questions from Craig Harrison: My James Lipton.

1. Can you tell us a bit about your early years: where were you born, where did you grow up and was there any defining moment that signaled, early on, that you might end up in this profession? I'm a Chicagoan, a former teacher who was one of the 1200 laid off by SFUSD in 1979 but I was the one who wanted to help my teacher buddies and designed one of the first workshops in the country for Career Change for Teachers. It ran out of Willie Brown's office because of my political life. And that started it all.

2. Everyone comes to NSA from somewhere. What were you doing prior to NSA? How did you learn about NSA? Did my due diligence but didn't like NSA the first 2 times I attended. Too much BS and arrogance. Joined because a colleague said I needed networks with Males. BEST decision.

3. Who were your influences within NSA or the industry and how have they impacted you? Patricia Fripp, Sheila Murray Bethel, Tony Alessandra, Jim Cathcart, Rosita Perez and the late Francine Berger. Smartest thing I ever did was hire **the Brilliant** Dawne Bernhardt as my speech coach early on.

One of my dearest friends, who has been a wonderful source of support these past 25 years, has been **Barry Wishner**. He is an idea machine, a constant sounding board and funny too.

4. We can all admire the length of your career as a speaker. Were there key phases? The SF Examiner Series contributed to my validity, expert position and a measure of local renown. Were there key turning points or "ah ha" moments that made a difference? Sheila Murray Bethel told me that I had to pay MORE Dues to be a keynote speaker... and I did. I luckily never lost my Midwest Moxie, work ethic and skepticism that cut through the "airy-fairy" nonsense.

5. NSA is full of people with different backgrounds: speakers who write, authors who speak, trainers, entertainers, subject matter experts. How has your own definition changed? To me, this is National SPEAKERS Assn. As an author, I belong to The Authors' Guild and don't expect speaking info from it.

6. If you knew then what you know now, what would you have done differently in your career? [Not listened to people who held different goals and values and I would have assessed recommendations before I followed them. The money I would have saved could be working for me now and building a nest egg for the days when I'll need a little nest. I should have listened to David Smith who proposed a franchise of How To Work A Room® in 1988. BUT the world wasn't ready for that till Chicken Soup was made \(without matzoh balls, I might add\).](#)

7. For the newcomers to NSA, what tips do you have for helping them gain a toehold? [Attend NSA, listen to GREAT and Horrible Speakers: Bad role models are great teachers. The hawkers taught me how much I abhorred Back of Room and that it just doesn't fit my plans. I passionately support local, indie bookstores and they helped propel to bestsellerdom. **Be appropriate, if given advice, follow through and for heaven's sake --- keep people in the loop! Acknowledge all gifts.**](#)

8. Some years ago Odette Pollar did an NSA program for us in which she argued that we as speakers DIDN'T NEED A BOOK. At the time she had a few already to her credit. You have books, she has books. How does life change when speakers have books in their credits? [How To Work A Room® launched an industry but I had designed SF Examiner's Career series and brought in a number of our colleagues to write columns. That was third party endorsement par Excellent! Never wrote a newsletter as I knew it didn't have the same cachet. You can be wildly successful without a book. But my career was launched in print. I want to emphasize that **I write my books**...no ghosts or goblins involved and of that, I am so very proud and thank Mrs. Smolack and Burl Covan, my teachers.](#)

9. In the mid-80's you literally wrote the book on HOW TO WORK THE ROOM. Ever since, others have been "borrowing without attribution" (AKA Stealing) from your material. It could easily become a full-time job just pursuing the unscrupulous within and beyond NSA who use your material. Please talk to us about the ETHICS of speaking and how you deal with people telling your stories, using your titles and copying your material without permission. [People who "lift" or "steal" should be called on the carpet, shamed and shunned and be given the Chicago Treatment: Brand new cement shoes!](#)

[The problem with "ethics" is that people have different interpretations of what that means.](#)

And there is the author from Colorado who wanted my endorsement for a book that had 36 similarities to two of my books. It cost me A LOT of money. My only regret is that I didn't pay attention when she only had a self-published book and hire the attorney at that time. But that taught me a lot about Intellectual Property (IP) issues and corporate publishing world.

NSA has a code that is clear but finding a member in Toronto who used my US PATENT office registered title for her talks and who sat on a national committee ---was shocking. She was the mentee of one of our senior members who stepped in to inform her of her violation and that she had to cease and desist.

Then there's Edith Barnard in Illinois who was informed about the violation of US Patent and Trademark law for using the title How To Work A Room® as a program but ignored three cease and desist emails. The next request is from my attorney. BUT...it has to be done. Mary monitors my registered mark for How To Work A Room® and we take action. Most people "GET" that they must stop. Others must be prodded.

10. You are expert at relating to audiences of different backgrounds. How do you stay so hip? Why is it important? (Just threw in a Chris Brown Reference in a presentation and always have a Jon Stewart or Judd Apatar comment). Be a chameleon: relate. **READ, READ, Read.** Don't be such a snob as to say, "I don't watch TV" or "I'm too busy to read papers, People, etc because you will miss what is going on with your market.

11. How can NSA members become more savvy networkers at NSA workshops, meetings and conventions? Can you give us your top five pet peeves of bad speaker behavior and help us understand what I call the "tao" or proper way of networking? Follow-up and keep people in the loop. Don't ask people for more feedback if you don't implement their original suggestions. Just don't waste peoples' time. If you need help, ask for it and then always, always ACKNOWLEDGE idea, leads, support, information.

12. They say NSA is a relationship business. Can you speak to us about your relationships with meeting planners, editors, publicists, lawyers, etc. that have continued over time? **Treat people like people, not prospects.** Period, end of story. That is a tenet in *The Secrets of Savvy Networking* that most people who speak on sales and marketing don't get. About five of my dear friends started as clients

with whom I clicked and we grew our friendships. Same with bureau people although I don't do much bureau biz. I don't do "outbound" marketing anymore but **do a lot** to generate the energy that "makes the phone ring".

13. You are masterful at getting press. Be nice to everyone! Offer to be a resource to link them to others. If you like an article or have additional information, send a note to the author. I did that to Bob Morris of New York Times and he quoted me last August. Having my name and book in the Sunday NY Times was PRICELESS and the outreach occurred 8 months prior. If I am not reading your articles in publication I am reading letters to the editor you write in response to others' pieces. Can you talk to us about the power of the pen? It's mightier than the sword and you can get refills.

14. You are often on the road. Any travel tips for us? Bring an umbrella, pillow, food and noshes. Be self contained. Be nice to airport personnel. Stay true to your exercise/eating habits/ schedule. Take good care of yourself physically. Treat every speech, trip, event as an Adventure. Just spoke at San Jose State... stayed 2 nights but had a day off where I walked around the area, met a friend for lunch, went to St Joseph's Basilica (awesome) and the gift shop, visited San Jose Museum of Art for Picasso and Goya exhibits. Allow yourself to be "wowed" wherever you are. I was in Bakersfield for the first time in years and reconnected with my clients who are pals there. That turned into an extra talk, dinner with my pals and another speaking engagement because someone brought a spouse to my talk. **Have FUN...** and for heaven's sake--- WALK YOUR TALK.

16. What's next for Susan? More of the same.... And a new book in Fall: *Face To Face: How To Reclaim the Personal Touch in a Digital World* for Fireside S and S. I am focusing on my Military Mingling and college/universities and building my corporate and publishing consulting and hell bent on staying active, cool, fun and young!!!

One thing I have been doing for years and am doing even more is to attach time to each gig for me to enjoy friends, places, etc in the cities in which I speak. When I spoke in Hershey, PA (yes, it does smell of chocolate), I had dinner with a client from 20 years ago and spent my money to have the car take me to Amish Country which was a wonderful learning experience. I extended time in Florida to include a lunch with a friend I met at ASTD 25 years ago in San Francisco and a 2 day visit to my 92 year old friend who was the Superintendent of School's secretary when I was a teacher. Life is short: see your

friends, the country, the sights (not sites) as they add to our quality of life, our bonds of friendship and the breadth of experience from which to draw for our speeches.

Be sure you enjoy your life and don't need the applause as reassurance. There are days when meeting planner feedback, audience response and evaluations are no walk in the park. And other days, they make us "walk on air". Plan your own "walks in the parks" with friends, colleagues, family or on your own!

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