

002 – How Do I Get Started

Announcer: Do you dream of living as a speaker, writer, or performer? Do you want to learn to communicate with clarity, focus, and power? In each episode you will learn the secrets of dynamic communication so you can make a living doing what you love.

Welcome to the Art and Business of Public Speaking with your host, who, for over 30 years has helped men and women build exciting careers, Ken Davis.

Brian: Hello there, this is Brian Scheer, your cohost for the Art and Business of Public Speaking, where we peek behind the curtain to discover how to create, grow and maintain a successful career as a communicator. Ken, today we're going to talk, and answer a question that I get all the time, through email and through phone calls, and they're always asking, How do I get started in doing what your clients are doing?

Ken: That's right. Over the years I remember sitting in my office and waking up every morning – "you've got mail." You've got mail. You've got mail. And so many of those were from people asking the question, How do I get started? And there's no way to answer that in another email. I tried for a long time, and eventually we wrote a little letter. I'm going to use parts of that letter today as an answer to the question "How do you get started."

But for people who are asking that question, what we'd like to do today is provide some instructions that will help them move in that direction. And at the end of this, and right now, at the beginning, this is going to sound like it's designed for a promo. It is not. One of the reason we built our LAUNCH conference, how to launch your business as a speaker, one of the reasons you have a company, the Frontline Group, which helps coach people in all of these areas is because people were screaming with all of those letters. So when we peek behind that little curtain of the art and business of public speaking, there's a pile of emails, there's a pile of letters – the old kind of letters – there are messages everywhere. How do I get started? So today I'd like to talk about some of the instructions that we can give that will help people answer that question.

Brian: Great. Let's get right into it and talk about these instructions to answer the question, How Do I Get Started in the public speaking arena.

Ken: Can I read a little bit of the letter we wrote years ago?

Brian: Absolutely. That's a great idea.

Ken: It says:

"Thank you for your inquiry. I am honored. I am often asked to answer questions such as yours. However, many questions do not have formula answers. Because we get so many requests for this information and because answering these questions takes more

time than any email will allow, we've developed a two day workshop" – at that time called what?

Brian: The Summit.

Ken: The Summit, which is now called LAUNCH – "which addresses these issues in detail." And it's actually more than two days now, isn't it?

Brian: Yeah. Actually we're going into the third day.

Ken: Yeah, we go into the third day called the Summit. But here are some of the answers we gave back them. Here's the first instruction: Don't burn your bridges.

Brian: Now wait. Did you say britches or bridges?

Ken: Don't burn your bridges.

Brian: Bridges – okay, good.

Ken: You caught me off guard with that one. I just got a mental picture out there of people trying suddenly to put out the fire that they had started on their own britches. No, don't burn your bridges.

The nice thing about speaking and entertaining, the nice thing about the business and the art of public speaking is that you can do it while you're doing something else. And especially, you can start it while you're doing something else. I found that, over the years, I've met people who go "I want to be a speaker." And so they quit their job. And suddenly they're out there and they haven't had these instructions that help them get started, so they're left high and dry. They don't have a job, and then they have to go back and get another job.

Brian: But there's an argument that could be made that if you do quit your job you're in a desperate position and it will motivate you and get you going in the right direction.

Ken: Desperation and motivation do nothing unless you have information. And that's what we're giving today. Think of it this way. If you really believe that you want to make a living speaking, then think of where you are now not as an obstacle, but as a spring board to that. Don't think badly of your job. Be thankful that you've got a job that's supplying the income right now which will allow you on the side to do what you love to do, and maybe learn to do it in such an excellent way that eventually you can make a living doing it.

Brian: You know, we have our communicator coaching program that we put together, the Frontline Group, along with you, Ken, and we have many clients. Probably about a dozen clients that we work with and come alongside them. I would say that 80% of them all have a full time job. And they're developing their platform right now on their

own time. It might be in the evenings or it might be on the weekend. And you know what? At least half of them are using the current bridge they have with their company and/or the business they're working in to help them develop this because they are doing presentations for them.

One lady, for example, is in the banking industry, and she is doing four different presentations for them that she knows, one day, it's her content, she's going to be able to utilize on her platform.

Ken: And then there are other people, Brian, and we're going to talk about this a little later, there are other people who discover really, they're completely fulfilled by having speaking the art and business of speaking be a part time thing for them. And you want to make sure that you've got a little safety net there. Here's what's interesting. I had a full-time job when I decided to do public speaking full-time. But the reason I decided to do public speaking full-time was I couldn't keep up for the demand for my speaking. My job, as a youth worker, was to speak, but somebody else was paying me to do that and I was getting all kinds of invitations. And people were saying, you can't take those invitations. You've got a job here. They weren't mean people. It was true. I was being paid to do another job.

But when I quit and went into public speaking "full time" I took a different kind of job. It was a job that did not have a 9 to 5 requirement. I wasn't busy every day of the week. It was more in a sales representative position. And I had to go to some conferences and I had to visit some people but I had some extra space and extra time. So I even provided a different kind of safety net. But here is what was beautiful. Within a couple of months I had made more money speaking than I ever had at any job in my life, and I was able to drop the safety net and swing from those trapeze.

Brian: All right. Here is what I want to do. I want to put a bookmark there. We're going to go on to point two but we are going to come back to this in the fifth point, so listen closely. We are going to come back to this illustration or story that Ken just said. But let's go on to the second instruction on how to get started. Okay?

Ken: The second one is, identify your assets. And what we mean by that is, those qualities of your life, those experiences that you've had. The proprietary information you might have. The giftedness you might have. Certainly, early in my life, and we've talked about this and other podcasts, I identified the fact that I could make people laugh. I remember the first time I went to a comedy club and they kind of smirked and - oh, you're a youth guy. Yeah, that's great, you can have five minutes. And they asked me then to headline the very next week. A guy by the name of George McKelvey. I will be grateful to him my entire life encouraging me in that way. So I headline the very next week.

But I knew what my assets were. I didn't figure out until later that one of those assets was the ability also to present content. So when I tied the two - I thought I wanted to be

a comedian. That's what I'm going to be. I'm going to be a comedian. And only in trying it did I discover, well, I don't think that's exactly what I want to be. I want to use comedy, but I have always wanted to use it in a way to present material that could change lives. I'm not ashamed of the faith-based aspect of my life and, it was for a long time, only in churches and then into corporations and now doing our own shows. It has been a marvelous thing. But I had to identify what it was, first.

Some of your clients - what are their assets?

Brian: I just got off the coaching call earlier today. As they are getting started, I asked them to do something. I asked them to take a piece of paper and just start brainstorming all the assets that they had and what they brought to the table. And they said, I have a good eBook. And I said, okay, that's an asset. You have written an eBook. And I said, how did you know to write? Well she said, I'm a writer. And I said, that's an asset. And she said I'm an editor. And I said, that's an asset. She said, I have connection in the publishing industry. And I said, that's a huge asset.

And so, one of the things that, Ken, you didn't mention as a possible asset would be network. What is your network look like? Also, then she talks about her life experience. Going through a divorce. Going through some pain. And then physical trauma that she had. All of those, although they were painful, are assets.

Ken: Right. We had an interview not long ago with Carol Kent. One of the assets, and you almost hate to name and that, was unbelievable tragedy in her life. But not an asset that allowed her to make money. That isn't the idea. But an asset that allowed her to reach out to other people who had been through that kind of tragedy and touched their lives. So you've got to identify all of those things that come together that might make you an interesting speaker.

Brian: And be intentional about it. Don't be afraid to list all of those things because they do leads to the third instruction that we're talking about.

Ken: Absolutely. I use the word absolutely all the time. So we have to eliminate...

Brian: You really absolutely do.

Ken: I know. Absolutely. The third instruction is to design your product. So you take all of those ingredients or some of those ingredients, because you may end up with more than one speech. More than one presentation. More than one "product." And you design what it is you are going to present. You design your presentation.

So, my presentation – I've ended up with many of them. One of them is Living and Laughing Together. I just presented that at a women's conference. Another one is Fully Alive, based on the book that I wrote. And in that case, my assets were going through an experience where I had to change my lifestyle, where I changed physically, experiencing

losing a granddaughter in the mountains at 10,500 feet, and the wonderful experience of finding her again. And how all that affected my life. I took all of those and made a product called Fully Alive.

And when I started speaking on that, Brian, you may remember a publisher came to me and said, well, are you thinking of writing a book on that? And this is going to touch on the next part of it, real strongly. But I started talking about it. I put those assets together. And that's what it looks like. You take your experiences and you have to find out where that touches the audience. Because it isn't just about what you've experienced.

But like with Carol Kent, it's how what she's experienced can help other people. That's the intersection every single time. You want to design a product that meets the needs of other people. If you can give other people what you want, you will never want for what you want.

Brian: It's true. It's funny, because designing your product has to have a look back at your assets, but a look forward to what the market is asking for and being able to bring those together and say, what do I take from my assets to respond to what the market is asking for? So you've got to look at both of those things. That's why it's so important to get your list put together of everything you bring to the table. Because sometimes the ingredients that you put together to create a new product or a new presentation are going to utilize all kinds of different ingredients in one form, and then another one in another presentation.

Ken: Yeah. Sometimes people have a hard time identifying what these are. In our LAUNCH conference we go into this in specific detail and we allow people to set some time aside to actually list what these are and to try to put them together so that it designs a product.

But as you're listening to this, just think through of who you are and what you love to do, and what other people say you're good at, and that will help you start in the right direction.

Brian: The one thing that the Frontline Group can do for people is get them started. But before we can do that, we've got to know what their assets are.

Ken: That's right. They've got to be able to identify them.

Brian: Yep. And so, before we do any kind of coaching call, we ask them to send us a list of all of their assets. And when we know that, we already hear the market a little bit, and we can find what formula we need.

Ken: I want to encourage people that this doesn't happen overnight. This is work. This really requires some introspective thinking, and sometimes requires going back into your

childhood. So don't be discouraged if this doesn't pop into your mind during this podcast.

Brian: So the first instruction was: Don't burn bridges. The second one was: Identify your assets. The third one was: Design your product. And our fourth one is: Refine your product.

Ken: Refine your product. And let me tell you what this means. That means practice your product in public. Give that presentation over and over. If you have to do it free, do it free. I can't tell you how many rotary talks in my life I gave. I can't tell you how many – what is that organization...

Brian: Toastmasters?

Ken: Toastmasters. I can't tell you how many talks of groups like that that I gave my talk over and over. I would call these groups and say, I've got a great talk. And they would allow me to come. Of course, there was no pay for it. But eventually, when you practice in public, people will hear.

I practiced in public fully alive, the presentation. Before I wrote the book. The publisher came and said, write the book. We want you to write the book. A movie director came and said, we'd like to make a movie of that. And they made the movie "Fully Alive." That showed in theaters. We got that on Netflix. We got that DVD now available for anybody who wants to hear that DVD, or I guess you'd watch a DVD. Not hear it.

Brian: You'd do both. Watch and hear.

Ken: Absolutely. So when you practice in public, two things happen. You begin to refine your product. You should record what you're doing. Listen with a critical ear to what you're doing. Ask other people to give you feedback on what you're doing.

Brian: And be very receptive to that. Hopefully it's people who will give you constructive criticism.

Ken: Constructive feedback. Sometimes that is not your spouse. I'll just tell you that ahead of time. So yes, practice in public. And then never stop learning. Here's what amazes me. We've been doing SCORRE and LAUNCH – SCORRE for 30 years, LAUNCH for pretty close to that.

Brian: Well, it's 15 years for LAUNCH.

Ken: That's pretty close to 30. It's half way. When you get half way you go, "I'm close."

Brian: You round up. You always round up.

Ken: I ran two miles last night as fast as I could run. Half way was a big mark for me, because I laid down and rested for a while before I ran the second mile.

But the truth of the matter is this. In the years of providing those conferences, Brian, tell me we have not looked out into the faces of professional athletes, of people who had spent their entire career speaking, of people who have made tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars, of corporate executives who came because of a man who taught a Sunday school class with four girls in it and wanted to do it better. You know what amazed me about these people? They had the key to fulfillment and success embedded in their hearts. And that was, they were never satisfied with the status quo. They always felt they could learn something. And the day you decide, I've got it together now, I don't need to do anything else – you've got one foot in the grave.

Brian: I mention on another podcast the Aristotle quote – it keeps coming back to me. “To avoid criticism say nothing, do nothing, be nothing.” And as you talk about practicing, you're going to be open for being criticized. And that's okay, as long as you take it well, and it's not a personal attack on you, it's going to make you better, refine that product, improve it. More and more people will respond to your product.

Ken: I remember when we interviewed Carol Kent. She said this. “In every criticism – “ and I think this originally came from a guy by the name of Gordon MacDonald, who went through a very difficult time in his life. “In every criticism, no matter how unfair, there is a grain of truth that we can learn from.” And that's probably true.

Of course, you know that I take criticism extremely well. I am so gracious.

Brian: Notice that it's silent on this side of the mic.

Ken: In my younger years – I'll tell you someday about a guy that got thrown down a flight of steps. He's still alive. He's doing fine, but he's a little more careful about criticism.

Brian: Walks with a limp now.

Ken: So, let me give you number five. So we've got don't burn your bridges, identify your assets, identify what your skills and gifts and all those elements that can help you put together your product, then design your product, then refine your product by practicing in public, and by never, ever giving in to the temptation to stop learning. To continue to learn. And of course we want people to come to our conferences. Because we've seen the lives changed by them. But if it's not ours, find somewhere – keep reading, keep improving.

And then number five is this. If you do those, one of two things will happen. If you take those instructions seriously and act on them, one of two things will happen. And we find this at our conferences. Some people come to the conference and say, after being here, I realize this isn't the direction I need to go. That decision alone saves them tons

of time and money and heartache. That's a few good people that that happens to. Most people begin to realize, this is how I can unleash what's been inside of me for a long, long time. This is how I can live out my passion.

For those people, here's what will happen. The phone will start ringing. People will start stopping them on the street. People will start emailing, saying, can you come and speak to us. And when that demand reaches the place where you go, what am I going to do? – That's God Himself giving you one additional instruction on how to get started. And what He's saying in that moment is, burn your bridges. Burn your bridges now.

That is Him opening up opportunity, saying, here it is. That's what I did. And I was so scared I had to get this other job, I wouldn't have needed that other job, but I was smart. I had a little safety net there, and when I left that job, the guy that gave me that job sent me out with unbelievable encouraging "man, go do your thing." I was so happy to be here for that little bit of time you needed me.

Brian: I told you, we'd bring it back – that was the bookmark. When Ken started getting those calls, he knew that he was on the right track. And it was affirmation for him to burn the bridge. And so we brought it back to where we were in the beginning. But I do want you to give one more illustration on - if you're on the right track, you'll know it.

Jay Laffoon, a dear friend of ours, he was just starting off and he was just doing a lot of, I believe youth work, right? And he was having some demand there, and then he started a...

Ken: He started that marriage conference. Celebrate Your Marriage. By the way, make sure that's in our Show Notes where people can find out about that. But he started Celebrate Your Marriage, and he called Danny de Armas, who is one of our mentors, who was managing me at the time. My career was exploding at that time. And Jay Laffoon wanted to be, I think he would say this himself, he wanted to be Ken Davis. He wanted to be a comedian. He wanted to be a speaker. That's kind of where it was going.

And this is probably a good illustration because this was God's message in a different way. God is saying, look to your left. I've kicked opened a door here. Because he had this marriage conference and he was going, this thing is sold out every time. All my attention and work is going in this direction, and I want to be this over here. And what was happening was, the market was refining his product for him. He had these messages he had done on marriage, and the market was screaming, this is what we want. And Danny helped him see, you've got a marvelous career right here. And he and his wife took off with that thing.

I'm going to be speaking at it again.

Brian: In 2016.

Ken: 2016. They're still going up at that marvelous hotel.

Brian: It's at the Grand Hotel, and I think it's their 20th anniversary.

Ken: You know, I am so excited about being there again. And that's just one guy who listened to the market, and to be honest, he listened to God and he burned his bridges and headed in that direction. And I don't think he's ever been sorry for doing that.

Brian: Well, let's review real quick here. If you were taking notes, this will be your chance to catch up.

The first instruction to getting started...

Ken: Don't burn your bridges.

Brian: Yes. And the second one...

Ken: Identify your assets. Identify your gifts. All of the things that can be a part of what you're going to put together.

And the third one is, Design your product. And then of course, Refine your product. And you do that by practicing in public and by choosing to never stop learning. To continue your search for excellence.

And then finally, when the phone starts ringing, when all of this works, then it's time to burn your bridges and experience your dream.

Ken: And you'll know you're on the right track. And over 40 years, I can tell you how wonderful it is to realize you're on the right track.

Brian: Hey Ken, we're going to go into our next segment here. This is our Road Tip segment. This is a segment that we've heard a lot, that people love. You give some funny ones and you give some very practical ones, and some off the wall ones. But today, what is the Road Tip for our audience?

Ken: There is more depth in this one than you will ever realize. And it touches on maybe some other road tips that we've done. But this is about staying in the hotel. And you can disagree with it if you want, but this is my Road Tip.

Don't watch TV. There's a half a million things you can do that is better to just go into that hotel room, flop on the bed and start surfing channels and watching TV. Don't watch TV. There's a lot better stuff to do.

Brian: I think that's a great tip. And something that is so hard to put into practice sometimes when you just want to lay down and...

Ken: Veg.

Brian: And veg and relax a little bit. But there are a lot of different options that you can do instead of watching TV.

All right. We've mentioned this almost every show. We do put our Show Notes together for you, and they are laid out really well so you can see the overview of this. And if you want to go deeper you can listen to it again. Lauren Brady does a great job of putting those Show Notes together and they're available – you can download those by going to dynamiccommunicators.com.

And not only will it have the notes from the show and what we just spoke about, but it'll also include the links. For example, Jay Laffoon's Celebrate Your Marriage conference. And you can get more details on that conference in those Show Notes.

Ken: There's a couple of other things that I'd like to say. We're not done with this topic yet, about getting started. We have a podcast coming up on the money part of this. How you charge, when you start to charge, and so on. And also, a step that I forgot is that you've got to get someone like Lauren Brady on your team. Because without that, I don't know how we'd get this darn podcast done.

Brian: We're looking into that cloning project and seeing if it will work for Lauren. And also, I wanted to mention something. A lot of the framework that you just heard here, in a much more detailed fashion, is presented at our LAUNCH conference. And we have a conference coming up in 2016. All of the details of that conference will be available through our Show Notes, and you'll be able to click right through to the LAUNCH conference. It'll give you the time, the place, and how you can register.

And we have a lot of different options on how you might register for our launch conference.

Ken: I might have said this at the beginning that this isn't a promo, but it really is. Because if you want to get started, that's the place to start. Right there.

Brian: So we could have really cut out a lot of this content...

Ken: One step. One instruction. Go to LAUNCH.

Brian: Very good. Well, thank you, everyone, for joining us for today's podcast. We are happy to be on board with you in this journey in the Art and Business of Public Speaking. And until next time...

Ken: Don't burn your bridges – your britches – don't burn 'em.