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Five Tips to Become a Soundbite Genius

By Susan Harrow

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1. Speak in soundbites to everyone.

Getting key phrases for concepts and ideas across clearly is central to all communication. As a fun practice try to shave off any extraneous details during conversation in your everyday life. In Errol Morris' film *Fog of War* former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara said, *Never answer the question that is asked. Answer the question you wish were asked.* Begin to train yourself to speak only what you want others to hear. In this way you'll be shaping other's perception of you—which is the essence of good media.

2. Answer the first interview question with your sermonette.

In a 1989 interview on the NPR show Fresh Air veteran TV journalist David Brinkley said, *Everyone of them [his guests] will arrive in the studio with some little sermonette in mind, and determined to deliver it. So one thing I do is first ask them a dull, boring question like, what do you think about this. And let them deliver their little sermonette. And then we get to the hard core of what we're there to talk about.* Your first and last points have the most impact so plan and deliver your sermonettes no matter what you're asked.

3. Frame your ideas for your audience.

Jennifer O'Neil, a film producer and director, explained that when shooting background footage (b-roll) she uses a technique called *grounding.* To *ground* the camera must end definitively on an object or scene that signals the viewer that that segment is over. I suggested to her that she probably also used the opening footage to *ground* or shape the beginning of how she wanted a viewer to perceive the scene. In this way you orient your audience to the scene or the material you want them to focus on.

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You can apply the same concept to soundbites. Your opening words set the stage for what you want to convey, your final words signify the close, how you want your audience to remember what you've told them. Use your opening and closing statements to anchor your audience to the information you want them to grasp. That way you shape the way they think about your product, service or cause.

4. Tell people what to do.

I love mystery, but this isn't the place for it. Don't leave your audience guessing. Be forthright about the action you want them to take by letting them know why your product or service is necessary for them to have a complete and happy life now. What gap does what you have to offer fill? Be direct in pointing this out so there is no doubt.

5. Live your words.

Get to the point with clarity and insight. The Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer said of composer Astor

Piazzolla's music, *I don't think it's [the music] always about embellishment. I don't think it all can be expressed rightly just gliding on the surface of convenient rhythms. This music can't be in fact performed, it has to be lived. And I always can distinguish if someone is flirting with Piazzolla as a convenient item of our commercial industry or if someone really lives the life or the heartbeat of the music of this great composer.*

It's the same with you and your soundbites. Are you living the heartbeat of what you're saying, what you're representing? If not, we hear your false notes, your commercial intent. If so, we know in an instant when your music is true.

Learn how to use any interview, any time, on any topic, to get your business, book, product or cause the publicity—and fame you long for in this soundbite teleclass.

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Susan Harrow is a top media coach, marketing strategist and author of *Sell Yourself Without Selling Your Soul* (HarperCollins), *The Ultimate Guide to Getting Booked on Oprah*, and *How You Can Get a 6-Figure Book Advance.* Her clients include Fortune 500 CEOs, millionaires, best-selling authors and successful entrepreneurs who have appeared on Oprah, 60 Minutes, NPR, and in TIME, USA Today, Parade, People, O, NY Times, Wall Street Journal, Inc.

Pixar's Joe Ranft's 2 Rules For Living

By Susan Harrow

Joe Ranft knew how to live. Considered the heart of Pixar's films his sense of humor and gift for storytelling were legendary throughout the industry and throughout the world. How can you apply his life lessons to promoting yourself, your product, business, service or cause? Storytelling is key along with two others.

1. The journey is the reward.

I want it now. I can't wait. Hurry, hurry. Show me the money. What do I get? Life will be better tomorrow.

Stop.

What about now? What about doing without knowing what will result, just for the fun of it?

This is what Kathan Brown, a client of mine who is legendary in the print making/etching world and who has worked with such artists as John Cage, Richard Diebenkorn, and Richard Tuttle, writes in the opening of her book, *Ink, Paper, Metal, Wood*:

"Thirty-three years ago when I founded Crown Point Press I didn't have a clear plan, but I liked the feel of ink on my hands and the look of it after I'd printed it onto paper using an etching press. I liked working with polished copper, aromatic liquid tar, rosin from pine trees, and wax, heated and rolled out thin -- poetic materials from another age."

She goes on to say that she started the press for her friends who were painters and sculptors and how they taught her ways to make sense of life in this day and age.

During this time when our troops and the Iraqi people continue to die, when hundreds have died or are in desperate straits in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, when depression, obesity and anxiety have become as commonplace as the housefly, how does what you do help us make sense of the world?

And while the journey is the reward, Kathan says, "You can't just sit around and enjoy. You also have to look for the next step."

2. Trust the process.

Process is often mysterious, frustrating and slow. Process is also miraculous, easy and instant. They are part of the same continuum.

Margaret Welty is a great example of trusting the process. She's an artist and gifted teacher who just got her own cable TV show). She has attended the Soundbite System for Success (tm) teleclasses) every single time they've been offered.

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She practices weekly with her soundbite buddy and has done so for over six months. She's made dramatic strides that have come from trying different ways of saying things, hearing her soundbite

buddie's feedback and booking herself on radio shows so she can hone what she's learned. I love the phrase (soundbite) on her website: "No Talent? No Problem! Drawing Free allows anyone — even YOU to start drawing NOW."

Even me? With Margaret holding my hand I will trust the process and give it a go. No doubt Joe Ranft would cheer me on.

Susan Harrow shows you how to trust the process while doubling or tripling your business in her book, *Sell Yourself without Selling Your Soul*. Learn how to promote yourself, your business, your product or your cause without bragging, begging or whoring—and get exactly what you want—from the media and ultimately, from life.

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