

THE SPONTANEITY SHOP

**Presentations and pitches
that really work**

Barack Obama

There were nearly a quarter of a million people in Grant Park watching Barack Obama deliver his victory speech on 4 November 2008, yet he looked perfectly confident, relaxed and comfortable.

His delivery was crisp and clear, his speech was filled with striking imagery and clarity of purpose, and he looked and sounded in every way like a world leader. But President Obama wasn't always able to command an audience with this kind of skill and ease. In fact, ten or so years ago, he had a reputation for being a dry and tedious speaker.

This kind of charisma can be learned.

Obama learned it. And so can you.



Most of us can't face even a small audience without a trace of anxiety. Public speaking continually tops polls as people's number one fear, with death at number two. Can it really be that most people feel they would rather be in the coffin at a funeral than giving the eulogy? If so why?

Audience

Cavemen and women who found cobras cute and wanted to cuddle them died childless. Those who were snake-savvy lived longer. This means most of us have inherited a natural fear of snakes. But what possible advantage could there be in fearing an audience?

Well, if you were standing on the African savannah, and there were twenty eyes in a pack staring at you – what would you be?





Prey

The fear of public speaking is probably a fear of being somebody's lunch.

This means that when we give a speech at a wedding, a presentation or a sales pitch, we are likely to exhibit the same signals as someone who's about to be chased by a homicidal hunter. Our blood pressure rises, we may sweat or shake – all because adrenaline is racing through our bodies getting us ready to sprint fast. This could save our lives if we were in physical danger, but these same signals work against us when we most need to look relaxed and charismatic in public. It makes the experience of presenting an anxiety-inducing experience, and it makes us want to run away.

When presenting, most people look like a twitchy gazelle about to be chased...

But some people look like a lion in charge of a pride, completely relaxed, ready for action and scared of nothing.

How does someone who presents like a frightened gazelle begin to take charge of a room like a charismatic lion?

They would have to be in the right state of mind to learn – in a safe place – probably not a lions' den.



Coconut Shy



**One turn
for a pound**

**Three turns
for a pound**

An easy choice.

You don't really expect to knock the coconut off with your first attempt. All you're doing with that first ball is gathering data – how heavy is the ball, how stable is the target – so that the second and third attempts have a better chance of success.

But in a training session, if you were offered three turns at something in front of the group, or only one, which would you take? Most people would much prefer only one. Why? Instead of seeing each turn as a chance to gather information or have a go at something fun like a coconut shy, we worry that each turn is a chance to fail in front of others and reveal that we're "no good" at the exercise or inherently "untalented".



What if the trainer could create an atmosphere that took away this internal “success or failure barometer” and instead the group could look at each individual’s turn as an opportunity for the whole group to explore a problem to be solved?

The group gets closer to the solution as each individual tries a new tactic. Some will be close to the target, some will be far away – each one gives us new information to find the best methods. If people are having a good time, then they’re in a great state to learn, forget their fears and find their most charismatic self.



When are you at your most charismatic, fun, witty, spontaneous and charming? Usually it's not at a job interview. It's normally with old friends, in the evening, maybe with a good meal and a bottle of wine. The people you trust the most are most likely to see the "real you" – the relaxed and confident you.

Some people or situations will bring out your most nervous and unconfident behavior. An intimidating colleague who always leaves you stammering, a networking event you have to attend on your own which leaves you with a dry mouth, a question from the floor during your presentation which makes you sweat.

Why can't you produce your relaxed, comfortable self in these situations?



It is because you are letting your body take the lead. Your body has a very powerful influence over your state of mind.

Try this...

Before you turn the page find a mirror and try this exercise. Hold your head very still, make direct eye contact and say “Hasta la vista baby.”

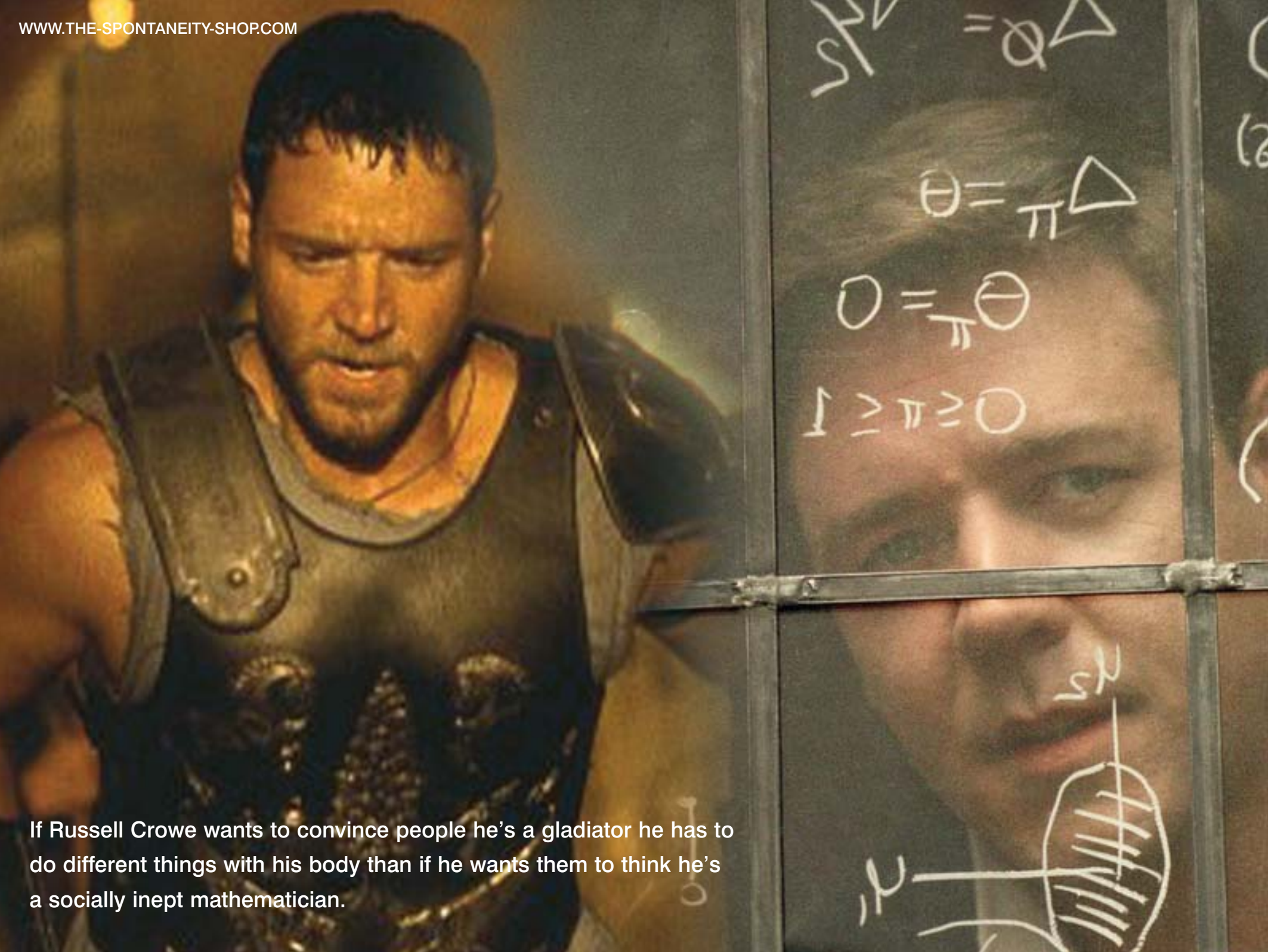
This can look and feel very powerful – intimidating even – like Arnold Schwarzenegger when he was still the Terminator.

Now try saying it again while wagging your head from side to side. This famously intimidating catchphrase is not threatening at all with a moving head. In fact you look more like Austin Powers.

You can change the way people perceive you and control your levels of confidence with your body.

**“Hasta la vista,
baby”**



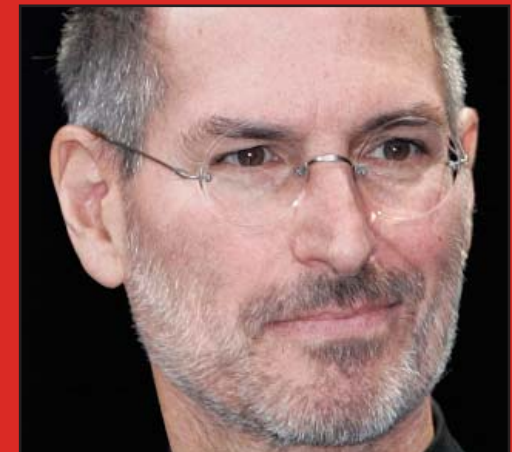
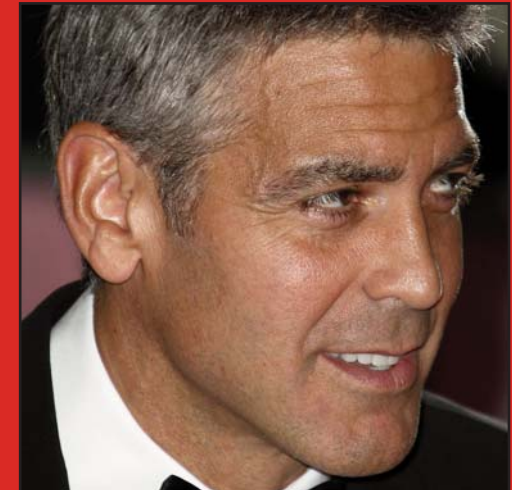


If Russell Crowe wants to convince people he's a gladiator he has to do different things with his body than if he wants them to think he's a socially inept mathematician.

If you want to look and feel like a relaxed charismatic speaker you have to know how to act like one. What did Obama learn to do with his head, hands and body to look and feel comfortable and engaging? How is that different from what Oprah Winfrey does? Or George Clooney? Or Steve Jobs? Or you? What can you change to find your unique inner super star? How do you write material as dynamic and compelling as Barack Obama when you're not accepting the presidency of the United States but presenting everyday figures or even bad news?

At The Spontaneity Shop we've discovered the answers. We run workshops, seminars and one-on-one coaching sessions which give the participants real experience in doing these things – not just hearing about them.

Over the page are some stories about how our techniques have worked for our clients.



It's about results

An aerospace sales executive had been trying to close a three million dollar deal for months. He attended a conference one morning where The Spontaneity Shop delivered some charisma training. He decided that as he was having no luck with the client, he might as well try one of the simple techniques he'd learned. He called the client in the lunch break and in minutes was astounded to find he'd closed the deal.



Quick wins like the example above are common from one off sessions but building lasting charisma takes time: a marketing executive from a “Big 4” accountancy firm suffered anxiety when presenting in high profile sales situations which were increasingly a key part of his job. He attended monthly sessions with The Spontaneity Shop with a team of ten colleagues for a year. Towards the end of the training, he went on a high-stakes sales pitch. The tech team had set him up with a more advanced form of PowerPoint which he'd never used before; as he predicted, the technology crashed, leaving him high and dry right at the top of the pitch.

He laughed, turned to the client and said “Forget the slides, let me talk to you about what it would be really like if we worked together.” When he won the business, the client said “We’ve seen you in a crisis – and we want you on our side when things go wrong.” More than that, they liked him as a person. He now looks forward to having to give last-minute presentations and to going out to catch the big fish. He sees it as his specialty.

A PR company were not winning all the pitches they could have been. They were great at selling their clients but found it harder to sell themselves. The Spontaneity Shop took the same facts they had been delivering and transformed them into an engaging story that the team was excited to tell. Over a period of six weeks, we worked with them on delivering their sales pitch in a relaxed and charismatic way. Since then, all their pitches have been a warm and engaging conversation – a great experience for them and their new clients – and they have won business from every pitch they've done since.

We can put you in touch with some of the people we work with so you can hear for yourself these stories and others about presentations, pitches, leadership, promotions, innovation, creativity and relationship-building. We work with investment banks, accountancy firms, TV networks and production companies, insurance firms, advertising agencies, charities and anywhere there are people who want to access their most exciting selves, ignite their creativity and learn to tell stories that work.

Our trainers are charisma and creativity experts because they have a diverse and exciting skill base.

We also work as actors, comedy improvisers, improvisation teachers, stand up comedians and screenwriters who pitch in Hollywood. We rely on the skills ourselves whether we are delivering training or performing spontaneous comedy. We are inspired by training others and learn something new with every session we deliver.

Call us at The Spontaneity Shop and make an appointment to talk further.

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