

The art of persuasion w/ Kimberleigh Stark

 By [Carmen Murray](#)

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Persuading a crowd, whether it's your customer, an audience at a conference, the board of directors or even a pitch to a possible client, requires the ability to make an impact with the art of persuasion and confidence.



Actress and coach, Kimberleigh Stark.

Kimberleigh Stark, born and bred in California, now living in South Africa, has acted in over 20 international films working along with Robert Downey JR, Bo Derek and Kris Kristofferson, just to name a few. As a producer, director, talent manager, chair of the Saftas and jury for the international Oscar and Emmy Awards, she also coaches CEO's, executives and actors on how to craft and convey a message in an authentic and concise manner.



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I sat down with Stark to pick her brain about some of the lessons learned from training executives and actors over the years.

Here is what she had to say:

Lesson 1: Know your facts and believe in what your conveying

You can't sell an idea to an audience unless you can sell that idea to yourself. You need to know your subject matter well enough so that you are not constantly searching for the next connection in your mind. People can easily see if you are not knowledgeable and comfortable on the topic at hand. This leads to mistrust and can also make your audience feel ill at ease, lose focus, because they are channeled into your discomfort, and not receiving your message.

Lesson 2: Eyes are the window to your soul

It important to identify when to and when not to make eye contact with your audience. The reason for this, is you need to

be allowed time to assess who is receptive and who is not receptive in the audience so that you know where to focus your energy. This will keep you laser focused.

Lesson 3: Body language

It's easier said than done. There are confident and insecure body languages. All of us have habits that we are unaware of when it comes to our physicality. When people are searching for the next sentence, they will have their mouth open for example.

When people don't truly believe in the message they are conveying, they tend to touch their hair a lot. Pacing is a sign of discomfort. When you are truly comfortable in yourself and the message you are conveying, you are very still. Stillness is the key to exhibiting self-confidence and knowledge.

Lesson 4: Clarity of speech

Nobody wants to listen to someone who is mumbling. People want to relax and listen to your message without having to strain to hear what you are saying in order to fully understand your message. Think about it. There is nothing worse to endure than listening to someone, grasping at words, and the audience trying to put their message together in their minds. It's almost as if you wish there were subtitles so that you could receive the message.

Lesson 5: Learn to channel your energy

Being able to gauge and understand your audience is vital to your performance. If it's a hostile audience, your performance will be completely opposite to a welcoming audience and the way you deal with them. The manner you converse with a hostile audience, you have to pull yourself towards yourself very quickly to avoid being "hijacked" by their energy. There is no better way to rise above it, by enjoying yourself. Doing this, the audience will begin to enjoy the journey and you will ultimately win them over. Your joy is infectious.

In closing

In every engagement, it is essential that we recognise that it's not about you, but about the audience. Your message is for their enjoyment and therefore you need to pay attention to know your audience, know your subject, know yourself and **Practice, Practice, Practice**, or as they say in Hollywood, be well rehearsed.

ABOUT CARMEN MURRAY

Carmen Murray is one of the most influential modern marketers in South Africa. Her strong background in content, digital, mobile, innovation, and data analytics allows her to identify emerging trends and conceptualise disruptive communication strategies deployed with precision. The customer and their needs are always at the heart of her approach.

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