

EMBRACE INNOVATION TO ENSURE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S LONG-TERM RELEVANCE
Standing still will cost you members, integrity and more

TOP 5 THINGS VIRTUAL AC TAUGHT OSAE
Plan now for virtual changes ahead

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We Build Relationships

**THINK
OUTSIDE
THE BOX**

BEING A PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

It's not just organizations that must innovate to drive engagement, relevance



PACANOVSKY

I still remember the last live audience to whom I spoke. It was March 11, 2020, and I was in Las Vegas speaking at a national conference. There were more 1,200 people attending this conference and Las Vegas... well, it looked like Las Vegas.

As I returned back to my hotel room after my seminar, I remember looking at my calendar. In it were engagements in places like Ottawa, Canada, Texas, Indiana, Michigan, Oregon, Illinois and, of course, Ohio, just to name a few. Then, in a matter of a few weeks, not only my world, but the world of my fellow speakers and trainers came to a complete halt.

So, what is it like to be a professional speaker during these last six months?

First, I have worked from my home for the last five years, so the transition to working at home was not that big of a challenge (and I would think that this was the case for most of us in this industry).

The biggest challenge for me was (and is) simply: I miss people... in a live setting, at a conference or training room. I miss seeing the looks on people's faces knowing that what I just shared really hit home for them. I miss the energy in the room, as I am someone who thrives off that. In fact, in the fall of 2019, I was speaking in 11 states and Canada during a two-month period. People asked me how I was able to do it, and I said, "it was the energy of the audiences."

I miss hearing their stories when I would ask for an example of a great customer experience that either happened to them, or what they did for a member and seeing their face light up. I miss being able to read the body language of people as I would intertwine through the ballroom during my keynote.

I also miss the hallway conversations before and after my keynote or training session. I didn't realize how much valuable information I would get from someone just by spending a few minutes with them. I don't know about you, but I don't get that now in a virtual meeting.

And, finally, it's the simple things we have taken for granted. The handshakes when meeting people, the photos taken at conferences or meetings with each other standing right next to people, sharing a meal with people, which to me is one of the best ways to show hospitality.

I know that there are many other industries that have been hit hard by this pandemic and there are people who have been furloughed or lost their jobs, and my heart goes out to all of them. I think one of the biggest challenges with what has happened these last six months is that no one knows when we will recover and get back to whatever "normal" is going to look like moving forward.

But, like many of us, there have been some good things that have come out of this pandemic. For me, while I was speaking on webinars prior to this year, I have learned how to adapt my seminars to a virtual audience. I've also dabbled in Virtual Leadership Coaching for clients, and that seems to be working. The biggest change for me is that I have added a live cooking demo where people can cook right along with me in the comforts on their own kitchens. It's something unique and different than most virtual meetings, and I will be expanding this into my live seminar as well.

And, I am going to be in front of a live audience again. As I write this, I will be headed to York, Pennsylvania in a few weeks for a two-day training then will be in Bloomington, Illinois and Columbus in the same week for two keynote seminars. I don't think I have ever looked forward to speaking engagements as I am these three! ♥

ABOUT OUR AUTHOR:

Bob Pacanovsky, who has provided general session and breakout presentations to OSAE, never thought he would be an entrepreneur. But, looking back, this journey started when he worked for his uncle's Italian restaurant where he learned how to take care of customers and make them loyal in an industry that is extremely competitive. Fast forward about 10 years and he couldn't find a quality pizza to order. With a degree in finance, and a background in marketing and advertising, he did the only logical thing: called his uncle, tweaked the recipes and started making pizzas at home; he and his wife then opened their first Italian restaurant in 1994. Twenty-six years later, Pacanovsky no longer owns his restaurant, but he is a professional member status of the National Speakers Association. He has spoken throughout the United States to numerous organizations, universities, colleges and companies, including the American Bus Association, The Massachusetts Assisted Living Association, the Ohio Society of CPAs, the Ohio Trucking Association, Small Market Meetings, Select Traveler, Catersource/Event Solutions and many more.

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