

How to Achieve
Remarkable Performance
in Anything You Do

The

Encore Effect



MARK
SANBORN

Author of the National Bestseller *The Fred Factor*

Table of Contents

	Acknowledgements	ix
	Warning!	1
	Introduction	3
Part 1: Understanding the Encore Effect		
1	The Power of Encore Performances	7
2	From Routine to Remarkable—Make Them Want More!	13
3	Why Remarkable Performance Matters	23
4	A Different Kind of PDA	37
Part 2: Achieving the Encore Effect		
5	Passion: The Fuel for Remarkable Performance	47
6	Preparation: Where Remarkable Performance Begins	57
7	Practice: It Won't Make You Perfect, but It Will Make You Better	67
8	Performance: How to Engage Your Audience	81
9	Polish: Making Your Performance Shine	91
10	Pitfalls: How to Keep from Stumbling	101
Part 3: Sharing the Encore Effect		
11	How to Help Others Perform Remarkably	113
12	From Remarkable Performer to Remarkable Person	121
	Epilogue	131

Preparation: Where Remarkable Performances Begin

Excerpted from
The Encore Effect: How to Achieve Remarkable Performance in Anything You Do
By Mark Sanborn
DOUBLEDAY 2008

Warning: You are creating your future *right now*.

The future could be five minutes from now or five years from now. In either case, the future is primarily determined by preparation—or lack of it. The question is not *if* preparation is necessary. The question is what kind of preparation we will make. As you and I go about our business each day, we don't often give conscious thought to the kind of future our actions are creating. And yet the kind of future we will have depends on the kind of preparations we make.

A Chinese proverb says, “Dig the well before you are thirsty.”

Abraham Lincoln said, “I will study and get ready; then maybe my chance will come.” (It obviously did.)

The esteemed French surgeon Nelaton once said that if he had only four minutes to perform a life-saving operation, he would take at least one minute to assess the best way to do it.

The amount of guidance that's available in our world on the subject of preparation is quite astounding. There is a wealth of resources on how to prepare for things that *might* happen (hurricanes, terrorist attacks, IRS audits, divorce, financial calamity, medical emergencies, economic downturns, and the like), the things we *expect* to happen (taking the SAT test, getting married, raising children, retirement, passing the bar exam,

preparing a résumé, interviewing for a new job), and the things we *hope* will happen (how to close the sale, get the job, receive a raise, and improve our golf game).

But there is a lot less information available on preparing to perform remarkably; preparing for the last two, five, or 10 percent that will separate your performance from that of others; that will result in you being called back for an encore performance. Sometimes the difference between remarkable and not-remarkable (between “Thanks for coming” and “When can you come back?”) is razor thin.

In his book *Slaying the Dragon*, Olympic sprinter Michael Johnson (world records in the 200 and 400 meter sprints in 1996) wrote, “Success is found in much smaller portions than most people realize. A hundredth of a second here or sometimes a tenth there can determine the fastest man in the world. At times we live our lives on a paper-thin edge that barely separates greatness from mediocrity and success from failure.

“Life is often compared to a marathon, but I think it is more like being a sprinter: long stretches of hard work punctuated by brief moments in which we are given the opportunity to perform at our best.”

We assume it’s the “long stretches of hard work” that make the difference. (More about that in the next chapter.) But everyone works hard for long stretches, and that doesn’t necessarily create anything remarkable. It’s the willingness to engage in the long stretches and a little bit more—that is, to prepare diligently—that makes some performances remarkable.

My friend and Olympic gold medal gymnast Peter Vidmar explains the “little bit more.” Getting to the level of Olympic competition requires everyone to train for long hours each day. The training is so demanding that there is never another hour or two available to invest. The difference, Peter says, is not in finding another non-existent hour, but in finding an extra 15 minutes. After spending all day training, it’s the athlete who will invest just a few more minutes who stands a good chance of rising to the top.

Preparation Breeds Confidence

I entered my first public speaking contest at the age of 10. I was a member of a 4-H club and we needed a representative. With childish naiveté I figured, “How hard could it be?”

Answer: very hard.

My speech lasted three minutes and was a total flop. I stammered and stuttered. I said things I didn’t intend to say and forgot some of what I meant to say. I don’t know if the audience was more bored or amused by my performance. I don’t recall even seeing them in the midst of my humiliation.

After my baptism by fire into the world of public speaking, I realized I could throw in the towel or learn from experience. I definitely didn’t gain any confidence from the experience, but I did gain a measure of resolve. I determined to keep speaking—entering contests, speaking for civic groups or any other opportunity—until I could speak well enough to win.

So I spoke—a lot. And a funny thing happened: the more I prepared and the harder I practiced, the more confidence I gained. And the more confidence I gained, the better my performances became. In due time, speaking became *fun* for me. Over time I realized that I could accomplish three things at the same time by speaking: help people, have fun, and make a living.

Everyone is anxious before they give a speech, and I’m no exception. This is a form of performance anxiety, and lacking it you probably aren’t taking the experience seriously. For me, I’m not terrified (as I once was) nor even nervous (in the typical sense). Why? My *preparation* and *practice* have resulted in a level of *proficiency* that allows my *performances* to be valued by others. Don’t misunderstand that last statement:

it is not braggadocio. It is an honest statement about the connection between *preparation* and *performance*. My natural talent at speaking was evident at age 10. My acquired ability to speak is the result of decades of preparation and practice.

This principle—the critical link between preparation, practice and proficiency—applies to every area of performance, not just public speaking. The principle is as true for parenting as it is for pastoring or public relations.

Confidence is a feeling created by experience—preparation and practice. Thinking you can “psych yourself up” to perform when you are not adequately prepared is not only wishful thinking, it is foolish.

The world of entertainment provides regular examples of those who are consistently prepared and as a result prosper, and those who try to get by on raw talent and tank. The ratio between the amount of time it takes to ruin our reputation and the time it takes to rebuild it is HUGE. Therefore, preparation is not an option for anyone who wants to succeed.

Confidence comes from knowing you can do something because you’ve done it before (experience), or knowing that you can do something because you know there is little chance of failure (preparation). To that end, experience is an excellent form of preparation. But you can even eliminate the possibility of failure from things you’ve never done before by preparing adequately.

If you’ve ever witnessed a jazz musician take off on a long improvisation, you’ve probably wondered how they do it. How can they compose music right on the spot? It’s because they know every square inch of their instrument; they know the musical scales backwards and forwards (what notes will work in which keys); and they’ve spent years preparing for that very moment.

I once heard about a renowned concert organist who was in the middle of a Bach

performance (playing without music) when he suddenly went blank—he forgot where he was in the piece! Instead of panicking, he simply began to compose Bach-like measures at the keyboard, his fingers flying over the keys and his feet over the pedals until he got re-organized, found his place in the piece, and continued on. The audience, of course, had no idea what he had done because of the confidence he exuded. Only an expert would have noticed the stretch of faux-Bach. Because he was prepared he was confident—ready for any unforeseen circumstances. It was why he gave encore performances wherever he went.

Preparation Is Declaration

Joel Weldon has spoken a mouthful in these six words: “You prepare for what you love.” The level of our preparation for any given performance is a non-verbal declaration of the value we place on our performance and our audience.

Let’s consider an easy example: two guys planning an early Saturday morning fly-fishing trip. Bob has spent most of his weeknights getting his gear ready. He’s put fresh line on his reel, checked his rod for cracks or damage, checked the line guides to make sure they’re on tight, then disassembled it and stored it in its carrying pouch. He’s checked his waders for leaks, his net for breaks or ravel in the cord, and tied several new flies suitable for the stream where they’ll fish. He’s rising at 4:00 a.m. Saturday morning so he lays out his clothes in the spare bedroom so as not to wake his wife the next morning: flannel shirt, ball cap, sunglasses, lip balm. He’s packed a small cooler with food and stored it in the refrigerator . . . Bob loves to fish and it shows. He couldn’t be more prepared.

Saturday morning when he pulls up in front of Jim’s house at 5:30 sharp, there are no lights on—and it goes downhill from there. (I’ll spare you the details.)

Bob loves to fish and his preparation proves his words. Jim *says* he loves to fish but his lack of preparation says otherwise. Bob never calls Jim for an encore fishing

performance.

The bottom line is this: Our actions (preparation) speak louder than our words (declaration) when it comes to how much we love what we do.

I am often given the opportunity to speak to civic, church, non-profit, or other groups on a *pro bono* basis. I have found over the years that I spend no less time preparing for those speaking engagements than I do the corporate engagements where I leave with a check in my pocket.

Why? Because I love to speak! Note: I don't love to *talk*. I love to *speak*. When I speak to a group of people, whether in person or through a book or a web site, I am communicating the essence of who I am and what I believe. And who I am and what I believe is not determined by the presence or absence of compensation. I don't devalue or demean myself or my audience when I stand on a stage, taking money in order to say what I think people want to hear. Instead, I say what I believe is true and what I believe will genuinely help people whether I get paid for it or not.

Why would I prepare any differently, any less diligently, based on whether or not I get paid? In the case of *pro bono* engagements, the audience for whom I am performing is not going to give me a pass on my performance because I'm speaking for free. Indeed, most of the time, a *pro bono* audience doesn't know I'm speaking for free. They're going to judge my performance based on what I bring to them, not based on what I was or wasn't paid.

What are you saying about your love (your commitment to, your enthusiasm for, your dedication to) for your audience based on the preparation you put into your performance?

- If you have a presentation to make at work, how thoroughly have you prepared? (Backup laptop for the PowerPoint presentation? Fresh whiteboard markers?)

Refreshments? Anticipated the questions you'll be asked?)

- If you have a date night planned with your spouse or date, what kind of preparations have you made? (Fresh, clean clothes? Dinner reservations made? Clean car? Special surprises?)
- If you're a teacher ready to introduce a new unit of material to your students, what preparation have you made to "hook" them and keep their interest? (Guest speaker? Special audio/video segment? Hands-on, interactive break-out groups?)
- If you're a sales professional scheduled to meet with a prospective client who could make your year, what have you done to prepare? (Researched the client's company thoroughly—aware of its needs and goals? Carefully planned [maybe even scripted] and rehearsed your presentation? Anticipated all possible questions and objections and your responses?)
- If you're a manager giving a performance review, how much preparation have you made? (Reviewed the notes you've kept on the employee's performance over the last year? Identified several specific examples for commendation and correction? Developed a professional development plan for the employee?)

In past chapters I've written about your "audience." We all have different audiences every day, ranging from the people we live with to those we work with to those we serve in our jobs or our volunteer work. What do you want your audience to believe about how you feel about them and your relationship to them? Let your preparation do the talking.

Preparation Is Planning in Disguise

In *Flying* magazine, author Peter Garrison wrote about an airplane crash that occurred while the pilot was trying to set a record: "I have come to think that the best

way to plan a difficult undertaking like this [record-breaking attempt] is to assume in advance that it has failed and then try to understand the reasons why.”

Do you get what he is saying? Whatever you are getting ready for—corporate presentation, sales call, employee review, family outing—picture in your mind what it would look like if it totally failed. Then start mentally going through the wreckage looking for what happened and why. This kind of preparation becomes planning-in-reverse: by anticipating your computer dying in the midst of your sales presentation, you know ahead of time to plan to have a backup on hand—unplug the video projector cable from one computer, plug it into the backup (have it running beneath the podium or to the side) and you hardly skip a beat.

By projecting all the things that might go wrong you can prepare for them ahead of time. Preparation becomes a process of planning in disguise.

If you think that’s a bit over the top, I remind you of Olympic sprinter Michael Johnson’s words that I cited earlier: “Life is often compared to a marathon, but I think it is more like being a sprinter: long stretches of hard work punctuated by brief moments in which we are given the opportunity to perform at our best.”

Preparation: The Crucial Five Percent

I like to think of dedicated preparation as a process of finding and seizing “The Crucial Five Percent”—the extra five percent that no one else will search for, much less implement, when it comes to performance.

Do you recall our earlier discussion of the bell-shaped curve? (Chapter 2) The crucial five percent of preparation and performance is found out on the far-right end of that curve—where the curve flattens out and meets the horizontal axis. It’s in that “thin edge of the wedge” that the remarkable performers are to be found. And I strongly

encourage you to make it your goal to move out of the bulbous center of the bell shape and into the crucial five percent of all who perform in your field of endeavor or expertise.

In your preparation . . .

1. Find out things about your “audience” that they thought no one knew, things that your competitors won’t bother discovering.
2. Anticipate every question that your audience might raise and learn the answer.
3. Mentally (and physically, if necessary) rehearse every problem that might arise, planning how to prevent it or how you will solve it if it happens.
4. Know more about your competitors’ products, features, and benefits than they know themselves.
5. Become the expert in your field of expertise.
6. By your appearance and demeanor, give your performance a level of gravitas that your audience wasn’t expecting.
7. By your preparation, give your audience more than one reason to invite you back on stage for a repeat performance.

There is not room at the top for very many; there are only so many encores that will be called for. If you begin today to prepare to be one of that small number, you will be. You will be an encore waiting to happen.