



## INSIDER EXCLUSIVES

SHEBBY LEE SAYS

### To Speak Well or Not to Speak Well— How Good Diction Wows Clients

**A**s a theater major in college, I was taught to speak my lines fully, out front, loudly, and clearly, and then get the hell off the stage. It seemed like wise advice at the time, and, in fact, it has served me well in all my varied endeavors ever since.

If you can't be heard—or understood—your message is not going to get through. It is hard to overstate the importance of good diction in any situation. Imagine mumbling your best sales pitch into a telephone receiver followed by a quick conclusion to the conversation. Not exactly the response you were going for. I personally think a semester of public speaking should be required for all college students.

But it goes beyond just enunciating your words distinctly and audibly. I once worked with a step-on guide who sagely stated that if all you can see are the tops of passengers' heads (on the bus), you might as well sit down and shut up!

This leads me to another of my mantras: It doesn't matter how important your information is, if it isn't interesting, you're wasting your time. It's up to you—no matter what your role is in the travel industry—to make it interesting.

It is amazing how much of my theater training I use on a daily basis. It's not just because I do a lot of public speaking and serve as a tour manager. My brother-in-law is a trial lawyer. He tells me that

he uses his theater experience every single day. Think Perry Mason.

For those of you unfamiliar with the hit 1960s TV show, Perry Mason was a trial lawyer who never, ever lost a case. Why? He had a commanding courtroom presence. He inspired confidence. When he spoke, you just had to believe his client was innocent. Of course, it didn't hurt that all his clients were indeed wrongfully accused.

Theater isn't just the art of having proper diction, of course. Good acting also involves controlling one's expressions, the art of dramatic storytelling, and the ability to hold the attention of an audience. Whether that audience is a jury, a tour group, a prospective client, or a congregation, if you don't have their attention, you don't have anything.

So remember: Step out in front with confidence. Speak loudly and clearly. Have something exciting to say, and say it with enthusiasm.

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