

SPEAKER

LESSONS LEARNED
BY A SPEAKER-
TURNED-MEETING
PLANNER

**WHAT DOES
YOUR BRAND
SAY ABOUT
YOU?**

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handling
a mic
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CAUTION!

ALICE COOPER will
make you a better
speaker (and golfer)

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TO THE
BENEFITS OF
INTERNET
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BUCKLEY,
APR,
STOPS TO
REFLECT**



Alice Cooper's ghoulish make-up has been a mainstay since the 70s.



Alice Cooper Can Teach Speakers a Few Things

SNAKES, GOLF AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

BY TERRI LANGHANS, CSP

My mother wouldn't let me listen to Alice Cooper. But I did anyway. Decades later, a mother myself, I stunned my own kids by knowing all the words—and joining them—as they sang along to Alice Cooper's "School's Out," as it played on their favorite radio station. Six months ago, I finally got to see Alice Cooper live and grab his autograph as he left the stage.

He was completely out of character. No ghoulish eye make-up, fake blood or tight, low-slung leathery pants. His below-the-shoulder-length hair was tied back and tidy. Instead of a boa constrictor, he held a putter. The "stage" he was leaving was the 10th green of the Arnold Palmer golf course in PGA West. The event was the Bob Hope Chrysler Classic golf tournament, and Alice was one of the celebrities playing.

Other fans proffered posters, album covers or concert T-shirts for him to sign. I handed him my

dog-eared, yellow-highlighted copy of his new book, *Alice Cooper, Golf Monster. A Rock 'n' Roller's 12 Steps to Golf Addiction*.

"Ah, here's a good book about golf," he said, and then asked me the proverbial Terri-with-an-"i" or Terry-with-a-"y" question.

"Two r's and an i," I told him, and then quickly added, "I'm sure it is a good book about golf, but I don't play the game. I read it because I'm a professional speaker. I think it's a great business book."

He looked up. I now had eye contact with Alice Cooper. Be still my rock 'n' roll heart. He didn't say a word, but his wink said it all—he agreed. Golf addicts, rock stars and successful speakers do have a lot in common.

Be a Good Imitator

Imitate others? It's Cooper's first principle, yet seemingly strange advice coming from a guy with a girl's name who is the inventor of shock rock, whose concerts were, and still are, an elaborate stage show unlike any others, featuring guillotines, electric chairs, fake blood and live snakes.



COOL ALICE COOPER TRIVIA

One of the first deejays to play Alice Cooper's first big hit, "I'm Eighteen," was a young jock in Missouri named Rush Limbaugh.

Alice Cooper was introduced to Shep Gordon, who would become his one and only manager, by Jimi Hendrix. Cooper and Gordon have worked together from day one without a contract, on a handshake alone. Their first record deal was with Frank Zappa.

Alice Cooper is addicted to television and TV show trivia. At one time, he had 27 TVs in his house.

Perhaps his "imitation" principle applies more to golf? After all, Cooper rose from hacker to scratch golfer to serious Pro Am competitor and today is known as one of the best celebrity golfers around with a "comfortable" five handicap. PGA pro Johnny Miller was the first one to prompt Cooper to seriously pursue golf, and that's who he says he imitated.

"I studied Johnny's moves, where he placed his hands, how his left hand did something different than mine. I mimicked him, and developed this really good swing. Find someone whose swing you like and watch it, imitate it."

It's what he did in his early rock 'n' roll career, too. Seeing Mick Jagger of The Rolling Stones for the first time opened up a whole new world for Cooper, who was 16 at the time, performing with high school buddies in a band called the Spiders and using his given name, Vincent Furnier.

"Jagger was the first to break away from the band and move around the stage to become the focal point," he says. "After seeing Mick, I realized I didn't have to just stand there in front of the microphone like a lump and just sing. I could walk around on stage, dance, point at the pretty girls in the audience. From there I crafted my own style."

When it comes to speaking, however, Cooper is not suggesting we "imitate others" and try to be someone else or try to be someone you're not. He doesn't mean copy or steal someone's content or story. He means listen and watch. "I learn new things every time," he says.

Instantly, I thought of NSA—and wondered

The original shock rocker, Alice Cooper is still performing after five decades.



where I would be if I hadn't joined and been able to listen and watch other speakers. And I was reminded that when you listen and watch other speakers and perhaps even study them, you get so much more than information or a handy-dandy tip. Often, you get insight, perhaps inspiration, and either one or both leads to more impact—for your audience and for your career.

WORDS THAT ROCK HIS WORLD

If Alice Cooper were a professional speaker (he isn't and doesn't want to be), his one sheet might feature only three testimonials—compliments that he will always cherish:

1. **Groucho Marx:** "Alice Cooper was the last hope for vaudeville."
2. **Bob Dylan:** "I think Alice Cooper is an overlooked songwriter."
3. **Tiger Woods:** When a journalist asked him to rate celebrity golfers, Woods said he wouldn't give Alice Cooper "two a side." This means that Woods would not give Cooper the extra two-shot handicap on the front nine and the back nine because if he did, Cooper would beat him.

Signature Snakes, Songs and Stories

The Spiders graduated from high school in 1966 and Vince Furnier (soon to be Alice Cooper) says he knew the band needed a gimmick and a new name (we now call it a “brand”) to succeed.

The origin of the Alice Cooper name includes stories of Ouija boards, past lives and the television show *Mayberry R.F.D.* Cooper says the name actually came out of thin air, when the band realized that the concept of a male playing the role of an androgynous witch in tattered women’s clothing and wearing make-up would cause social controversy and grab headlines. “If the parents hate it, the kids will love it,” became a typical Alice Cooper formula. The name change and resulting brand was one of his most important and brilliant career moves, Cooper admits.

So was his ability to connect to an audience, tap into a universal emotion and bring it to life on stage and in his songwriting.

His signature “prop” is a boa constrictor, incorporated into his show by accident. This is the same way we speakers hear ourselves say something that gets a great response, and then we build it into the next program and then every program, sometimes evolving it into signature story status.

Cooper was backstage at a show when a groupie came in with a small boa constrictor wrapped around her arm. “It scared me—I jumped,” Cooper remembers. “Then I thought if I reacted that way to a snake, other people will, too. Alice Cooper should have a 15-foot boa constrictor on stage. It could be pure shock value—and people are going to hate it!”

His songwriting, too, went for the universal connection. The band’s first hit was “I’m Eighteen,” but the band wasn’t satisfied with it as a “signature” song. The Stones had “Satisfaction.” “My Generation” was the Who’s anthem. Alice Cooper lacked a definitive signature tune, and they set out to get one.

The band members started with a question: What are the two happiest moments in a young person’s life? Their answer: Christmas morning and the last day of school.

Cooper explains their creative thought process: “I thought back to my own school days, watching the clock. Three minutes left before three months of summer vacation. I remembered that anticipation as the seconds ticked down. If only we could write a song capturing those final climactic three minutes of the last day of school.”

They did. And it was an immediate hit, with the single going straight into the American top 10 as soon as it was released. It nailed the experience, that elated feeling of freedom, and kids everywhere “got it.” (Mine still do!)

Rock bands call it their “anthem.” Speakers call it a signa-

ture story. They both have the power to connect, communicate and catapult our careers when done well.

Keep on Golfing. Keep on Rockin’!

Alice Cooper just turned 60 and is in the middle of a world tour as you read this. You can bet he’ll be playing golf every day on tour, as well. He says he plans to play golf until he “drops dead on the back nine.” This is an interesting juxtaposition, because Cooper credits golf with saving his life—replacing an alcohol addiction with a golf addiction.

He says golf also opened doors and gave him credibility. In fact, Cooper is a member of the Friars Club in Los Angeles, the only rocker ever to be invited. “At first, I couldn’t figure out how I got in and became accepted by guys like Bob Hope and Jerry Lewis. Heavy hitters a la Jack Benny, George Burns, Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, all hanging out with Alice Cooper,” he says.

It was the golf. Cooper got his clue when he was invited to Steve Allen’s birthday party—he and 200 of the biggest comedians in the world wearing tuxedos. (Cooper, true to his brand, wore black leather.) Cooper was in a room with Bob Hope, Jackie Gleason and then-President Gerald Ford.

“You know, Alice, I’m pushing the ball right,” Hope said.

“Well, relax your right hand. You’re just not releasing,” Cooper casually commented. Cooper says he will cherish those days because “nobody ever questioned the fact that I was there.”

Golf and rock ‘n’ roll are two things amazingly related in Cooper’s life, and he says he wants to do them forever. Just like many speakers who say they plan to be making presentations when they’re 100. (Maybe you’re one of them?)

“I’m what you call an ‘all-in’ guy. I have that addictive personality. It’s all or nothing. I invented a brand of theatrical rock that has never died and that I refuse to radically alter. I’ll keep touring,

recording, writing songs until I can’t do it anymore.”

Double eagles, holes-in-one and No. 1 hits. Cooper says they’re all reasons to keep on swinging the golf club. “I’m never gonna shake this golf-junkie jones in my soul, and neither should you. Keep on rockin’,” he said.

Those are the last words in his book, and I realize now that he was talking about golf. But maybe not.



Cooper credits golf with saving his life—replacing an alcohol addiction with a golf addiction.



Terri Langhans, CSP, is outgoing chair of the Editorial Advisory Board, which means this is her last issue at the helm of Speaker magazine. Sniffle. She’ll stay busy being COE (Chief of Everything) at Blah Blah Blah and speaking to people who want their marketing to stand out and their lives to be less ordinary. Contact her at www.BlahBlahBlah.us or www.MaverickMarketing.com.