

Communicating with confidence

By Henry Bury
The Intelligencer

When Jack Rizzo speaks, people listen and learn so that they can speak like him.

That's especially true at Loyalist College whenever he regularly conducts his "public speaking for everyone" night school courses and seminars.

About 800 graduates are better public speakers now because of what Rizzo has taught them at the college them since 1984.

Teaching public speaking through lectures and self-help books has been, in fact, Rizzo's business and will take up a greater deal of his time now that the 63-year-old has recently retired as manager of corporate purchasing from Svedala Canada Inc. (formerly Stephens-Adams) in Belleville.

"No matter who you are or what you do in life, there is much to be gained from being a more effective communicator," he said.

Rizzo is an accomplished speaker or effective communicator as he prefers to call himself. In his 20-year involvement with Belleville Toastmasters Club, Rizzo has achieved all levels of recognition.

He was the first club member to become a Distinguished Toastmaster, the highest level within the organization. He's also the first to secure his bronze, silver, and, shortly, gold Able Toastmaster designation.

More than a decade ago, he began imparting his knowledge of communication to everyone from housewives to company presidents.

He then gave his teaching business a name, The Institute of Public Speaking, in 1987.

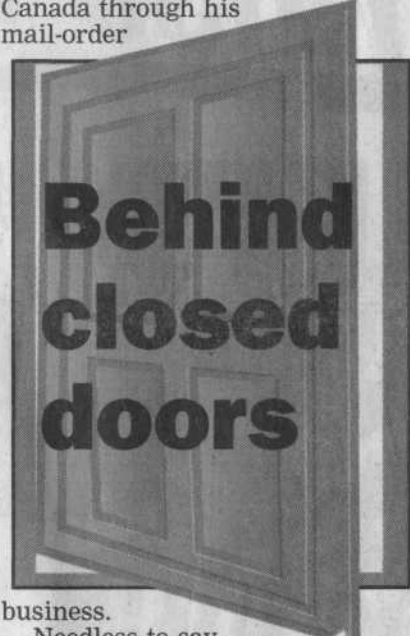
"To be successful in anything, you need to have an effective name and reputation. And I hope I have both."

A room inside his Keller Drive home in Belleville is devoted to the institute.

From that locale, he's proceeded to write two books on public speaking.

One book forms the basis of the 10-week night school public speaking course at Loyalist and which students are required to have.

The other is patterned more as a do-it-yourself manual on public speaking that he sells throughout Canada through his mail-order



business.

Needless to say, Rizzo is a firm believer in being a good communicator.

"Everyone must have the ability to communicate their goals, dreams and desires to be successful in this world," said the 63-year-old Rizzo. "This world truly revolves around communication and your success depends on the effectiveness of your communication."

Rizzo got into public speaking for the same reason that many people now take his course at Loyalist.

As a member of the Purchasing Management Association of Canada and a committee chairman, he was called upon to make presentations.

"I didn't know whether I was doing it right so I joined the Belleville Toastmasters to help me become a more effective communicator within the association of professional purchasing people."

It worked, too, as Rizzo subsequently succeeded in becoming a

national director and, later, national president of the purchasing association. In 1990, he won its Fellowship Award, the most prestigious award presented to the most productive purchasing executive in Canada.

"I wouldn't have been able to advance in my position in the profession without that public speaking ability."

Rizzo said it's been "very gratifying" to see others improve their confidence and skills in public speaking since he began teaching the night school course in 1984.

All these students, he noted, had one common quality when registering for the course.

"They all had a fear of public speaking. Some couldn't even stand up and give their name or occupation on that first day of class because they were so shy."

Upon graduation, said Rizzo, they could speak with confidence. They also increased their self-esteem, reduced their nervousness, and overcame their fear of speaking in front of others.

Rizzo said anyone can and has benefit from the course. His students have included ambulance drivers, bankers, clergy, doctors, executives, journalists, military personnel, retirees and housewives.

"Effective communication is important for people in all walks of life...there's no overly dominant profession that can benefit."

Students in the course use Rizzo's book.

But a similar book is helping others from across the country hone up on their communication skills.

Through his direct mail sales campaign, he's forwarded his "public speaking for everyone" book across the country. Sales are solicited by contacting schools, libraries, fire departments, police departments, cities, towns, villages and municipalities throughout Canada.

"Anyone can use better communication skills."

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