

## EFFECTIVE FOCUS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THINKING ON YOUR FEET

*"Sometimes, thinking on your feet can be the most creative. Constrained circumstances can bring the best out of you.  
Some of the most successful shows come out of shoestring inventions.*

*- Cameron Mackintosh*

Making a quick decision or giving an answer quickly is not an easy thing to do. No matter how versed we might be in a particular subject or acute our feelings surrounding particular topics. Our minds can go blank when we are under pressure. When you can express your thoughts and ideas quickly and easily, you will become more confident and seen as more professional. Still, a few questions to ask yourself are: HOW do we prepare for unforeseen situations, and HOW do we know if we are coming across as professional and knowledgeable in high-stress situations?

### Discovery Questions

You may not need to make many discoveries on this issue. Soft-spoken people usually speak like that all the time—in meetings, on the phone, or in formal presentations. Ask several people:

1. Does your mind go blank when you are feeling pressure or "all eyes on you?"
2. Do you oftentimes find yourself tuning out when people are talking to you?
3. Do you oftentimes find yourself preparing what to say next without really listening to the person talking to you?
4. Do you find yourself reaching for words when trying to formulate a thought

## CHOOSE ONE PRACTICE STRATEGY TO DO TODAY

Our brain is just like any other muscle it needs to be exercised and challenged. Here are a few exercises that will challenge your quick-thinking agility:

1. **MIND MAPPING**- this is a way to unload the ideas swirling around in your head onto paper so you can a) visually see your ideas and b) think quicker on your feet. To begin a mind map, write down a main idea in the center of a piece of paper and circle it. Next, add details around your central idea and connect the ideas with lines. This technique allows you to identify nonlinear relationships between ideas. It doesn't matter how disorganized your mind map is to start or if you're spelling words correctly. The goal is to get everything you're thinking about, the main idea, onto paper as fast as possible. Mind mapping is frequently used as a brainstorming tool to organize your thoughts and can be beneficial in the initial stages of project management. We use mind mapping a bit differently. For us, it's a training tool to get you to think faster on your feet, which is an incredibly valuable skill for a public speaker!



2. **RANDOM WORD GENERATOR** – Use a random word generator website to choose three random nouns, then come up with a story on the spot using those three nouns. Practice with yourself or with a group!
3. **ALWAYS REMEMBER** – BREATHE... REPEAT THE QUESTION, OR HAVE THE QUESTION REPHRASED, AND LISTEN!