

Today's Technology and Woodturning Demonstrations

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Mankind has been giving speeches to groups since the beginning of time. The basic tenets of speaking have not changed, but the technology that supports and enhances speeches has evolved. Woodturning demonstrations are improved when the presenter makes proper use of today's technology to allow the audience to see and hear better.

Enhanced Viewing with Modern Camera Systems

Today's demonstrations are viewed on large monitors fed by multiple cameras. These cameras can be zoomed in to allow the entire audience to see the specifics of tool usage and the edge as it cuts the wood. This is a tremendous improvement from the early days of woodturning demonstrations when one had to gather around the lathe and peer over the shoulder of the turner to see what was happening. Not only does today's technology improve the view, but it is also much safer than standing in the line of fire.

The Importance of Camera Awareness

Today the presenter needs to have an awareness of where the camera is and what it can see – because that is what the audience sees. Camera position needs to be incorporated into scripting the demonstration.

Camera awareness is easier when the club setup includes a monitor positioned for the demonstrator to see what the camera sees. When club setup does not include a demonstrator monitor, use the audience to tell you when the camera is not focused at the correct place. Camera awareness is a new skill for demonstrators and one that improves the audience experience.

Leveraging Video Technology for Better Demonstrations

The falling cost and proliferation of video cameras open the door to several other worthwhile uses.

Time Management Through Recording

Ending a demonstration on time is the largest challenge of demonstrating. Recording a practice session, or the first live demonstration, allows one to fine tune the length of a demonstration. The time stamp of the recording allows one to gauge the length of each segment. Segments can be expanded, or removed to adjust the length of the demonstration. This is a great aid in having your demonstration end at the appointed time.

Efficient Equipment Preparation

A recorded practice demo can serve as a detailed list of what tools one needs to pack. Set the playback speed to 125% and as you pick up the tool in the video, place the actual tool in your kit to take to the actual live demonstration. This is a far more efficient way to pack correctly than the alternatives of writing out a list, or taking every tool in your shop. The video can be stopped, rewound, or advanced as needed. One of the worst things a demonstrator can have happen is to fail to bring a tool, or blank, that is an integral part of the project. This is the best way I have come across to address this problem.

Accelerated Practice Sessions

Practice really does improve any speaking engagement. Unfortunately, practice sessions take as much time as the actual demonstration. After 2 or 3 practices, things get tedious. When I watch the video of one of my demonstrations it embeds itself in my memory just as well as if I had said all of the actual words. Up the speed to 125% or even 150% and watching it is just as effective as speaking each word and takes a great deal less time.

The Evolution of Demonstration Materials

Today's video world also impacts handouts. We have gone from paper, to PDFs to today's recorded video of the demonstration. I find that clubs ask if they can record a video of the demonstration for the club library much more frequently than I am asked for paper copies.

This article highlights the practical applications of modern technology in woodturning education and demonstrates how traditional craftsmanship instruction continues to evolve with available tools.