



FACULTY OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

Shiftkey Labs Reflection

In

The Class of

CSCI 5193: Technology Innovation

by

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Submitted to

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Event Name: Public Speaking Workshop

On the 9th of 2024, I walked through the doors of room 430 in the Goldberg Computer Science Building, greeted by the promise of overcoming my fear of public speaking. The Public Speaking Workshop, organized by the innovative minds at Shiftkey Labs with the support of STEM Connector, Dalhousie's Computer Science Faculty, and the Computer Science Society, was about to begin. I could feel the anticipation in my bones, the same kind encountered before unveiling a new technology to the world.

The organizers turned the room into a welcoming place that felt more like a team gathering than a traditional lecture hall. It was a comfortable space designed for us to challenge ourselves, similar to when you share a new tech idea with investors. In this room, around fifteen of us came together, each from different parts of the technology world. Our group was small but varied, with designers, coders, and engineers from different countries, each bringing their own skills and experiences. We represented the wide range of people who work in technology, each of us adding our own piece to the big picture of the industry.

Our shared pursuit of public speaking excellence was the thread that wove us together. This shared goal was more than just improving how we speak; it was about enhancing how we share ideas, provide feedback, and fuel the collaborative engine that is essential in tech innovation. Our gathering was a testament to the power of collective learning, showing that even in a world driven by screens and code, the human element, our ability to communicate and connect, remains at the heart of technological progress. In this group, you could see future leaders of tech start-ups, researchers who would go on to publish influential papers, and developers who would craft code for life-changing applications. Each participant brought not only their personality but also their aspirations, their potential to be a voice of change and a force of innovation. The diversity in our small number was reflective of the global tech scene, where a multitude of skills, perspectives, and cultures collide to create breakthroughs that push humanity forward.

The agenda for the day was a carefully constructed journey from the first tentative steps of understanding the importance of body language to the final stage of delivering a persuasive speech. Kewoba, our guide, was a beacon of knowledge, walking us through the do's and don'ts with the precision of a skilled coder. Their advice was practical, something you could take away and apply immediately, much like a good debugging session in programming. During the workshop, I saw barriers break down as we exchanged views and constructive criticism. There was this one moment when a peer from a background entirely different from mine offered a perspective I hadn't considered, a reminder of how interdisciplinary teams work together to solve complex tech problems. In our small huddles, ideas sparked like circuits connecting, illuminating new pathways to common goals.

Walking into the workshop, I felt the familiar flutter of butterflies in my stomach, a sensation akin to the pre-launch jitters one experiences before debuting a new app or platform. That first major insight, realizing that the anxiety I felt was a common experience, not an individual weakness was profoundly comforting. It was akin to discovering a bug in a program and then learning that it's a known issue with established fixes. This realization wasn't just comforting; it was empowering. The second revelation was a toolkit of practical strategies for managing public speaking anxiety. These ranged from breathing exercises to focus techniques, each a tool to be deployed in moments of need, much like selecting the right programming library for a specific task in a software project. They were practical, tangible, and immediately applicable, offering a semblance of control over the daunting task of speaking before an audience.

These insights were pivotal, not merely as isolated lessons but as competencies that transcended the workshop's context. They equipped me with a newfound resilience, the kind required to navigate the unpredictable waters of academia and the tech industry. In understanding the universality of fear, I found solidarity with my peers; in learning to mitigate it, I discovered the confidence to not only present my ideas but to stand behind them, to defend

and discuss them with conviction. These takeaways, both profound and practical, have imprinted upon me lessons that I'll carry forward as I continue to learn, grow, and innovate.

The workshop deepened my understanding of how closely public speaking intertwines with the essence of technology innovation. It brought to light the crucial role of knowing one's audience. This is much like in tech development, where truly grasping the user's needs can make the difference between a product that's merely functional and one that's essential. I discovered that presenting an idea with genuine originality isn't just about personal style, it's about disruption. It's the kind of originality that has the power to change the way people think and interact with technology, much like how a unique approach to solving a problem can redefine a market. The clear messaging we practiced at the workshop underscored the value of our ideas. It taught me that the true value of any technological innovation isn't just in its features, but in the story, it tells and the problem it solves. It's about how effectively we communicate that story to those who need to hear it.

Lastly, the workshop emphasized empathy, not as a nice to have, but as a core element of engagement. This reflects the same approach needed for creating user centric tech solutions that resonate on a human level. To design technology that serves people well, we must first understand their experiences and needs, much like we must connect with an audience when we speak.