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## BRITISH BOSSES FIND PUBLIC SPEAKING MOST TERRIFYING BUSINESS ACTIVITY

- 71 per cent of business executives would be worried about addressing a large conference
- 80 per cent of bosses would be scared of facing a TV interview
- A third (34 per cent) have themselves had a bad experience of public speaking
- 60 per cent daydream about sex when listening to presentations

Despite the many complexities of modern business life, Britain's bosses find their most difficult job is exercising their God-given gift of communication, according to research published today by **The Aziz Corporation**, the UK's leading independent executive communications consultancy.

The survey of business leaders found that 71 per cent would be nervous or worried about addressing a large conference, with 80 per cent similarly concerned at the prospect of doing a television interview. Almost half (42 per cent) of bosses claim that speaking in public is the most daunting aspect of their job, with 34 per cent having had at least one bad experience of public speaking in the past.

By contrast, other apparently complex business tasks are considered routine. 38 per cent find reviewing financial data difficult, while just 31 per cent cite any problems in preparing business plans. Of those who find other activities more daunting than public speaking, the most commonly cited problem areas all involve the softer issues in communicating with people, including handling redundancies and disciplinary matters and dealing with difficult personnel issues.

Professor **Khalid Aziz**, Chairman of The Aziz Corporation, commented: "Business leaders are, by their definition, successful people. Considering that they are also the public face of their company, and that a major speech or TV interview can make or break their reputation, it is worrying that so many of them fear communication."

Professor **Khalid Aziz**, explained: "Executives often rise through the ranks as a result of technical expertise and so can find themselves misplaced to deal with communications issues, preferring the more behind-the-scenes number crunching, to the fame of a public persona. Clearly good public speaking requires practice and those in business are not born with that."

The biggest concerns about public speaking by executives are that they will bore their audience or fail to get their message across (58 per cent each). 54 per cent worry that they will lose their train of thought and 32 per cent that they will be unable to answer questions.

When listening to other presentations, business executives are often frustrated by poor delivery (82 per cent) or by over-reliance on complicated slides (78 per cent). 75 per cent often wonder how much longer the speaker will go on for, while 73 per cent are worrying about the work they need to do when they get back to the office.

Professor **Khalid Aziz**, commented: “Having been on the receiving end of lacklustre presentations, most speakers are all too aware of the pitfalls of public speaking: boring your audience, not being able to handle difficult questions and poor delivery, amongst many others. This adds additional pressure to the speaker who can panic, rather than use this insight to their advantage.”

Perhaps of greatest concern to speakers is the proportion of the audience who, far from paying attention, are thinking about sex. 69 per cent admit that they typically spend at least part of their time thinking about whether or not they are attracted to the speaker or a fellow member of the audience, whilst 60 per cent habitually daydream about sex. The survey confirms some gender stereotypes, finding that that 76 per cent of men let their minds turn to sex during presentations, compared with only 35 per cent of women. Surprisingly, it is the older generation who are most likely to be distracted by such thoughts, with 88 per cent of those over 60 admitting to thinking about sex during presentations.

Professor **Khalid Aziz**, concluded: “There are reasons why some speakers are more engaging and charismatic than others, and indeed appearance feeds into this. But enthusiasm for a subject is in itself attractive and can also be infectious. Fortunately you don’t need to look like George Clooney to be as effective at public speaking as Bill Clinton. Whilst the audience might be more inclined to pay attention if the speaker is attractive, it does not necessarily follow that they will be thinking about what the speaker is saying.”

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Professor **Khalid Aziz** of The Aziz Corporation is available for interview on this story. If you would be interested in speaking with Khalid then please visit our [Contact us](#) page.

Notes to Editors

### **The Aziz Corporation**

The Aziz Corporation is the UK’s leading independent executive communications consultancy. Its mission is to add value to businesses by ensuring their people are effective communicators. Consultancy services offered by the Aziz Corporation include presentation skills, media training, crisis management, image consultancy and voice development.

About the survey

This survey was completed by 200 senior managers and directors of major companies based across the United Kingdom.