

## Ep #12: Making a Meaningful Impact with Shannon Stowell



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**Michelle Barry Franco**

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number 12.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

Hello, my speaker and leader friends. We have such a treat today, I'm so excited to share this conversation that I got to have with Shannon Stowell. Shannon is the CEO of the Adventure Travel Trade Association. And as the leader of that association, and also the association being one of the leaders in the travel industry, he gets to do a lot of speaking, both for the conferences that they put on within their industry, and also at other conferences within the travel world.

So we talk about how he approaches his speaking. Both how he uses it as a way to make a meaningful impact with his mission that he cares so deeply about. We talk about where he gets his conviction around that message. We also talk about how he uses his team in really unique ways to make sure that he is sharing the very best content possible.

There's a lot of focus on audience, which delights me because I don't think we can talk about that enough. I'm not sure it's possible to talk about it enough. So I love the ways that it comes up in this conversation, really so natural and in a way that I think is really useful for you. So really good conversation here, I hope you love it even half as much as I did.

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Michelle: My speaker and leader friends, I'm just so thrilled that I get to have this conversation with the most awesome Shannon Stowell. I had the tremendous honor of working with Shannon on his TEDxBend talk, which he delivered brilliantly in March of this year. While working with Shannon over those months on his TEDx talk, I was struck by a couple of things.

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First, Shannon is deeply passionate about adventure travel. His TEDx talk is called Change the world, take a vacation, and we'll put a link to that in the show notes. And he has captivating stories to tell about his adventures with travel. But second, and this was really cool to witness, and a big part of why I wanted to have this conversation with him to share with you is that he has a really special collaborative relationship with his team members. At least he did during the TEDx talk for sure, and I could tell this was a theme. So he invited them into the whole process of crafting his TEDx talk. And I hadn't seen that in that way before with other TEDx speakers I've worked with. And the other thing is it was clear that his team really enjoys his speaking by the kinds of comments that they were putting on his script and throughout the process. So I wanted to talk with Shannon because he's a great example of a powerful mission in his speaking and leadership, and we'll talk about that too, and to learn more about how he uses speaking in every way in his company and industry to keep his team inspired as well.

First, here's a bit more about Shannon. Shannon Stowell leads the ATTA as CEO after restarting the organization in 2004, pursuing the vision that it could be a powerful force for good in the tourism industry. More than 25 years of business experience and adventure travel, e-commerce, outdoor retail, and environmental science have prepared him well to serve and head the organization. He also helped launch the Adventure Travel Conservation fund and loves spending time stand up paddle boarding. Ooh, I really want to try stand up paddle boarding. We should talk about that later. Shannon, I'm so happy you're here and that we get to have this conversation.

Shannon: Thanks for having me, Michelle. I'm excited about it too.

Michelle: So I'd love to start just with your mission. Just tell us like, what is the impact you're committed to making in the world with your message?

Shannon: Yeah, we're a trade association, so we're a membership-based organization with nearly 1400 different companies and governmental organizations that are members. So we're in the travel space, we work in

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tourism, and our mission is really to galvanize and help professionalize the responsible sustainable part of the travel industry, which for us has landed in the adventure arena, focused on nature and culture trips that really use those two elements as their core pieces. So really, we're all about bringing together the best and brightest minds in the space to try to move the needle away from over-tourism and irresponsible and exploitative tourism into tourism that protects wildlife and involves local people in the equation of financial success too.

Michelle: And you know, I mean, I was so enlightened working on your TEDx talk with you not having ever really thought of a distinction between the two. I knew there were different ways to travel, and I've traveled in different ways, so but just this whole concept of using - really kind of using tourism as a force for good, using our travel, our vacations as a force for good is such a - it's an exciting concept because it also sort of helps us feel even better about going on vacation.

Shannon: Absolutely.

Michelle: Yeah, and that's exciting. I also, as someone who may not be the most adventurous in the traditional way when it comes to my travel, I think it would be really helpful for people to hear what - and you touched on this with the culture, but I'd love for you to say a little bit more. Do I have to bungee jump?

Shannon: Absolutely not. No, but that is interesting. A lot of people do immediately go there in their minds when they hear adventure travel. They think of the most extreme thing they're aware of, and the reality is that most adventure travel where tour operators are taking people on trips, they're really accessible, and the way that we've defined adventure travel and we build that off of consumerist definitions after really digging into understand what do people consider to be actual adventure travel, and we came up with three things that if all three pieces are part of a trip, then it technically would fall into the category of adventure travel. We've even softened it a little and said if two of the three are in there then it would still constitute.

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Because adventure is different for different people. So to give it a really firm guardrail on either side I think is not fair or even appropriate. So the three elements are immersion in nature, connection with culture, and some sort of activity. Active experience. So if you're cycling and doing a wine tour in Italy or Spain, that's considered adventure travel. If you're birding and doing a culinary tour in Peru or Ecuador, that's adventure travel. If you're going to Brazil to learn to surf or to go trekking in Mongolia, you're adventure traveling. So it actually gets quite broad because adventure travel for one person is different than adventure travel for another.

Michelle: Yeah, I mean, I remember you saying that when we were crafting your talk, and you were saying, you know, one of the most common adventure travel sort of like, activities is hiking. So I think that's actually what you ended up saying in your talk, right?

Shannon: Exactly.

Michelle: It does help it feel a lot more accessible when those of us who just have thought of adventure, I think, in a very confined way. Because as soon as you say it, I can absolutely see how all of those things are adventures. I love it. I really have to tell you just, you know, your TEDx talk and of course the gift of getting to work through it with you completely changed the way I think about travel. Just sort of like opened up a whole different window or door for me to look through when I plan my next family vacation or whatever so.

Shannon: Well that makes me happy, thank you.

Michelle: For sure. Okay, so before we - I do want to talk about how you use speaking and you know, your team and all of that because it is exciting, but I do - one of the things that a lot of the people who listen to the *Beyond Applause* podcast - one of the things they're trying to solve is kind of like, how do they feel powerful conviction around a really clear message. And you have a really clear message and your conviction is clear. And if often

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helps to hear from others who are clear like you are why this matters so much to them.

Shannon: Sure. And specifically, in regards to what we do, I think a lot of people go on vacation to escape something, whether that's work or boredom or stress or whatever it is. So we're in this really delicate position of asking people to think about how they travel, and I know that some people are not going to be keen to what they view trade off their fun experience that they've finally gotten to have happened, they don't want to trade it off and not have fun in order to be responsible. Sometimes you hear responsible tourism and that sounds really boring and disciplined, and that doesn't sound like a vacation at all. The message that we're trying to get across is that you can actually have an incredible transformational experience and do it right where you are - your dollars that you're spending on your trip are actually helping protect wildlife and take care of local people while you're having a much better experience than if you were entombed in the bubble of a mass tourism experience where you're actually being shielded from the immersion in nature and culture. So our message is easy for us to be convicted and strong about because it's so clear to us because it's the world we live in, and we understand that for most people, tourism and travel is something they get to experience maybe once a year, once every two years, especially a big international trip or maybe it's every five or 10 years, and yet we live in this space where we get to watch it up close all the time so we just know how you can, by the way that you take a trip, you can be a force for good. I think it's very personal for me because I've seen the damage and the devastation of tourism done wrong, of mass tourism. I've spoken with people who are stuck in poverty in environments where there's lots of money flowing around and it was their home and they're not a part of the equation. And I think it's - for me, it's an inner sense of injustice, wanting to see justice done. I think all of us have a strong sense of justice unless it relates to our behavior. We want justice for everyone else. But no, in all seriousness, I think it comes from a sense of something is not right and when I started working in this space, I didn't have that sense of injustice. It actually grew

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on me over time. When I got into the adventure travel business in 2004, I did it because it looked really fun.

Michelle: Oh, I love it.

Shannon: That was my motivation is it looked really fun. And I got in and it turns out that there are a lot of things that are really fun about adventure travel and about tourism and working in the business of tourism, and there are some things that are awful about it. And I didn't know about the awful parts until I worked in it, and over a period of time, I think I started to really see how the equation was not working, but it could, and it was in some cases. And a lot of people in the adventure travel world started educating me, educating each other. I think there's just this growing consciousness now where if you go to one of our conferences where there'll be close to 1000 people there, they're on the same page. They may be tackling problems differently, but we all see that tourism can either help or harm nature and local people. So for me, it comes from a deep sense of desire for fair treatment and justice protection.

Michelle: I love that. There's so many things I love about that because I also love that you're like, hey, it looked like fun at first. Like, sometimes that's just the way these things happen for us, right? Like, stepping into this leadership role isn't always what we're intending when we're doing it, right? And it's pretty cool that over time, you learned along the way and your conviction grew. And I think that's valuable for - I just think about some of the people that I know are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast. There's this sort of tangle around like, gosh what if I'm not feeling it right now? Or like, what if the reason I want to do this is because like, I like stepping on the stage or I love being in the spotlight. You know, do I have to have like, a totally deep human desire to serve, which I talk about a lot, you know, so I can probably make it feel very heavy for people. Well, sometimes that ebbs and flows, right?

Shannon: It ebbs and flows, and you know, honestly, a lot of people will say to me now, it's incredible the vision you had when you got this organization

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restarted, and I'm honest. I say, my vision was actually, I wanted to get out of what I was doing and this looked a lot more fun, and I thought, well, this will be a fun little home-based business where I could provide benefits and services to adventure travel companies. That sounds really fun. And it was about five years in when one of my - guy that now works on our team, who's a very close friend from Brazil, we were on a sea kayaking trip and he said, "You guys need to start being the voice for responsible tourism." And I said, "No way man, we're barely surviving. This business is barely making it. We have no margin to do that." And yet it started to dawn on me that we actually couldn't avoid it. We had to do it, and then the conviction started growing and now I'm very clear on it. But it was a journey to get here.

Michelle: That is so good. So I just want to bottle up what you just said, seriously, and like, send it off to so many people. Because I do think there's this misconception just like - you know, you're getting that question because of that innocent misconception which is wow, you had such an amazing vision from the beginning, which is just so often not what leadership actually looks like. You just - you know, that whole connect the dots looking backward thing that Steve Jobs said. When you're doing it, you're just kind of like, oh, this, let's try this.

Shannon: And we're still learning a lot. Like I still sometimes feel like we're just starting to understand what we're doing to be honest. Everybody's business is a complicated business if you get under the skin.

Michelle: Yeah. Well, I mean, one thing that really struck me as I was listening to you just in these last few minutes is you have done - you do two things so well. One is you've done a really rich audience analysis. You really understand your audience, and not just what they're wanting, but - and I think the broader audience, which includes people who are resisting this but searching, right? So that your audience isn't just the people who are like, you know, hands in the air right behind you. They're also the ones that are like, wow I want to do something that matters but I don't know, you

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know? I don't know if I can or this is it. So you're really obviously done some really good listening and then responding to it. I mean, what you just said in those paragraphs basically was like, you know, we don't get to go on vacation very often. Like, and I understand it might be once a year, it might be once every two years, and it feels heavy to have to be responsible about it. When you say that, as a speaker, as a leader, the people who are listening going, "I wish there was something I could do," go like, "Oh wait a minute, maybe he's going to help me see a window in."

Shannon: I think the mistake a lot of people make that are passionate about a subject is being shrill and preachy, and you just turn people off. And I look at this and say - we're working on an initiative to reduce single use plastic water bottles across the industry, and we are very clear with our members and with others, and we say we are not here to shame or blame anybody. We're here to say how do we work together to solve this problem. Because the minute we start shaming or blaming, we're going to lose people because they're going to feel like, look I'm barely making it in my business, or I have so much to do, I don't need this, I don't need to listen to this. And I think the same message goes to travelers, which is yeah, we're going to put really amazing opportunities out in front of you and we hope that you'll consider that just like you're deciding whether you're going to source your food locally and organically, you should think about your vacations and the impact that they can have.

Michelle: Yeah. I mean, there is such magic in saying out loud the struggle that those you want to influence or invite into an opportunity or whatever that they're having. Just saying it out loud, which is really what I hear you doing over and over again in this conversation. It's really powerful. So I love your mission, I'm so excited that more people are going to hear about your talk and they can go watch that TEDx talk that changed my life and I know so many people in that room because I heard from a lot of them afterward. I also want to talk about you and your team, and sort of - well, I guess let me start a little bit broader than that. How do you think about speaking? You know, you're a leader of an organization, and it sounds like you are a

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leader in the industry, so tell me how you think about speaking as part of all that.

Shannon: Well, I think it's an integral part of a leader's role is to be able to get up in front of people whether that's digitally or in person and take a stand and say what you think about issues that are salient and important to that industry. So I think speaking is the venue for that. One of the things I really love what TED has done is not only for TED talks but also, it's affected a lot of other people's speeches. It's reduced the amount of long overly wrought talks and has really kind of forced people to be more concise and clear. And when I get asked to speak and somebody says we'd like you to speak for 30 minutes to an hour, I always ask, can I bring it down to 15 to 20 minutes because honestly, I don't want to - there are not very many people I want to hear talk for an hour. There are a few, but not very many. Time is the most important thing we have, the most precious thing we have, and so to give somebody time to listen to them, I take it really seriously. So every time I speak, I spend as much time as I can talking to the organizer about who's the audience so that I can really understand who I'm talking to. Because we've all sat in a room where a speaker is off mark and you just think, man I wish I was out having coffee right now. And so I take that really seriously and then if I can, I like to be at whatever event it is. Time doesn't always allow, but I usually try to go and spend a day or two with the conference attendees in advance so that I can just hear them talk. And what are the issues they're talking about and how do those relate to my talk, and am I on mark, am I off mark, do I need to adjust or do I have actually some really fun opportunities to take brand new things I've learned in this place and use those on stage and say, yesterday when I was talking to Jenny, she said, you know, this that changed my mind or made me understand the context of this a little differently. So I really believe in really understanding your audience.

Michelle: Yeah. It's obvious it's a theme, and it's why speaking is working so well for you. That's why I'm so excited. I'm so just thrilled that we're on - having this conversation now and I get to share it because I will tell you, it

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is a much - it is an often-missed piece of speaking for people, and it's perplexing. I think a lot of people don't understand, they've done all the other elements of great speaking. You know, they've used all these other best practices. If you don't know and connect deeply with the audience, whatever brilliant slides you've created or stories you tell or whatever, none of it's going to land because they don't feel it. I think people often come to their talks thinking - and again, it's innocently. It's innocently because so many times that's what we see too. It's what's modeled, it's the way people talk to us about it, our mentors and leaders and companies are like, here's what you have to say, here's your presentation, and they give a deck. And they say, go deliver on this, and we're like, what, I didn't even create it, you know?

Shannon: Right.

Michelle: They're like, okay, so what do I want to say? What am I supposed to say? When the real question is - and this is what I hear you driving your speaking with is what do they want to hear? What's on their minds? And then how do I take what I know and craft it for them to serve that?

Shannon: Exactly.

Michelle: So let's talk about your team. You've nailed the way to craft a great conference talk, everybody can just take that and go do it. But I really want to talk about this, you know, using speaking within - oftentimes people think of speaking from a stage, and it is really important, and it's a big part of industry leadership. Or even a big webinar to lots and lots of people. But you know, of course, the greatest impact you have is when you inspire a team of people who are working with you to go out and make an impact as well, right? So talk to me about how you use speaking within the organization. How do you pull together even just team meetings or is your team remote and how do you handle that? Start wherever you want.

Shannon: Sure. Since we're a global travel organization, our team lives all around the world. So we're one of those virtual organizations. We have no

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office. Everybody works remotely. And that's a whole subject in and of itself. It's mostly good. There are challenges with it when you can't sit in the same room as other people every day, but there are some benefits as well. So for us, communication is really, really important and we actually published an article in our news outlet called Adventure Travel News about what it was like to be a virtual organization and what are the tools that we use. But the tools are really about us communicating clearly with each other. And so we have, I think, at least 10 different tools that we use for different things. But the one that I would say is important to this conversation is Slack. And we have a channel on Slack where we call it the water cooler, and that's where we meet and talk, and we have a channel for funny stuff called random, and so if you're busy, you have no need to check the random channel, but we get together every week as a team and have a team meeting. And we have different departments report in just to say here's what's going on, here's what we're doing, here's what we're up against, here's our challenges. And most of the times I'll close with something that's on my mind or something that might be relevant to the main conversation of the day, or sometimes I'll yield the floor if we're short on time. But I know that some of my team have also expressed to me that they really appreciate my talks when I give them too because it motivates them because they feel like, "Yeah, we have a mission, we're on a mission here." It's not just a job. We're doing something bigger than that. And so when I give those talks, I get really positive feedback from my team. The truth is my team feed me a lot of the information that I end up delivering because they're eyes and ears out in the industry where I'm not, and so I really try hard to listen to the different team members and hear the patterns and the themes and acknowledge that they're important in helping me do that. And I think probably the other important thing is that I'm the same guy whether I'm on our team call or on stage. And I might act a little differently, but it's the same message. And we're true to our integrity, and what we say behind closed doors is the same we say out in the open. So there's nothing to hide and that breeds a lot of trust with the team too, that we're not saying one thing from out in the open and then behind closed doors laughing about it and saying we're making that up as we go, like some Wall Street

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firms have been exposed as doing in the last years. So I think that's important too that the team be fully on board with the mission and engaged with it.

Michelle: Yeah, so tell me about the process. And maybe it isn't a process you've written down somewhere, something, but for example, you have a talk coming up, you have a big industry conference that you're leading, putting together, and I know that you plan to bring in input from your team, and I watched you do this with the TEDx talk, and for a lot of us, and I have to admit to being not super naturally collaborative, that would be really scary. It's like, uh oh - scary meaning how am I going to balance all these different voices and honor them and still have my true voice come through and keep the kind of mission that I have in mind. How do you do that?

Shannon: It's a great question. I think it's really important if you are going to collaborate and have other people give you input on your talk that you be ready for a couple of things. One is you may have to grab control of where you want it to go again, and then the other is you may have to admit that your idea is not the best idea and somebody else has a better approach than you do. So you have to kind of go in with a loose but strong grip, if that makes sense. Be ready to grab it when you need to but also be willing to relinquish. So you know, doing the process with you was very different for me and I feel like I came out with a better talk than I had ever done before because of the guidance that you gave and also being an outside voice because I was also pulling in, as you saw, some of the inside voices. Some of my team were giving me feedback on it. And I had to kill my favorite story from my TEDx talk and it hurt, and I didn't like it, and I instinctively also knew that you and they were right. And so I really do try to listen to trusted friends and voices because again, listening to a tone-deaf person on stage, you know, just talking about themselves or bragging or getting off course, a lot of times, I'll think, "Well, there's somebody who's not getting any input." We had a brilliant guy speak on one of our stages years ago, and so much knowledge. Like, literally iconic level of experience and information, and the talk honestly fell really flat for 90% of the crowd. And I

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was sitting there cringing because it was our event and I was thinking, this is a guy who doesn't listen to his team. Because my team never would have let me get on stage with that. And so it made me even more committed to listening to my team, and there are times where I don't agree and I still stay the course with what I wanted to do, but I better have thought that through and understand why I'm getting pushback.

Michelle: Yeah, even that process is so valuable because it requires you to dig in like, okay, I know that I'm supposed to stay the course even though they are resisting it, so why do I feel so deeply about that. It makes you check on that and really even deepen your own conviction with good reasons. Not just...

Shannon: Absolutely.

Michelle: Yeah, there's just something magic about - I mean, ever since working through that process with you, I've thought a lot about how can I open up more to the idea of collaboration, and I certainly run things by other people. And it did change your talk in very cool ways. And I saw you resist the sort of kill your darling situation with story, but your talk ended up being really amazing. So it was a huge lesson for me and I think something that I definitely wanted to highlight for people who are listening thinking about their talks. There is something really valuable even if it's difficult about asking others to come into our creative processes.

Shannon: Yeah, you know, the other point I would make on that, and I think this is important is these are people that I've worked for a long time. And I trust them, and they trust me, and we kind of know each other. So I think that's also a really important point to make is the voices that you do let in should be ones that you really trust and that you know have the higher purpose in mind. And they're also not afraid to tell you when they think you're off. One of our team twice has - I've had the most painful conversation. Painful for me because I bombed a speech in 2006 at our second annual conference because I didn't prepare. I wasn't ready. And I flung that thing together and I gave a cringe worthy talk, and this friend and

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team member of mine had the strength to come to me and say - he literally patted me on the back and said, "Well, that was definitely not your best work and I know you can do better and it was really obvious you didn't prepare." And I can still feel like, the shame of that moment but he was doing it to make me better. He wasn't doing it to make me feel badly. And then a few years later, I pulled him in before I launched a talk and practiced it on him and he was just like, "This is so overthought. This is kind of unbearable, honestly."

Michelle: Wow.

Shannon: That took me all day, and it's a crinkle it up and throw it in the trash. So that was a lesson too is stop overthinking things. Stop overthinking things, and then the other lesson that I still remember really, really clearly, it actually comes in two forms. One came from our friend, Moe, our mutual friend Moe Carrick, who said people will often not remember what you said but they'll remember how you made them feel. And my wife has kind of taken that same theme and she always reminds me, speak from your heart about what you really believe in and the rest is going to fall into place. And so that is also very, very important is to try not to be too technical unless you're a laser scientist talking to other laser scientists then you got to be technical, but for 99% of us speakers, what are we really trying to get across? What matters in our talk?

Michelle: Yes, perfect, exactly. So right on. And what a gift to have that guy, even though it's so hard, you know, someone's who's willing to say - this is one of the things. I get to work with a lot of high level leaders in companies, and one of the things that most of them are - I hear over and over anyway is I don't have enough people, or I wish I had more people who I could trust to tell me what they really think. You know, without the sort of fear - you know, that are just strong enough to hold up to the conversation.

Shannon: It's a gift. They're handing you a gift when they tell you that. And it hurts. I mean, you're being vulnerable, you're putting yourself out there,

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and someone says you didn't do well. It hurts, but it is so worth it because then you can take that and fix it.

Michelle: Especially if you get to do it like you did the second time, which is deliver it to that person early and get that feedback before you're standing on a stage in front of a thousand people or a hundred, or whatever your audience is full of. So that's a lot less painful, I would imagine.

Shannon: Absolutely.

Michelle: So one, I know that there are people listening who are going to want to hear even just a little bit about this, and I know we're running a little longer than we usually do, but if it's okay with you, can you talk just a little bit about prepping for your TEDx talk? How was that different? A lot of people want to do TEDx talks. And there's a lot of mystery around it, and since you've crafted one, what would you say was different, if anything, about crafting that compared to these conferences? You've been preparing for lots of different talks over the years.

Shannon: Yes, it was really different for me for one really stark difference is that I usually speak to travel trade audiences. So I'm speaking to my peers and colleagues, fellow business people. And this was to a consumer audience, to the general public. And so I knew that and yet still like you noticed, I still was speaking like I was speaking to industry people, even when I tried to make it more public friendly. And so that was a real mind shift was thinking, so how do I not assume that anybody knows what I'm thinking or talking about on any of my points? Because this is the world we live in. So I think that was probably the biggest shift was having to imagine a radically different audience, which by the way, was super fun too because it was fun seeing light bulbs go on in an environment where normally those light bulbs are already on. And so I better be delivering something of technical value, generally, or inspirational value. And so this was fun because it felt a lot more like it just was a lot lighter in that sense from the audience standpoint. I had a lot of fun with it. There were reactions where I didn't know there would be reactions, so that was super fun. I think the

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other part was being forced into a shorter timeframe. You know, at many events you're given half an hour, 45 minutes to talk, and even shortening that a little you can be too long. Sometimes 29 minutes or 27 minutes is still too long. So being forced into that really tight timeframe and then working with a coach, with you was a new experience for me. I had collaborated with my team on many different talks, so that wasn't new, but having somebody to coach me along and say, well, explain why you feel that way, or let me tell you how that lands for me, for someone who doesn't work in our industry, I found that super valuable and also hard. Like, it was the hardest talk I've ever created. I think also, I tend to rely on a notepad on the podium, so to be kind of forced into a situation with no notes was harder for me, but it was really healthy. So it was very different, and I think the other thing - there's probably only one other talk I've ever given where I practiced as much, and so the other thing I hit on this one was a little bit of talk fatigue, where towards the delivery time of the TED talk, I started to get a little weary of some of the aspect of my talk, and I would kind of skip them when I was practicing with my wife. And she would say, "I think you skipped a part." And that was a new experience. So that was an interesting like - you actually can over prepare.

Michelle: And that's what it felt like, like you just kind of were saying it so much that you were just...

Shannon: I wouldn't say that I over prepared, but I got close.

Michelle: Yeah.

Shannon: I kind of walked up to that edge and looked over and went, that looks like it might actually take a little of the life out of this talk because I will have given it too many times.

Michelle: Yeah, I think of it so much like, even though I'm not really a committed runner, it reminds me of like game day, right? You run and you can run and run and run and you just train and train until you get to the end and you're like, oh god, just let the day here. But then the day gets there

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and it has such a life of its own, it's like a totally different energy. Did you experience that?

Shannon: Completely. You know, when I practiced my talk on my friends and family and you, no one ever laughed at my opening line. So I didn't think it was that much of a spark. I thought it was more of a thought provoker, so when I delivered it in the TEDx environment and everybody laughed and started cheering, I went, oh, this is going to be fun.

Michelle: Yeah, that's true.

Shannon: I didn't see that coming.

Michelle: I just watched it again recently and I also was - reminded me of that moment because I heard it in the video of when you show that picture of the converted recreational vehicle - was it your grandfather?

Shannon: Great grandfather.

Michelle: Great grandfather. And everybody cracked up and you're like there it is.

Shannon: I had people asking afterwards if that was really real. It was so outlandish that they thought it was maybe not true.

Michelle: It's true, yeah, I can see that. I can see why they could ask that. That's so great. So I know that our listeners are going to want to just - this is going to spark curiosity. What's the best place for them to learn more about adventure travel?

Shannon: Well, I think you know, if you're looking to learn more about what's going on in that world, probably [adventuretravelnews.com](http://adventuretravelnews.com) would be the best place. That's where all of our news goes out, that's where our members news go out. We cover the issues that are of importance, at least from our perspective. So that's probably a great place to start. And then [adventure.travel](http://adventure.travel) is another website that people can do some surfing around

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on just to get ideas of what sorts of trips are out there. That would be another great resource.

Michelle: Awesome, perfect. And we'll make sure those are in the show notes so it's easy for people to click over. As I knew that it would be Shannon, this has been so awesome. It's just such a delight to talk with you always.

Shannon: Well, mutually.

Michelle: Thank you. I love that we get to actually share this one. Like, I've had so many awesome rich conversations just you and me, but this one I know is going to serve so many people on so many different levels, so thank you.

Shannon: Well, I appreciate that and I hope it is helpful.

Michelle: Thank you.

Shannon: Thanks Michelle.

So that was so fun. Shannon shared so many great really specific examples of how he uses speaking to inspire his team and you know, also make a difference in the industry. And again, I just love the way he focuses on audience, and I just want to kind of anchor that in. I know I did that a lot during our conversation, but I really don't know that we can focus on that enough.

So I would love to help you be even more clear about your own audience and all the other aspects of great speaking. So if you haven't already, be sure to go to [michellebarryfranco.com/start](http://michellebarryfranco.com/start) so that you can download the get started speaking guide. Inside that guide, there's just so much in there. It's 17 pages of some of my best resources for great speaking.

So there's a section on how to get crystal clear on your message, there's a section on audience analysis and how do you make sure that you're

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crafting the content that is best for the audience that you want to engage. There's a speaker page checklist and guidance in there. There's the speech structure, the only presentation outline you'll ever need, which is like, gold. My clients love that. There's the effective use of amplifying aids just sort of how to create amplifying aids that actually enhance your presentation instead of distract from it.

And then there's some suggestions about how you can create a connection beyond the room in which you're delivering. So how do you invite people onto your email list and continue to nurture the relationship, that kind of thing. So I'm not kidding, this is a really powerful resource, and you can have it for free. So again, [michellebarryfranco.com/start](http://michellebarryfranco.com/start) and you will opt in through that and get immediate access to this content-rich resource.

As usual, I've loved being here with you today. I'm so happy I got to share this conversation with you and I can't wait until I get to be with you next week. Remember, you were meant for this. Take good care. Bye.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Beyond Applause*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, head on over to [michellebarryfranco.com/start](http://michellebarryfranco.com/start) to get your free complete guide to stepping into leadership speaking right away.