The importance of impromptu speaking

You may not be exactly the strong communicator you think you are.

That’s the conclusion from an analysis of 40 CEOs whose videotaped interviews yielded wide discrepancies between how they think they come across and how they really do.

“CEOs just aren’t as self-aware as they may think, at least with regard to their speaking skills,” says a coach who led the analysis.

The leaders were assessed on two criteria: delivery and content. Many CEOs who claimed they had strong delivery skills actually had a high degree of filler words like “um” and “ah,” and many who claimed to have strong knowledge actually lacked the telltale signs of quality content.

Bottom line: You can’t say whatever comes into your head. Learn skills that will let you think before you speak, while responding quickly, naturally and substantively.

— Adapted from “It’s More Than Just Talk,” Anett D. Grant and Amanda Taylor, Business and Professional Communication Quarterly.