

My heart and my “inspiration cup” was fullest when we received (yes, it was a gift!) the speaker Helene Banner. Through her powerful speech, she showed by example how often we deliver much more than just information and data in our presentations. We also deliver everything we embody: who we are, our values, our unique experiences, and everything we have been through and healed from.

She captivated us with her presence and her honest interest in what the audience thinks and feels. In her brilliant approach, she moves away from the “business bro” performance-based, timed, concise, and almost unbreathable format that we are forced to fit into in most patriarchal spaces, where we must present ourselves as presentable above all else.

Instead, she asks a powerful question: What do I need as a speaker to create my comfort?

Through self-awareness, empathy, humility, and self-worth rooted in authenticity, she takes up space with confidence. She taught us about her tools, and the most surprising - and my personal favorite - was that we can choose an intention for our speech that sparks joy in us.

This way of combating stress feels natural. It is based on choosing trust, joy, and curiosity over fear and the inner critic, and it leads to excellence. She also emphasized the importance of having a circle of support and learning to ask for it intentionally. She further explained that much of the pressure is released when a speaker begins to see themselves as a contributor to the topic rather than an omniscient expert. From this stance, it becomes impossible to be embarrassed by a question - because in this scenario, it is exciting that we can find out together.

Katarzyna Gattnar