

PowerSpeaking®

How Ordinary People Can Make
Extraordinary Presentations

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Extraordinary Presentations

Frederick Gilbert, Ph.D.

*“It’s not about perfection,
Let’er rip!”*

—Dena Pappas
Mentor

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Introduction

From passion to technology, from soul to strategy—it's all here. In **PowerSpeaking**®: *How Ordinary People Can Make Extraordinary Presentations*, you will learn the building blocks of excellent presentations while you explore the lofty heights of your own communication powers. You will learn (or be reminded) of the importance of *passion* and *conviction* in delivering any speech or presentation. And you will be introduced to my driving philosophy about the art and practice of public speaking: *It's not about perfection.*

My goal with this book is to free the great speaker within you. I've done approximately 15,000 presentations in my lifetime, and the most important things I've learned over the years about what makes “great speakers” are: they focus on what they care about, they take risks, they avoid perfectionism—and they practice, practice, practice.

What do you care about? What do you want to tell the world (or your department) about politics? about product development? about injustice? about technology? The list can go on and on. The point is—and you'll hear this echoing throughout the book—the speeches and presentations that move us, that enlighten, that help us do a better job, that effect change, are given to us by people who care deeply about what they're saying and who have worked hard to make their delivery live up to their passion.

The material in this book was written over a ten-year period and some articles were originally published in our quarterly newsletter to clients. While the book has been designed to give you the essentials in a format that is easy to read, **PowerSpeaking**®: *How Ordinary People Can Make Extraordinary Presentations* offers a breadth of information that is unequaled in the how-to market on this subject (and I've read them all!). The book—one third of which is written by other professionals and colleagues—begins with three main sections which mirror the three-point training model we've developed: the substance, style and staging of

speaking. From there we take you on a journey that spans the power, the business, the technology, the biology, the future and the soul of speaking. Furthermore, the information you will receive is truly leading edge—no endless lists of predictable do's and don'ts here!

The book is designed to be read straight through and the chapters build sequentially. Depending on your particular interest or need, however, you may want to skip around. If, for example, you are a newer, inexperienced speaker, you might begin with chapters one to five. If you're a seasoned speaker looking for fine-tuning, start with chapters five to nine. If you're primarily a speaker on technical topics, start with chapter six.

Of course this journey through the art and practice of speaking has an end: you, in front of an audience (again and again). However you approach this material, I'm confident your next audience will experience your best speech ever.

Frederick Gilbert, Ph.D.

The Myth of Perfection

Years ago I learned a powerful lesson about speaking from—of all people—a music teacher. She taught me that expressing ourselves is not about being perfect. It’s about the courage to make mistakes.

Like many people, my childhood attempts to learn music had been painful affairs. I remember, for example, a piano teacher, Miss Terwilliger, who would rap my fingers with a pencil and scold me for not practicing. At 37, though, I resolved to try music again—this time with the tenor saxophone.

It began at a music store in San Rafael, California. My saxophone teacher was a platinum blond named Dena Pappas. She was the lead player in a group called “The All-Girl Rock and Roll Band” that played at The Condor Club in San Francisco’s North Beach.

At my first meeting with Dena, she asked what I wanted to play. I said, “The tenor saxophone.” She asked, “Then why do you have that little alto?” “Because my other teacher said I wouldn’t have enough breath control for a tenor,” I replied hesitantly. “What crap. Here, try this,” and she handed me her huge, gold, rhinestone-studded, Selmer Mark VI tenor saxophone. When I played the scales, the low notes made my guts vibrate. I knew I was home. This is what I came for.

As I played the scales, I made lots of mistakes. Dena said, “Hey, keep going. Sounds great.” Her encouragement was infectious. She cared more about the feeling than about perfection. This attitude prevailed throughout all my lessons with Dena.

After a few lessons, I’d mastered a song, “*When Johnny Comes Marching Home*.” As I practiced, Dena and I stood side by side playing together. I’d miss one note after another, and she’d yell: “It’s not about perfection. Let ’er rip!” and off we’d go. Finally, I was having fun with music. Eat your heart out Miss Terwilliger.

Dena Pappas knew that learning a new skill takes courage and encouragement. When it comes to speaking, the same philosophy applies. In manufacturing we may strive to “get it

right the first time.” In speaking, however, perfection is not only unattainable, it shouldn’t even be our goal.

The next time you get up to speak and feel those butterflies in the stomach, the dry mouth and the sweaty palms, remember Dena Pappas. Imagine her spirit in the room. Her saxophone blaring. Hear her shouting in your ear, “It’s not about perfection. Let ’er rip!”

“Public Speaking Is The #1 Fear” — Hogwash

In our industry there is an old axiom that says, “Speaking in public is the #1 fear.” The source for this dates back to the 1977 edition of *The Book of Lists*. A study was reported in which some 3,000 people were asked what they were afraid of. The largest block of people, 41%, said speaking in public was their major fear. Death was number six.

Now, let’s think about this for a minute. It just doesn’t make sense. Imagine this scene: a person puts a gun to your head and says, “Okay, Jack, this is it. Either give a speech, or I’ll shoot.” And you say, “Go ahead, pull the trigger.” Unlikely.

Compared to death, serious illness, or financial ruin, which were a few of the other choices on the list, standing up at a meeting and talking is only a momentary fear. One of our workshop participants put it well, “This speech is nothing compared to the other priorities in my life.”

So what is this so-called #1 fear all about? It’s about approval. Most of us want to look good, to not make mistakes. Speaking before others gives us the chance to shine, or to crash and burn.

On the surface, our fears about public speaking seem cosmetic. These fears certainly are real. They are not, however, the scariest things we must face in life.

While we preoccupy ourselves with our surface or more trivial fears of public speaking, the real fear is in taking a position. It’s about standing up, without apology, looking ’em in the eye, and saying what you mean with force. Let the chips fall where they may. In a word, “To be, or not to be.”

The skills of speech organization and effective style are easy to learn. The courage to say what you mean is a bigger challenge. In fact, it’s one of the biggest challenges we face in our lives. In the words of Tom Peters, co-author of *In Search of Excellence*, “Forget all the conventional ‘rules’ but one—stick to topics you deeply care about and don’t keep your passion buttoned inside your vest.” So, push through the momentary fear of speaking before others, then, “let ’er rip.”

The Three Essentials of Speaking

Imagine yourself standing with over 200,000 others on the steps and grounds of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, as Martin Luther King repeats the hypnotic refrain, “I have a dream!” You are swept away by the power of the message and the impact of that historical moment.

All the key ingredients for the making of an unforgettable speech were there: the substance, the style and the staging. All speakers who must make an impact on their audiences need to pay attention to these three factors.

Substance — This is the content of your message, the heart of why you are speaking. It is the core message, the opening and closing, the key points, the stories, the humor and the passion.

Style — Style is the way in which the content is delivered. It is the sum of all the myriad techniques that differentiate the pro from the beginner: stance, movement, gestures, voice, pause and eye interaction.

Staging — Most beginning speakers and many seasoned professionals overlook this area. Think of staging as all the subtle details the audience is usually unaware of—but that can ruin an otherwise outstanding presentation: the quality of the PA system; the speaker’s familiarity with the AV equipment; the effective use of visual aids; the seating arrangement; the use of handout material in a nondisruptive way; the lighting and so forth. The other aspect of staging is dealing with audience reactions and behavior.

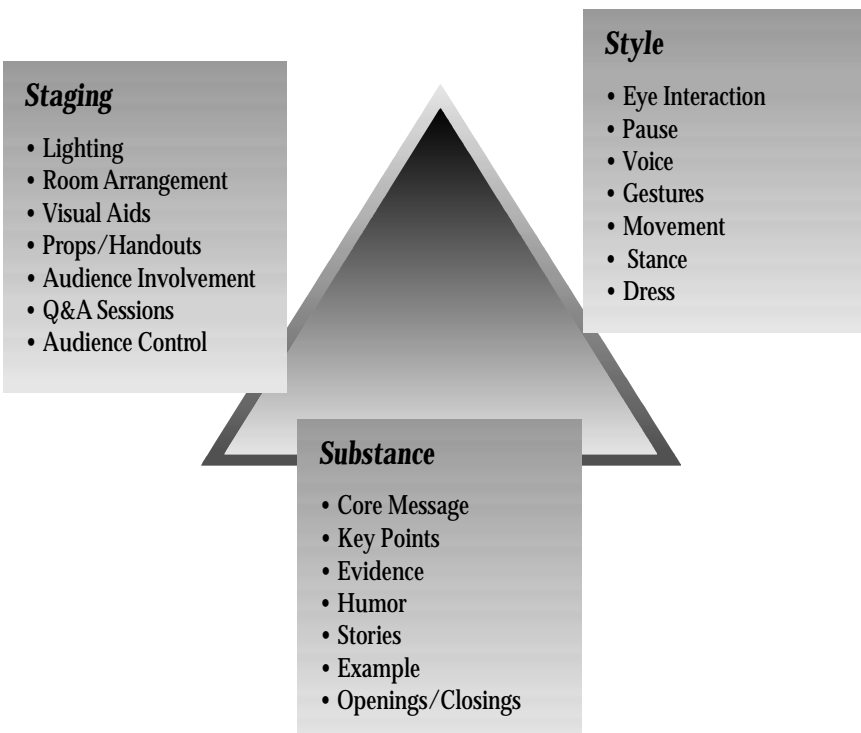
Often, in business and technical presentations, when the speaker is solely concerned with substance, i.e., getting the facts and numbers right, and ignores style or staging, the speech can be flat. The audience may be overwhelmed with detail and soon lose interest.

On the other hand, overemphasis on style can result in an audience being temporarily dazzled, but “an hour later feeling hungry for content.” An overemphasis on staging may leave an audience impressed with the show, but they won’t feel connected

with the presenter. Some corporate high-tech road shows spend small fortunes on flashy models, 35mm computer-driven slide shows and videotape presentations, but little on the presentation skills of the speaker. Yet in spite of the dazzling show, it is the confidence, persuasiveness and believability of the real, live human being who is presenting the show that will make the prospects feel comfortable with the product and the company.

Business, sales and technical presenters, then, would do well to seek a balance between substance, style and staging. Content alone will not persuade their listeners. Remember that what made Martin Luther King's speech memorable—in addition to moving content— was world-class delivery and excellent staging. He had all three of the essential ingredients. So can you!

In the following three chapters, we'll explore substance, style and staging.



I. The Substance of Speaking

“I’ve enjoyed hearing speakers who combine humor and anecdotes with their technical stuff. I remember what they’ve said. They entertain as well as convey information.”

— Richard Eaton
Hewlett-Packard

As Richard Eaton notes, the purpose of a presentation is to “convey information.” He also observes that when a speaker balances data with anecdotes, he’ll remember what they said. To be effective, your substance needs to be well organized. When it is, the audience will stay with you. Using stories will help them remember.

Presentations are far more than just data. In this chapter we’ll look at how to organize information around a core message, how to open and close, how to use humor, data, and stories, and the importance of your language.

Content is Everything (Almost*)

You've been asked to speak because you're an expert or have some special knowledge. In everyday business and technical presentations, content is "stage center." It is the base of the *PowerSpeaking®* triangle. How the content is organized is critical to audience attention and retention.

The first step is to find out who is in your audience. What do they need to know? Your content should be tailored to meet their needs.

Core Message

The next step is to decide what is the essence of your talk. What one or two ideas do you want people to leave with? Keep in mind that two days after hearing your talk, people will have forgotten 95% of what you said. Make sure they remember your main idea. We call it the "core message."

To be effective, a core message is short and it's repeated. Martin Luther King, for example, said "I have a dream" nine times in the seven minutes it took to deliver that speech. The following examples are familiar core messages.

Core Messages from Advertising

"It's the real thing."— *Coca Cola*

"I love what you do for me."— *Toyota*

"Don't leave home without it."— *American Express*

"Campbell's soups are M'm! M'm! Good"— *Campbell's*

"Quality is Job 1."— *Ford*

Core Messages from Speeches

"If it doesn't fit, you must acquit."— *Johnny Cochran*

"I have a dream."— *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

"Read my lips: no new taxes!"— *George Bush*

*Style and staging are also critical.

Note that a topic, i.e., “quality,” is not a core message. However the sentence, “Quality is our competitive advantage,” is a core message. For example:

Topic	Core Message
Customer satisfaction	“Customer satisfaction is our top priority.”
Quality	“Quality is our competitive advantage.”
Corporate child care	“Corporate child care is a benefit to the child, to the employee, and to the company.”

Core messages and key points can be made memorable in a number of ways. One study identified seven ways to increase retention.*

1. Verbal emphasis (For example: “Now get this...”)
2. Three distributed repetitions
3. Immediate repetition early in the speech
4. Speaking slowly (half normal rate)
5. Immediate repetitions late in the speech
6. Pauses
7. Gestures

“A speech is like a symphony. It can have three movements, but it must have one dominant melody.”

—Sir Winston Churchill

Key Points

Key points are the way you convince the listener of the value of the core message. Key points may be either analytical or narrative. Analytical key points consist of data, statistics,

*Cited in *Understanding Persuasion*, Third Edition, Raymond S. Ross, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1990, p. 162.

research results, etc. Narrative key points may be stories, illustrations or examples. Analytical key points persuade the mind while narrative key points persuade the heart. Based on audience preferences and needs, you may emphasize different types of key points.

To enhance the impact of your message, keep the number of key points small. People may be able to recall three or four key points, but it's unlikely they will be able to remember ten or twelve.

No Test

Remember in college classes how you wrote down everything the professor said no matter how deadly boring it was. Why did you do that? Because it could show up on the test. Fear was the great motivation.

Many presenters still use that model in their business presentations. They erroneously believe there is some outside force, like the fear of the grade, that will cause the audience to pay attention. The sobering reality is that most of your audience is daydreaming most of the time. During your presentation, they may be thinking about a wide variety of things: phone calls they need to return, reports that are due, the Little League game that night, the Hawaiian vacation next week, etc., etc. Your presentation competes with all of that for their attention.

One defense you have for fading attention is tight organization that is easy to follow. Have a succinct and repeated core message and have only a few key points. If there is a lot of data you want the audience to take away, consider giving it to them as a handout and keep the actual presentation material bold and easy to follow. Avoid the dreaded "data dump." Keep it simple and you will enhance attention and retention.

The Importance of Openings and Closings

Eighty-six percent of airplane crashes occur during take-off or landing. The same is true for speakers. If the opening is slow, tentative and boring, the audience will decide early on to mentally check out. It is hard to win them back once that has happened.

Similarly, the closing sequence gives a speaker a last chance to have impact, to drive the point home or to help the audience remember the key points. Even a mediocre presentation may be

revived with a strong, memorable close. Yet some speakers do not plan a powerful closing sequence. They just wind down, stop talking and thank the audience.

Here are some ideas to help you lift off and land with confidence the next time you speak.

Openings

Your opening is your first and most critical opportunity to grab and hold the audience's interest. The opening is also a time of high-level nervousness and stress. If your audience senses your hesitation or nervousness, they may lose interest. You, of course, respond to their reaction by feeling even less confident. Things go downhill from there.

What to do? Capture and hold their attention by coming on full-force. Learn your opening at the "muscle memory" level. In other words, charge through your nervousness by *overlearning* the opening.

Powerful Opening Techniques

- ▶ Humor (not a joke)
- ▶ Story
- ▶ Quotation
- ▶ Audience participation
- ▶ Questions (literal or rhetorical)
- ▶ Startling statement/fact/statistic

Audiences pay closer attention to, and are more likely to remember, what happens at the beginning and at the end of your talk. State your core message loud and clear at the beginning and again during the summary. Of course, you should also mention it in the body of the talk.

Closings

Have a well-rehearsed, powerful close. Be ready to transition to the close at any time. This will help you control your time and give you a strong, ready exit should you need it.

Powerful Closing Techniques

- ▶ Summary
- ▶ Core message
- ▶ Call to action
- ▶ Story
- ▶ Quotation
- ▶ Prediction
- ▶ Challenge
- ▶ Humor

As author and speaker Judith Briles says, “Leave ’em laughing, leave ’em crying, leave ’em thinking—but don’t just leave ’em.”

Your openings and closings take only five to ten percent of your presentation time, yet they have a very strong impact on the success of your speech. To avoid being a speaker who doesn’t have enough power to lift off, or who runs out of gas a mile from the runway, try the techniques we’ve outlined. Your message will be remembered if the take-off and landing are smooth.

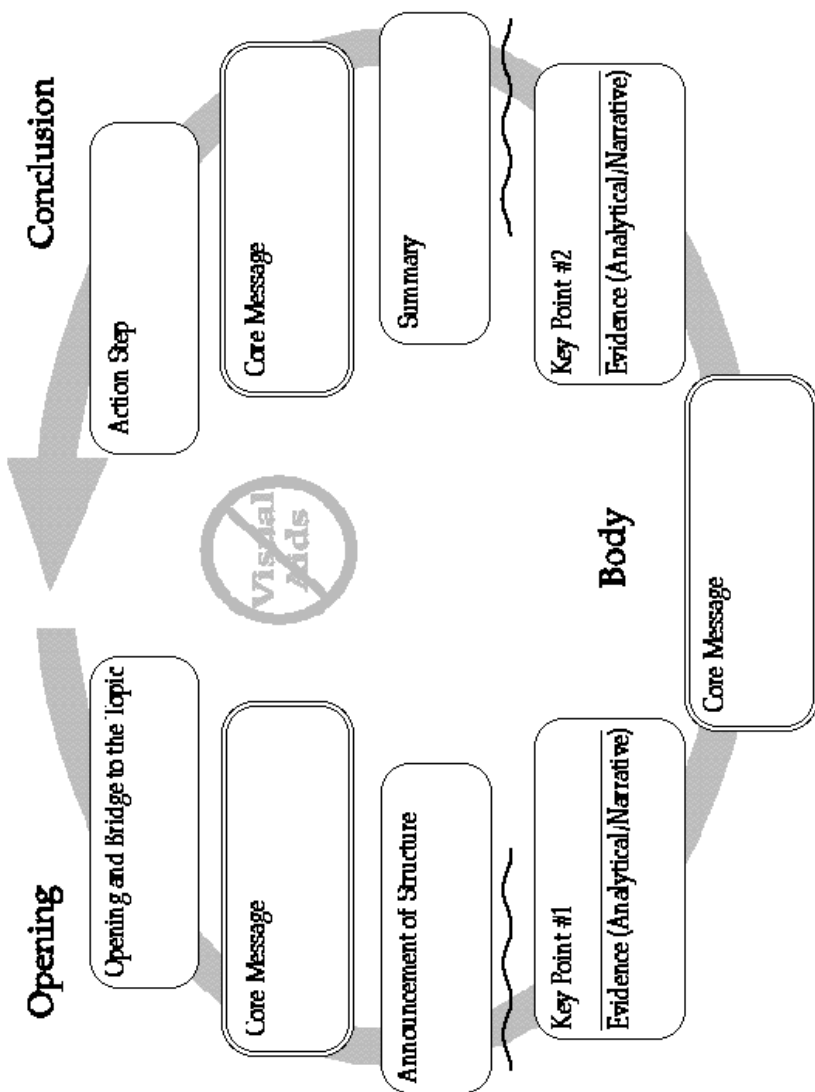
Presentation Plan

On the next page you will see our model for how to organize a talk. It’s in an oval shape to reflect what might be called the speaker’s journey. We set up the opening sequences, move down into the body of the talk with the key points and come back up through the conclusion. The challenge that we opened with may be resolved in the action step (what we want people to do). And so we end where we began.

If you are using visual aids, it’s a good idea to keep the overhead or laptop computer projector off during the opening and closing sequences. This focuses attention more on you and your core message for greater impact.

Other issues we’ll consider in this chapter include: how to use stories and humor, the importance of your language, and topic research.

Presentation Plan



The Power of Stories

Recently, I gave a short luncheon presentation. I began with the story of Dena Pappas, my saxophone teacher and her advice, “Let ’er rip!” After the presentation, a woman came up to say she enjoyed the session and that, in fact, she’d heard me speak before. She wasn’t sure where and she actually hadn’t recognized me, but she remembered the Dena Pappas story. Her comment reminded me again of the power of stories.

If you are not using stories in your presentations, you are missing a powerful way to connect with your audience. In fact, research has shown that stories have stronger impact than quantitative data in some forms of corporate communications (Martin and Powers in *Psychological Foundations of Organizational Behavior*, 1983).

Stories replacing corporate policy manuals? That’s the goal of David Armstrong, vice president of Armstrong International, a worldwide manufacturer of precision mechanical equipment. In his book, *Managing By Storying Around*, he shares company stories he has used to communicate the company’s core values.

Where can you find stories that will have the strongest impact? The best source is personal experience. You can also use other people’s stories if they can be made to fit your presentation goals.

Do stories have to be “true?” Yes—at least in intent. It helps in the telling. For example, my saxophone teacher story is essentially true. I can actually see pictures in my mind of what happened as I tell it. But Dena may not have said, “Let ’er rip”; I don’t remember her exact words. The point is, the spirit of the story is absolutely true.

Once you’ve decided to use stories, where do you start? Master storyteller and presentations coach, Robert Fish, says it’s important to start by listening to other people tell stories. Be analytical. Be aware of gestures, body movement, eye contact, use of the voice, etc. Next, try out your stories on friends to see how they work.

According to Robert, beginning “tellers” make two mistakes. “The most common problem is adding too much detail and dragging it out far too long,” says Robert. Another problem is being too timid. He advises, “Take risks in delivery. Use dialogue and let your voice reflect the emotion of the characters.”

Now you are ready to use stories. You may be surprised at the impact they have on your audiences. In fact, in the next piece you’ll see how one story, well told, changed an important vote in the Massachusetts State Legislature.

Can Stories Really Persuade People?

The following story was told in the Massachusetts State Legislature to defeat a proposed bill concerning elder care.

In a Middle Eastern country there lived a family. For many years the husband's father lived with them. As the old man aged he became more forgetful, spilled his food and required constant care.

The wife became more and more frustrated and demanded that her husband do something about his father. The husband replied, "No. I love him too much. We can manage." The wife continued to complain. Their quality of life was suffering.

Finally and sadly, the husband decided to act. He asked his father, "Dad, how would you like to go on a picnic?" The old man said yes. They packed a lunch and headed down the road that led toward the ocean.

They traveled a good distance when the father said, "Son, let's stop here and rest for a few minutes." The son agreed. They continued down the road and again the old man said, "Son, I'm a little tired. Do you mind if we stop here and rest?" Again the son agreed. After a few minutes the old man said, "I'm ready to go on." They continued farther. The son was feeling guilty. His heart was breaking as he walked along with his father. Finally, the son said, "Dad, let's stop here." The old man replied, "Do you mind if we go a little farther down the road toward the ocean?" The son asked why and the old man responded, "You know the first place we stopped? That was where my father took his father. The second place we stopped was where I took my father. This is where you have taken me. I wanted to see where your son will take you."

A few moments later, the son said, "Dad, let's go home."

A *PowerSpeaking*[®] workshop participant, Joe Gammal used this story to persuade the group of the importance of caring for our elders. The story was not original with Joe. His own father, Albert Gammal, had used the story many years ago when he was a representative in the Massachusetts State Legislature.

The bill being debated would have excused people from financial responsibility for the care of their aging parents, regardless of their ability to pay. Under the bill, the state would care for all the elderly, even those from wealthy families. Albert Gammal felt there was a moral issue involved, and that the state would be setting a precedent by allowing children to pass off the responsibility of caring for their parents to the state.

As Representative Gammal spoke, the audience grew silent. As he told this story, which his father had brought with him when he immigrated from their native Syria, he became choked with emotion. When he finished, there was not a sound in the chamber. When the vote was called, the only “aye” was from the bill’s author.

People can be deeply moved by stories. Your well-developed and delivered stories will add heart and persuasion to your next presentation.

A Corporate Story That Worked

You want your audience to feel the urgency of the situation. You want them to take action. Yet, you are no orator. What to do?

This situation faced Jerry Davis, vice president of Worldwide Client Support at Network Equipment Technologies (N.E.T.) in Redwood City, California. Jerry was scheduled to deliver an important presentation to the entire company live and on video at the “All Hands Meeting.” Although highly regarded in his position, “confident speaker” was not the way he’d describe himself. In fact, speaking always terrified him.

When Jerry and I first met to work on his talk, he was not clear what he wanted to say. He felt strongly, though, that he needed to get people fired up about the front-end process of the product life cycle. While field engineers had been doing an outstanding job of handling problems at customer sites—and should get recognition for that—he wanted people to collaborate better at the early stages of product design.

An image came to mind as we talked. Several months earlier I had noticed a newspaper photograph of a near tragedy. At an air show in Oregon, a wing-walker had slipped and fallen off a biplane. His ground crew developed a plan to save him. As he hung precariously by a life line, the plane flew slowly down the runway (about 80 miles per hour). The ground crew drove a pickup truck along the runway, positioning it under the helpless stunt man. The life line was cut and he fell safely into the truck bed. Certain death was avoided. A dramatic story of a process that had gone awry.

I asked Jerry if that was like what happens when field people have to act quickly and heroically to fix problems at customer sites. The image fit perfectly. What made the story ideal for Jerry is that he is also a stunt pilot and most of the company knew that.

Jerry worked on relating the story to the product life cycle. His enthusiasm for the talk grew. He told the audience the dramatic wing-walker story, then added,

N.E.T. does an Olympic job of bailing us out of problems after they occur. But we don't do a good enough job on the front end. I can't buy enough pickup trucks to keep solving these problems. I need your help on the product life cycle. I apologize if the front end work isn't exciting, but frankly, I don't know if my heart will take many more of these heroic rescues.

His talk was short and to the point. His meaning was clear. The sense of urgency hit everyone. Afterwards, people told Jerry they really understood what he meant. For weeks later there was talk around the company of wing-walkers and pickup trucks. The right image, for the right speaker, for the right talk, had made all the difference.

For your next important speech, take time to find the right image. It will make the talk more fun to develop and easier to deliver. More importantly, your audience will get your message on the wings of metaphor.

Blood on the Marble Floor: Stories, Emotion, and Memory

The speaker was a woman in her mid-thirties. She stood motionless before the group. Her eyes were wide as she told us about the most memorable event of her life.

While she was standing in line at the bank, a man with a gun suddenly started yelling commands to the tellers to empty their cash drawers into his bag. The silent alarm was hit. While the robber was collecting the money, police came through the front door. There was a shoot-out. She instinctively dropped to the floor, her eyes closed. Within seconds, she heard a loud groan and the sound of a body hitting the floor just feet from where she lay. For a moment that seemed like an eternity, there was absolute silence in the bank. When she opened her eyes, she saw a pool of blood spreading slowly out across the cold marble floor. She could faintly hear the robber's heart beating slower and slower as he lay dying next to her.

I heard that talk 12 years ago. I never forgot it. In fact, of the approximately 100,000 talks I've heard in this business over the past 15 years, that is one of the most memorable.

The latest research in brain physiology is confirming something that we all know instinctively: things that cause strong emotion are the things we remember. Think back to the day of the Challenger disaster. Remember that photo of the space shuttle exploding in air, the white mushroom-like cloud against the deep blue January sky? You can probably remember where you were and what you were doing that day. You may not be able to recall what you did two days earlier or two days later.

An article published in the prestigious journal, *Nature*, in October, 1994, details at the molecular level what scientists are learning about the connection between emotion and memory. They used stories with strong emotional content to test their hypotheses. People who received chemicals called beta blockers

(which deaden the emotions) were unable to recall information associated with the stories. Those that did not have their emotions deadened could remember the information.

This research has significant implications for speakers. If you want people to remember what you've said, use a strong story.

The Worthy Opponent

Jim Kozy was a bombardier on a B-24 flying missions over Germany in World War II. Years ago he gave a speech at our Toastmasters club that he titled, "The Worthy Opponent." As he began talking, everyone became completely focused. I was so intent on what he was saying, that I began to lose my peripheral vision. Jim described his position up front in the glass nose of the plane. He told of the awesome skill of the Luftwaffe fighter pilots who attacked his slow-moving bomber.

"They came straight at us with their wing guns blazing. Traveling at 400 miles per hour, they would pull up just 50 feet off our wing tip. I remember one pilot in particular. He came so close I could see his yellow life jacket, and even the blue of his eyes. I was so frightened, and at the same time awed, as he pulled up at the last second, just feet from where I was, I simply waved at him."

I heard that talk 14 years ago and remember it like it was yesterday.

Bob Galvin

Recently, at a company awards dinner, I had the pleasure of hearing a brief talk by Bob Galvin, the retired CEO of Motorola and the son of the company's founder. A man in his mid-eighties, he stood hunched over and motionless at the lectern. He used few gestures and little vocal variety. His style was minimal, yet I remember that speech at a very detailed level. He simply said that the purpose of management was to empower people, and that the key was trust.

He directed his comments at senior and middle management as he repeated his main message, "The engineer in the field must have the power of the CEO to make decisions that benefit the customer." The audience of 300 made not a sound.

The woman who lived through the bank robbery, as well as Jim Kozy and Bob Galvin gave speeches that I can remember

vividly years later. These speeches stand out among the tens of thousands of others I've heard. Why? Because each of these speakers spoke with urgency and emotion about things that moved me. The first two described life-threatening situations. The third spoke to the heart of a problem found in most people's work lives. What can we learn from them?

Realistically, few of us will be able to draw on experiences of being shot at by enemy pilots, or of running a major Fortune 100 company. However, each of us has lived a life of adventure at some level, i.e., raising a family, managing a career, excelling at a hobby or sport and we've all had our share of pain and disappointments. If you want your presentations to have lasting impact, draw on the stories of your life or career. Even small events that are personal and well told, can have universal themes that will leave your audiences moved.

Stories tap into emotion, and emotion enhances memory. While the idea of using stories may have felt intuitively right to you before, now we know from brain research that they do help people remember what you say.

So, even if you work in a technical area and present mostly data, try using a story to enhance the retention of the data you present. Hey, you could even talk about blood on the computer. Maybe they'll remember your talk for 12 years!

The Elements of Story: The John Rose Farewell

The date was September 10, 1953. I was in the ninth grade at Garfield Junior High School in Berkeley, California. I was sitting in drama class on the first day of the new semester. I wanted to be an actor. Sitting next to me was a new kid named John Rose. He had just moved to Berkeley from New York. He looked like a junior version of Danny Kaye. John also wanted to be an actor. The difference between us, though, was that John had more talent in his little finger than I had in my whole body.

As the year rolled along, John starred in one show after another. A tradition at Garfield was to have a talent show at the end of the school year to celebrate graduation. It was called “The High Nine Farewell,” and featured the graduating class. To no one’s surprise, John wrote and/or performed in almost all of the numbers. Our drama teacher was a spirited woman named Mrs. Curtis. During rehearsal, she would sit in the back of the theater in the dark shouting direction and encouragement to the kids in the show. At one point, she was so frustrated by John’s constant presence on stage, she bellowed out for all to hear, “Is this The High Nine Farewell, or is this The John Rose Farewell?” Everyone laughed, including John.

We all went on to high school. I dropped out of theater and drama, and John became the biggest star anyone had seen at Berkeley High School in perhaps a decade. After graduation he went on to The Pasadena Playhouse, and eventually to New York to study. Our lives went in very different directions. He became many things: an actor, a director, and even a song and dance man. We saw each other every couple of years. We always reconnected with great warmth, as though our friendship had never missed a beat. The last I’d heard, John was living and working in Hollywood.

Although he usually had little money, John managed to finance trips back to the Bay Area for the major high school

reunions in 1977 and 1987. Two years after our last reunion, late one night I got a call from Jim Thebaut, a mutual friend from our days at Garfield. “Hi Rick. This is Jim.” His voice was low and measured. “John is in the hospital in Los Angeles, and he’s dying of AIDS.” He had been diagnosed in November and by February he had just days to live. In the next week, I talked to John twice on the phone. We talked of working together on shows, we talked about Mrs. Curtis and about Mrs. Schwimley, the Berkeley High School drama teacher. I told him I loved him.

Two weeks after the call from Jim, I went to Los Angeles with two other old friends from Garfield. Our plan was to visit John. He died before we got there. Two days later there was an informal memorial service in the back room of a bar in Hollywood. About 100 people attended. The walls were covered with photos of John in various roles from King Lear to Willy Loman. That night I talked to producers, directors and actors who said things about John like, “He was an actor’s actor,” or “He was in a league with Sir Lawrence Olivier.”

Toward the end of the evening, people spontaneously formed into a huge circle. Many spoke about how John inspired them, and about his unbelievable talent. Toward the end, I stepped forward and told the story of the ninth grade drama class and Mrs. Curtis. I concluded by saying, “This truly is The John Rose Farewell.” When I was done, a black woman from across the circle stepped forward and sang *Amazing Grace*. There were audible sobs from around the room.

AIDS took my friend from me. I miss him so.

Purpose

I told this story recently at a seminar that focused on the emotional roots of effective speaking. It was very well received. It illustrates some important ideas for anyone who speaks in public.

- ▶ To have impact, draw on life experiences that move you. Although John died a number of years ago, it is still very raw for me. In telling the story, I choked up several times. This only made the impact stronger.
- ▶ Drawing on strong personal experience helps you to visualize. I can still hear Mrs. Curtis, see the huge circle of

people and hear *Amazing Grace* as though it happened yesterday. This made the telling easier.

- ▶ Relate personal stories to the group you are addressing. Several people in the workshop had mentioned AIDS, so I knew John's story would reverberate and connect.
- ▶ Several structural techniques that made the story work: setting it in time with a specific date; use of dialogue; use of visual images; opening and closing with the concept of "farewell."

We all have personal experiences we can draw on to touch others. Sometimes it may be comedy, sometimes it may be tragedy. The purpose is communication.

Finding the Perfect Image

Recently a participant in our two-day *PowerSpeaking*® program described her job responsibilities by using an overhead transparency of a three-ring circus. The effect was stunning. She got the idea (and the graphic image) while reading a bedtime story about the circus to her daughter the night before.

Where do you get ideas for your presentations? In the shower? While exercising? While watching a movie? The most unlikely places or activities can generate powerful speech material.

In Search of Excellence co-author Tom Peters lamented in a recent newspaper column that he sees so many business travelers cranking out the numbers on their laptop computers during cross-country flights. Big breakthroughs and much-needed creative solutions are more likely to come from letting the mind wander, says Peters. He recommends decidedly non-business sources like Sherlock Holmes books, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, or even the Clint Eastwood grade B in-flight movie.

As a speaker you may find just the right image to ignite your audience's commitment to your ideas by going outside conventional sources for your material. Your presentations are too important to get bogged down in the ordinary. Dare to be creative.

Using Humor

“Laughter is the shortest distance between two people.”

—Victor Borge
Comedian

After booking me for a keynote speech at his association’s annual Christmas get-together, a meeting planner said, “Last May, at our state-wide two-day conference, one so-called ‘motivational speaker’ turned out to be a plastic surgeon who lectured us on the joys of doing tummy tucks and removing crow’s feet. He included detailed medical slides. The members were outraged. Many stormed out. I’m still getting criticism about it,” he lamented.

I asked him how many people at the December meeting would have heard the surgeon. He said well over two-thirds. That was all I needed. I knew I had my opening.

My opening line was, “When Bill asked me to address you today, he said you were interested in motivational strategies. I assured him he selected the right speaker. As an expert in the field, I can tell you enthusiastically that I have the answer to your queries. The motivational strategy for the 90s is... (long pause)...plastic surgery.” The audience roared and we were off to a good start.

Humor is an invaluable asset to the speaker or business presenter. It breaks the ice, builds rapport and reduces tension. It opens people up so they can hear your message.

The best type of humor is that which grows naturally out of the situation or out of your own experience. Art Linkletter once addressed the inmates at San Quentin during their annual track

and field competition. His opening line was, “The warden asked me to announce that the pole vaulting event has been cancelled.” It brought the house down.

Humorous real-life situations or stories that can be adapted for your audience will likely work better than canned jokes. Try out funny material on friends to make sure it works then fine-tune it.

Well-crafted humorous stories from your own experience will warm up the audience and help to relax you. Skip the jokes though—unless you’re Bill Cosby.

Spontaneous Humor

Contributed by John Kinde

Picture this: I am walking into a junior high school cafeteria to make a speech. On the way, I notice two big, unrelated signs above the door. Most of the 300 faculty members in the audience have seen those signs before, but few probably looked at them the way I did. “This is a unique facility,” I remark to the crowd. “I knew that as soon as I saw the signs over the back door, ‘Restroom-Capacity 375!’” The audience cracks up.

Spontaneous humor: it’s one of the most powerful communication skills you can develop. When you’re making a presentation, whether to one or to one hundred, you will be able to relax the listeners and establish rapport if you can use humor. Not only will it enable you to succeed in formal presentations, it will also strengthen your one-on-one conversational skills. Using spontaneous humor at a job interview, for example, will show the interviewer that you are relaxed, creative and alert.

When making a presentation, a spontaneous quip will always be more effective than a canned joke. Audiences are appreciative when they feel the joke was created just for them.

Here are four keys to effective use of spontaneous humor:

- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Observation
- ▶ Courage
- ▶ Practice

Preparation

What? Prepare to be spontaneous? Of course! Have you ever visited a comedy club and observed how the stand-up comic has an “off-the-cuff” ad lib for nearly everything that comes up? Think of those times when the comic chats with the people in the front row and makes a witty remark if someone happens to be from New York, or works in the

medical field, or is the only man at a table of women. Such exchanges appear to be very spontaneous. But in reality, the comic is often making “spontaneous” remarks for the 50th or 100th time! The seasoned comic has prepared to be spontaneous.

In speaking situations, it’s a good idea to be prepared with humor to handle unexpected events. What will you do or say if the lights go out or the sound system fails? If you’re armed with a humorous ad lib, the audience will be won over when they see that the problem hasn’t gotten the best of you.

Here’s another tip. Carefully note any effective off-the-cuff humorous remark made by you or an audience member, then recycle it during your next talk. Although it may seem contradictory, being ready with a few humorous quips can actually add an illusion of spontaneity.

Observation

Since most humor is based on making connections between things, the more observant you are, the more likely you’ll be able to create humorous connections and pictures in the minds of your audience.

It’s also a good idea to listen to the remarks and presentations being made while you wait to speak. At one meeting it seemed as though nearly everyone receiving five, ten and fifteen-year service awards had started in the company’s telemarketing department and had subsequently worked their way into other jobs. I added a new line to my opening monologue. “People call me a comedy magician because they laugh at my magic and they’re mystified by my jokes. But I wasn’t always a comedy magician. I used to work in telemarketing!” It was on target and received a great response because the audience appreciated the fresh, spontaneous nature of the remark.

Then there was a function where a club president was giving out recognitions for club service. During the course of the ceremony, I noticed that some of the recipients were present and some were absent. One of my best lines came from that simple observation, “This is my kind of club. You gave perfect attendance awards to two people who weren’t even here!” Simple? Certainly. But highly effective.

Courage

There's no doubt about it, trying out a new joke takes guts. But the more you do it, the more comfortable you'll become. Not every effort will be on target. But it's worth the risk. Besides, if your audience doesn't laugh, just pretend you were serious!

Practice

You learn humor and spontaneity only by exercising your skills. I recommend that you set a goal of always using some humor in every presentation you give. Your humor "comfort zone" will increase and so will your spontaneity as you gain confidence.

A great way to practice spontaneous humor is to take advantage of your participation in meetings. If you belong to a civic club, a church committee, a PTA or have regular business meetings, you can use these gatherings as a training ground to learn spontaneous humor skills. Or you can join a local Toastmasters club, which is an excellent place to hone your technique.

When the opportunity arises to say a few words at the close of a meeting, use a bit of observational humor created from the circumstances of the gathering. Or, if you're assigned to present a joke during the get-together (many groups do this to brighten the agenda), bring a "hip-pocket" joke only as a backup. Then, during the meeting, attempt to create a fresh, new joke instead by exercising your observational skills. It's not as difficult as it might seem at first. You'll become more observant and will eventually be able to create five or six pieces of observational humor by the close of a one-hour meeting.

"You learn to ride a bicycle by falling off! You learn humor the same way—by trying, failing and learning what works."

—John Kinde

By using these keys of preparation, observation, courage and practice, you'll become more spontaneous, not only in your talks but in many other areas of your life as well. When you speak, you'll add a freshness to your presentations as you customize humor to your audience and your environment. You'll sell yourself and your ideas because your talk will hit the mark—and the funny bone!

In Praise of Profanity

“I’ll be *damned* if I’ll let anyone with a smirk and a sneer discredit the honor, service, accountability and competence of George Bush.” With that line, former president Gerald Ford brought the 1988 Republican National Convention screaming to their feet. It was the brightest moment of an otherwise ordinary, too predictable convention.

It made me reflect on the unwritten, though often articulated rule in many speaking organizations that advises speakers to never swear in a speech. I think it is time for us to re-examine that advice. Swearing can add intensity and emotional honesty—not to mention color.

Nationally known speaker, Zig Zigler, commented at a National Speakers Association Convention that he didn’t enjoy hearing “barnyard language” from a speaker. I agree with him that raunchy sexual stories have no place in corporate or association platform speaking—Las Vegas, perhaps—but not where most of us work. But swearing to underscore a strongly felt position, that is okay with me.

“But wait,” you say. “Swearing may offend someone in my audience.” One of the saddest comments I ever heard was from a colleague who proudly proclaimed that his material had been so sanitized it offended no one. I hope that when I’m lowered in the ground they don’t chisel on my tombstone, “Here Lies a Speaker Who Offended No One.” I’d rather it say, “Here Lies a Speaker Who Told it Like it Was. He Won Some, He Lost Some.” Life is not one big sales rally of good news and unlimited opportunity. As speakers we need to be in touch with the dark side, too. We are at our finest when we inspire from strong conviction. And occasionally, as we get ourselves and the audience worked up about our topic, swearing may actually enhance, not hurt our message.

Yes, some people may be offended. It is a calculated risk. Is the intensity and emotional honesty worth it? Each of us will have to decide for ourselves. Swearing hasn’t hurt Tom Peters’

career. If you've seen him in person you know how he adds intensity with profanity. Audiences don't seem too offended. His calendar is booked for three years out. People like to see speakers light themselves on fire on stage. That's what he does. It's not the swearing *per se* that makes him popular; it's the passion about an important topic.

I hope we aspire to nothing less. It is time to re-evaluate this sacred cow. In the words of Elbert Hubbard, "A great orator is inspired by many, but a copy of none. No prudent person ever made a multitude change its mind. Oratory is indiscretion set to music."

"Show me a guy who says 'heck' and 'darn' and I'll show you a guy who would kick a dog."

— Bill Gove
Professional Speaker

Women's Language, Women's Power

Contributed by Mary McGlynn

It is budget time. Several decision-makers watch as a woman walks to the front, smiles and begins her presentation.

Thank you *so* much for coming. I'm *so* pleased to see your *bright* faces. I have a *wonderful* budget that I know you'll *really* like because it's going to be *terribly* important to our division.

Imagine the same scene, but this time a woman, aware of her speech patterns, is presenting to the Board of Directors.

Thank you. I'm pleased to present our new budget. It will allow us to reach our goals but still help us control expenses. Let's look at it.

Women communicate differently than men. We are more polite. We qualify what we say. We appear indecisive because we ask for permission or add questions to the end of our statements. We use "women only" words. The result? Women are not taken as seriously in business and in everyday communication and we undermine our communication process. Let's take a look at some of the ineffective patterns women use and consider stronger alternatives.

Problem Language

Are you using "women only" adjectives and adverbs in your speech? For example, *charming, adorable, lovely, sweet and cute* are words that few men use. Adverbs such as *so, really, terribly, quite, awfully* and *simply* do not add to understanding, but instead differentiate female from male communication. We trivialize our intent when we use words that are weak and/or irrelevant.

Tag Questions or Reflections

Let's look at examples of some statements with tag questions.

- ▶ “It sure is cold, don't you think?”
- ▶ “It will be done by Friday?” (with an upward inflection)
- ▶ “I really presented that clearly, didn't I?”

Ending with a question gives away the certainty, the power. With rising inflection or a “tag question,” a statement falls between the cracks: is it a request for information or is it a statement? Such a language pattern gives the impression that you're saying:

- ▶ “I'm not sure of my facts.”
- ▶ “I need to be liked and want your approval.”
- ▶ “I want to do something but I'll change my mind if you don't approve.”

In simplified (and overgeneralized) terms: men command by making a statement; women request through indirect statements in hopes for approval.

Politeness

What are little girls made of? “Sugar and spice and everything nice.” A silly childhood rhyme, true, but it illustrates the notion that women exemplify our ideal morality. As a polite creature who can empathize, concur, and accommodate, we reduce our social status and give away our power. We are caretakers, not leaders.

According to a recent Toastmaster Magazine article, women ask 70% of the questions in order to “bring others out.”

Imagine a woman manager making a request of her secretary, “Will you please type this for me as soon as possible, okay?” The secretary is doing her boss a favor by typing the document. I am not suggesting that it is better to be rude or dominating, but rather, women must choose words that exhibit directness and clarity.

Interruptions

“Snakes and snails and puppy dogs' tails,” are what little boys are made of. Men have language patterns that affect women, too.

- ▶ Men dominate conversations.
- ▶ Men speak at greater lengths.
- ▶ Men are more likely to interrupt conversations.

A recent study showed that when women are in conversation with other women, or when men are talking to men, there are about equal interruptions. In a mixed group, all politeness disappears. Men make 96% of all interruptions.

It is also true that if a woman is speaking and is interrupted by a man, she is usually silenced. Even if a woman tries to get the floor again, she probably won't succeed. In our benevolence, we weaken our leadership roles and even give up some of our self-esteem.

These language patterns communicate self-doubt and uncertainty. Although this is predominantly a female problem, men are not immune to the weak language trap. Whether used by males or females, the patterns are destructive.

How To Develop Powerful Language

Being aware of our language patterns is an enormous step. There are many ways to do this.

Tape recording—Record your conversations in a business meeting or on the phone. Then analyze your language for patterns that trivialize communication.

Videotaping—If you have a major presentation coming up, rehearse on video. There is no better way to make behavioral changes. As a “third party” watching the video, you can check for verbal patterns, body language and self-confidence. Modify your word-use to create the greatest impact.

Interruptions—When interrupted, politely, but firmly, and with a slightly raised voice, indicate that you would like to finish your statement and then proceed. Don't automatically give in! Believe in your right to “have the floor.”

Self-concept—More and more women are becoming aware that self-deprecating behavior is the result of low self-esteem. If your patterns undermine your credibility, be willing to look at your self-concept. Counseling, inter-personal communication workshops and presentation skills seminars are all available options.

Look and Listen—Take some time to make changes by studying those people who are effective and dynamic communicators. What do they do? How do they present information? Contrast their success with someone who is not a strong presenter. Incorporate those successful behaviors into your own repertoire.

Summary—Women don't have to communicate less effectively than men. Awareness is the key. Style can change. The results for you will be greater self-confidence, stronger impact and a more dynamic presentation.

Building Content Power

Contributed by Wally Bock

Once upon a time, it was enough to be entertaining. If you could tell a good story or joke, or show some good slides, then your presentation could be a success. Presentation skills and entertainment could carry the day. No more.

These days, your audiences demand high take-away value from your programs. What they want is powerful, relevant content. Here's how to deliver.

The Strategy: Transform Data Into Information and Information Into Knowledge

You add value to your presentation when you transform data into information and information into knowledge. Data are raw facts. You transform data into information by adding comparison and contrast. You transform information into knowledge by adding guidelines for use and examples of applications.

What Do You Look For?

Look for relevance. Think about how your audience will use your content. Then find the best data, information and knowledge for their purpose. Examples from your industry are better than general ones. Examples from your company are stronger still.

Look for contrasts that surprise and delight. Try to find a fact that no one in the audience knows that you can tell them.

Look for stories. Stories are the way that human beings organize complex information and make it usable. Stories and examples are what your audiences will remember most.

How to Find Good Material: the Four B's

There are four places to go to get great content. Go to your brain, your buddies, books and other printed material, and bytes—content in digital form.

Your Brain

You probably already know a lot about the content of your presentation. Start by mining your brain. Take an hour or so to think about what you want to say. Identify key facts, issues, questions for research and other information sources you might use.

Use mind mapping to organize your thoughts. If you don't know about this powerful tool, make it your business to find out. It's great for organizing information for research or for the presentation itself.

Your Buddies

Next, work your personal network. Call or email people you know who may have information you want or who may know where to find it. Then follow their leads and references. They'll point you toward books, magazines and digital resources.

Books and Other Printed Materials

In order to use printed material well you should start with some good content discipline. Here are some tips.

Know what you need to read every day and every week. Then at least scan those publications. That will help your brain recall ideas and sources when you need them. When you get a new industry or business magazine, copy the table of contents. Then put the copy in a binder for reference later.

When you have a few moments at a later time, scan this material. You'll find that it feeds your brain and helps you keep current on key issues.

When you're preparing for a presentation, go back to the binder. You'll probably find some articles of interest that will help you.

Remember that good things come in bunches. If you find an article that you like, look for other articles by the same author or in the same journal. If you have a book that's helpful, check out the sources that the author used. Mine the index and the footnotes.

Bytes—Content in Digital Form

Brains and buddies and books have been around a while. But content in digital form is new. It's also powerful.

Content in digital form takes up less space than print. It's easier to search and to manipulate. For those reasons, getting content

in digital form will be very useful. Remember that you can always print it out easily.

Just like with print, though, you start with good content discipline.

Scan key information sources daily and weekly. I check the online Wall Street Journal (<http://www.wsj.com>) and New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>) every day. I check the Economist (<http://www.economist.com/>), Business Week (<http://www.businessweek.com/>), Industry Week (<http://www.industryweek.com/>) and Inc. (<http://www.inc.com/>) every week on their websites.

You can also set up clipping services or intelligent agents that will find information, based on keywords you select in publications all over the net. There's a good one called NewsTracker on the Excite website at <http://www.excite.com>.

When you find content you think might be important, capture it. Then put it into some kind of file system. My favorite filing program is called Ask SAM (<http://www.asksam.com/>). This program lets you set up keyword searches, or scan the full text of articles quickly and easily.

You also need to know how to find information on the net quickly when you're preparing a presentation. To do that, start in a good place, follow the links and use bookmarks like breadcrumbs to find your way back.

Good places to start include the key search engines and special "librarian" sites. Librarian sites are places where someone else has put together a list of "best sources" on a particular topic. You'll find one on my website at <http://www.bockinfo.com/tips.htm>.

You'll find others related to just about any industry or interest. Many of the best are on association web sites. The American Society of Association Executives maintains a searchable database of member association sites at <http://www.asaenet.org/>.

And don't forget that the sources you scan regularly often have searchable archives that will lead you to great material.

Begin your search by understanding that searching the web is different than searching in a library. In the library there's a recognized index or card catalog. There's nothing like that on the web. So your search there is more like calling your friends

for tips, information, or pointers. Try one link, if you find something good, keep going. If not, try another.

So follow the links. Links are the power of the web. When you find a site that may be helpful, bookmark it. That way you'll be able to get back to it whenever you want. And bookmark every site that you want to return to regularly. It will help you maintain good content discipline.

Get Started

The time to get started building content for your next presentation is right now. Master tools for searching and for information management. Then use these tools to develop a presentation that is powerful, helpful and memorable.

Resources

My website offers an array of resources to help you develop content more effectively. Check it out at <http://www.bockinfo.com>. You can also call me at 1-800-648-2677.

There are several excellent books on mind mapping, but my favorite is *Mindmapping: Your Personal Guide to Exploring Creativity and Problem-Solving*, by Joyce Wycoff.

The Power of the Hero's Journey

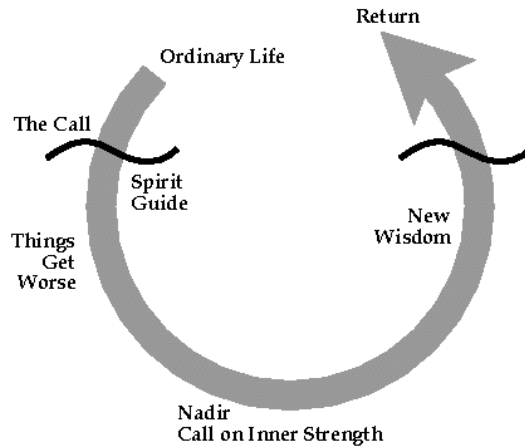
Luke Skywalker is hurtling toward the nuclear reactor of the dreaded Death Star in *Star Wars*. Empire fighters are in hot pursuit. At the last moment, Luke hears Obi-Wan Kenobi say, “Trust the Force,” and turns off his guidance computer. He evades his pursuers and blows up the Death Star.

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy is held prisoner in the castle of the Wicked Witch. An hour-glass measures the minutes she has to live. All hope is gone. Suddenly the image of Auntie Em appears in the crystal ball. Dorothy sobs, “Oh Auntie Em, I’m scared.” Back in Kansas, she tells everyone of her adventure and the lesson she learned, “There’s no place like home.”

Both *Star Wars* and *The Wizard of Oz* follow story lines often seen in the best Hollywood films: that of the “ordinary” hero. Mythologist Joseph Campbell described the appeal of such stories in *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Stories of mythic proportions involve life’s basic lessons. Typically, the story’s main character starts out as an ordinary person. He or she then gets a “call to adventure”—either by choice or by circumstance.

The protagonist leaves the comforts of home and family to begin the journey. Along the way there are life-threatening challenges. Things get worse. Finally, it looks like the end—there’s no hope. Then, at the point of greatest despair, the hero finds some inner strength to triumph over the odds. This inner strength is usually the message, or moral, of the story: “Trust the Force,” “There’s no place like home.”

The hero prevails over evil. He or she returns to ordinary life, but with new wisdom. This wisdom is then communicated to the rest of society for everyone’s benefit.



Campbell's model helps us understand the value of heroic stories like those of Luke Skywalker and Dorothy. Stories such as these tap into universal human themes. They are used to communicate the basic truths and values we hold dear.

Of what value is this to speakers in business or public life? As you craft stories to use in your speeches, consider the theme of the hero's journey. Topics as wide-ranging in content as altruism for the United Way to quality improvement in industry can fit this pattern. For example, tell how the main character took a risk, struggled against opposition, got in touch with fundamental values (e.g., long-term customer relationships over short-term profits) and helped the company prevail.

By using this storytelling approach, you will tap into a powerful, unconscious reservoir in your audience: the shared experience of overcoming life's hurdles, of striving to excel. And when your stories touch this, your audience will not only hear your message, they will *remember* it—as with the lessons we learn from the best-loved stories.

“Trust the force, Luke. Trust the force.”

Movie Spirit Guides and Their Advice

*“You are more than what you have become.
You must take your place in the circle of life.”*

— Mufasa
The Lion King

One day, at the last job I had before starting my corporate career with Hewlett-Packard in 1980, I had an earth-shattering insight that was to change my life forever. It was in the middle of a particularly slow work day. I was standing at the pool table on the locked mental health unit where I worked, absent-mindedly leaning on my pool cue waiting for my turn. Then it hit me, “There is more to my life than this. I am capable of much more. It’s time for a change.” What followed was one of the major turning points of my life. How strange it was to hear, years later, almost my exact words spoken by Simba’s father in *The Lion King*.

In these days of frequent professional and personal dislocation and change, wouldn’t it be great to have a road map? There is one. It’s right under our noses. To find help in these chaotic times, go to the movies! The guidance we need is right there. In movies about the inner journey of self-discovery, the path is laid out for all to see. The trick is knowing how to read the map.

The hero or heroine starts out on a journey that is often imposed by outside forces, like the tornado in *The Wizard of Oz*. On the journey, he or she encounters forces of evil (the dark side). To deal with these forces, the hero must get help along the way. This help usually comes in the form of a mentor, or what I call a spirit guide. The spirit guide doesn’t solve the problem, but helps the seeker learn how to call on inner strength to overcome the crisis. The answer is not outside ourselves.

The message is: “You already know the answer to your dilemma.” In this process of learning what one already knows, the seeker becomes a wiser person and then shares this knowledge with others. The Good Fairy of the North says to Dorothy, “You always had the power to go back to Kansas, but you had to learn it for yourself.”

Who have been your spirit guides or mentors? How have they helped you through those most difficult transitions? In the movies, we can see a pattern that is universal. Understanding this pattern can help us use these critical relationships in times of business and personal meltdown. The accompanying table will give you an overview of the complex dynamics of this rich, love/hate relationship between the seeker and the spirit guide. This is only a sampling of the movies I am familiar with. You can probably come up with many more.

- ▶ **The Nature of the Spirit Guide.** The word “mentor” is from the same derivative root word in Greek as the word “monster.” In the adult films, the spirit guide is often reluctant and hostile, and sometimes brutally critical: “You’re so full of crap.” (*Rudy*); “Who the hell are you?...I’m going to beat you with this crowbar until you go away.” (*Field of Dreams*); “...[what you’ve done] is a waste of life.” (*Rocky*). In children’s films, the spirit guides are kind and without flaws, while in adult films they are usually flawed, wounded people. The idea of “the wounded healer” comes in here. Perhaps we learn more from people who themselves have suffered deeply.
- ▶ **Spirit Guide Advice.** Spirit guides are not telling us to follow them, or to find some guru on a mountain top. They are encouraging us to listen to the inner voice, to trust in ourselves: “The secret of life is just one thing... that’s what you’ve got to figure out.” (*City Slickers*); “Listen to your heart...you know your path, child, now follow it.” (*Pocahontas*); “You’re not a loser, Eddie, you’re a winner.” (*The Hustler*); “You don’t have to prove nothin’ to nobody except yourself.” (*Rudy*).
- ▶ **Spirit Guide Interventions.** At crucial turning points in our lives, our spirit guides work their magic. In a movie, the whole plot may depend on the timing of when the

spirit guide intervenes. In *Rudy*, it's just before the last football game of Rudy's senior year. In *Strictly Ballroom*, it's just before Scott is being disqualified in the dance contest. In *Field of Dreams*, it's just before the bankers are going to foreclose on the farm. In *Scent of a Woman*, it's just before Frank Slade is going to kill himself.

- ▶ **The Forces of Power, Money, and Evil.** In many of the films, the hero's struggle is not only within him or herself, but also against a corrupt system. In *Regarding Henry* and in *The Doctor*, the heroes' journeys help to reverse unjust, huge legal settlements. In *The Lion King*, the struggle is against the selfish mismanagement of the evil brother, Scar. In *Field of Dreams*, it's against the money-grubbing bankers. In *Flashdance* and *Strictly Ballroom*, it's against the staid forces of position and tradition.

What is intriguing to me is that a universal theme in these films is the plight of the little guy against the uncaring, selfish interests of the establishment. In real life, the little guy rarely wins against the forces of position, power, and money. It must make us feel good to see our deepest hopes realized on the big silver screen. My question is, do stories like these serve the purpose of giving us the courage to, as the actor Edward James Olmos said recently, "Chase your passion, not your pension."? Or, do they encourage a kind of lethargy and inaction? Hey, if we can get our dreams fulfilled at the movies, why risk going for it in real life?

- ▶ **The Life of Regret.** The advice of the spirit guides is often based on personal experience of failure. They urge the hero not to make the same mistake they made. In *Rocky* the trainer missed his chance because he didn't have a trainer. In *Rudy*, the groundskeeper reveals at the last minute that he walked out on the team and has regretted that decision his whole life. In *Strictly Ballroom*, Doug Hastings (the father) reveals at the critical point in the film the regret he has felt his whole life for giving in to the demands of "The Federation."

- ▶ **The Hero Saves Others Too.** The spirit guide enables the hero to make the dream come true. In a kind of ripple effect, this usually benefits many others, too. In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's journey also helps the Lion, the Tin man, and the Scarecrow. In *Nobody's Fool*, Sully's newfound courage helps his son, his grandson, and the lawyer. In *Strictly Ballroom*, Scott's journey brings new wisdom to his parents, the other contestants, and most of the audience. Rudy's success in *Rudy*, filters down to his brothers, who then also attend college and break the family tradition of working at the foundry. In *Field of Dreams*, everyone is helped by Ray's dream: the brother-in-law, Doctor Graham, Ray's father ("ease his pain"), all the players, and of course, Ray himself.

In most of these films, when the hero reaches his or her own goals, many others are "healed" in the process. And it all depends on the sage advice of the spirit guide at just the right moment.

On my own journey, I have had a number of spirit guides. I feel deep love for these people. In important ways, they helped shape who I became. I bring it up for two reasons.

First, if this theme is being repeated so often in movies, one of our most important contemporary myth forms, it must ring true for millions of people. Understanding the spirit guide pattern may give all of us not only a deeper awareness of what is going on in the movies, but also an appreciation for those people in our lives who have helped to shape our destiny. That old teacher, parent, friend, boss or therapist who was so important to you years ago, might like to hear what they meant to you.

Secondly, since this spirit guide pattern seems to be so universal, consider touching on it in your next major presentation. A story about a mentor you've had in your personal or work life will probably meet with a great response from your audience. They will be feeling in their hearts the deep gratitude they have for their own spirit guides.

See you at the movies!

Movie	Hero	Spirit Guide	Advice	Spirit Guide Flaws
<i>Pocahontas</i>	Pocahontas	Grandmother Willow	"Listen to your heart. You will understand. Sometimes the right path is not the easiest one. You know your path, child, now follow it."	None
<i>Lion King</i>	Simba	Rafiki	"I know who you are. You are Mufasa's boy." Mufasa's spirit speaks: "Look inside yourself Simba. You are more than what you have become. You must take your place in the circle of life."	None
<i>Wizard of Oz</i>	Dorothy	Good Fairy of the North (Glinda)	"You've always had the power to go back to Kansas, but you had to learn it for yourself."	None
<i>City Slickers</i>	Mitch	Curly (trail boss)	"The secret of life is just one thing. One thing. You stick to that and the rest don't mean shit." Mitch: "What is it?" Curley: "That's what you've got to figure out." (It's his family.)	Burned out, cynical.
<i>Rocky</i>	Rocky Balboa	Mick (the trainer)	"You had the talent to become a good fighter, but instead you became a leg breaker for a cheap, second-rate loan shark." Rocky: "It's a livin'." Mick: "It's a waste of life."	Burned out, missed his chance.

Movie	Hero	Spirit Guide	Advice	Spirit Guide Flaws
<i>Field of Dreams</i>	Ray Kinsella	Terrance Mann (the retired writer)	"People will come, Ray. This field, that game is a part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that was good and could be again. People will come, Ray. People will most definitely come."	Angry, reclusive. Wants no part of it.
<i>The Doctor</i>	Jack McKee	June Ellis (cancer patient)	"Don't lie to me again. I'm dying. Don't waste my time...A farmer wanted to attract animals to his field. He stood there with his arms outstretched, but they didn't come. They were afraid of the scarecrow. Jack, just let down your arms and we'll all come to you."	June dies of a brain tumor.
<i>Strictly Ballroom</i>	Scott Hastings	Doug Hastings (father)	"It was the dancing that mattered. We should've put that above everything else. We had the chance, but we were scared. We walked away, and we lived our lives in fear."	Life of regret because of not dancing his own steps.
<i>Regarding Henry</i>	Henry Turner	Bradley (physical therapist)	"Don't listen to nobody trying to tell you who you are. It might take awhile, but you'll figure out who you are."	Ex-football player with bad knees.

<i>Movie</i>	Hero	Spirit Guide	Advice	Spirit Guide Flaws
<i>Flashdance</i>	Alexandra	Hanna (aunt)	"Dreaming is wonderful, but it won't get you closer to what you want. Alexandra, you are 18 years old. Do it now." Boyfriend: "Don't you understand? When you give up your dream, you die."	None. Hanna dies and that motivates Alex to audition.
<i>Scent of a Woman</i>	Lt. Col. Frank Slade	Charlie Simms (prep school student)	Charlie stops Frank's suicide, at great risk to himself. C: "So you screwed up. Everybody does it. Get on with your life." F: "Give me one reason not to kill myself." C: "I'll give you two. You can dance the tango and drive a Ferrari better than anyone I've ever seen...If you're tangled up, just tango on." F: "You askin' me to dance, Charlie?"	Charlie in trouble at school that could lead to his expulsion, possible career failure.
<i>The Hustler</i>	Fast Eddie Felsom	Sarah Packard (girlfriend)	"Don't wear a mask, Eddie. You don't have to." Referring to Burt, the gambler: "That's Turk, Eddie, the man who broke your thumbs. He's not going to break your thumbs, he's going to break your heart. He hates you because of what you are... You're not a loser, Eddie. You're a winner."	Sarah commits suicide. This gives Eddie the "character" he is searching for.

Movie	Hero	Spirit Guide	Advice	Spirit Guide Flaws
<i>Nobody's Fool</i>	Donald Sullivan	The lawyer, the landlady, the son, the grandson, the friend	On the proposal to run away with someone else's wife: "Until a while ago, I could've done it. But, I just found out I'm someone's grandfather, and I'm somebody's father, and I'm somebody's friend."	Each spirit guide has his or her own problems to deal with.
<i>Rudy</i>	Rudy Rutager	Fortune (groundskeeper)	"You're so full of crap. You're five feet nothin', one hundred and nothin', and you got hardly a speck of athletic ability, and you hung in with the best college football team in the land, and you're also gonna walk out of here with a degree from the University of Notre Dame. You don't have to prove nothin' to nobody except yourself, and after what you've been through, if you haven't done that by now, it'll never happen. Now go on back. If you don't, I guarantee a week won't go by in your life you won't regret walkin' out."	Ex-Notre Dame player who copped an attitude and quit.

Kate's World

A great source of presentation material is the funny things that kids say. I've been keeping track of some of the things our daughter Kate has said over the years. I'm waiting for an opportunity to slip this material into a presentation. Of course, I'll be paying royalties to Kate.)

5/94—Kate said, "I have to go poo poo." She got into the bathroom and nothing happened. She offered this explanation: "My poo poo's asleep."

11/94—Returning in the car from a long tiring weekend, we stopped at McDonald's for a bite. Back on the freeway, with a hamburger in her hand, Kate fought off sleep. Mary tried to take away the hamburger as Kate drifted off. Kate said, "No, Mom. I can eat and sleep at the same time."

11/94—"I'm so thirsty, my bones are dry."

5/96—Kate is very mad at Mary. She says: "I hate you, and I'm still going to hate you even when you're my grandmother!"

12/96—Talking to Kate about my mother, I told Kate her grandmother died some years ago. She asked: "Did your mother die before you were born?"

3/97—Last night we took Kate to a performance of Carmina Burana in San Francisco as both a choral work and a ballet. She said of the male dancers, "Why are they wearing those tights? You can see their butts."

8/97—Rick (feeling disgusted at his belly hanging over his belt): “Well, Kate, I gotta go back on that diet to get rid of all this.”

Kate: “You don’t need to diet, Dad.”

Rick: “Why?”

Kate: “You can just get bigger clothes.”

When your kids have such humorous comments as these, jot them down. You can never tell when you’ll be able to use them in a presentation.

II. The Style of Speaking

“If you can’t communicate your message, you might as well not have one.”

— Geoff Woolhouse, Ph.D.
Space Systems/Loral

There is a great paradox in speaking. It’s the relationship between content and style. Content is the reason you are speaking, yet people will judge your message based on your style. Your style is trivial compared to your message, but the success of your presentation may rise or fall on how you, for example, use your hands. Ridiculous, isn’t it?

In this chapter we will look in depth at how you can use all your non-verbal communication tools to enhance the value of your message. When style is done well, it is virtually invisible to your audience.

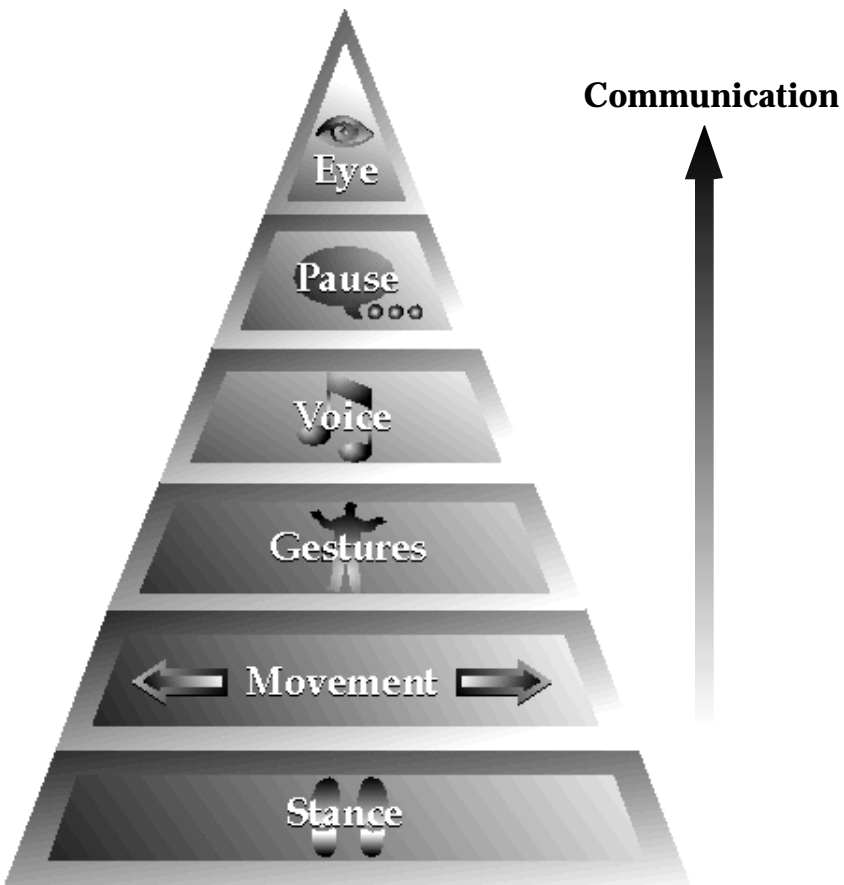
The Essentials of Style

You know a lot about the content of your speech. You may even have advanced degrees in your subject. Your nervous mannerisms, though, will drastically reduce your credibility with the audience. The nervousness most likely stems from lack of presentation experience. While you work everyday with your content, chances are you do not stand up and speak about it to groups all that often; hence, the nervousness.

It always makes me sad to see a bright person with an important message go down in flames due to something as “unimportant” as style. It doesn’t have to happen. Style is easy to master. This is not rocket science. A few simple things practiced and done well can give you the style power to match the excellence of your message. That’s what this chapter is about.

On the following page you will see our “style hierarchy.” It summarizes the behaviors speakers must master to be effective in their delivery. For most beginning speakers, all these behaviors operate on “automatic pilot”—that is, beyond conscious control. These speakers have no idea what they’re doing with their feet, hands or eye contact. They just do “what comes naturally.” In most cases, this is not effective.

You may say, “Well so what? What difference does it make?” If the presenter is pacing back and forth, looking at the floor and fidgeting nervously, the audience begins to doubt the *value of the content*. This is not fair, but it *is* reality. The words and numbers do *not* speak for themselves. The presenter must bring them to life with style.



Stance—Nervous energy is often expressed through dancing feet. This is not only distracting to the audience, but it makes the speaker appear ungrounded in what he or she is saying. If you have this problem, imagine your shoes are nailed to the floor. Do not go up on one toe or shift nervously from foot to foot. A balanced stance will make you look stronger in your content.

An effective stance is to have your feet six to eight inches apart, facing forward and your knees slightly bent. Avoid feet held tightly together or too far apart, in what I call the “Mr. Macho” stance.

Movement—While you should keep your feet firmly planted, it also helps to strategically use the space available to you. On the other hand, avoid nervous pacing. It detracts from your message.

Controlled, purposeful movement will actually help the audience follow your content. A good time to move physically is when your content moves to the next point. For example, you might open your presentation in the center of the stage, then move three or four steps to the right for your first key point, cross over to the other side of the stage for your second point and return to the center for your close.

Gestures—Gesturing strongly is perhaps the quickest and easiest way to build your confidence as a speaker. Beginning speakers are far too timid with gestures, fearing they will be too expressive or theatrical if they over-do it. Most have nothing to worry about. (See *The Bozo Zone*, page 83).

Gestures are a great way to add a visual component to what your words are saying. The audience now gets your message through two channels simultaneously—the auditory and the visual.

Everyone seems to use gestures effectively when speaking comfortably with friends. It’s when we stand up to speak and become tense that we get stiff and awkward looking. Let the words dictate your gestures. The addition of gestures to your words will help the audience follow your meaning more clearly.

Here are some tips:

- ▶ *Don’t cover up the front of your body.* Get out from behind the lectern or overhead projector. Keep your arms at your sides or use them for gesturing. Keeping the front of your body open makes you more vulnerable, less hidden.

This actually increases the audience's trust in what you are saying.

- ▶ *Gesture up and out.* Gesture above the belt and move your arms well away from your body. There are three possible zones for gestures:

Zone I—Arms held in close to the body in the midline; looks timid and apologetic.

Zone II— Gestures at shoulder level well away from the body; looks confident, committed and professional.

Zone III—Arms fully extended, elbows straight; looks over-blown and phony.

Zone II gestures are appropriate in most speaking situations. Zone I is generally too passive. Zone III looks too aggressive and insincere.

Using stronger gestures can at first feel artificial and unnatural; yet keep in mind that your audience has been conditioned for years by television. We see confident speakers all the time—and they use bold gestures. Your audience will find such gestures reassuring and they will see you as more believable. Furthermore, these assertive gestures will make you *feel* more confident. It becomes a positive upward spiral.

- ▶ *Use one-arm gestures.* One-arm (unilateral) gestures are seen by the audience as more confident looking. Two arm (bilateral) gestures make the speaker look more tentative.
- ▶ *Pockets.* “Never put your hands in your pockets!” said my high school speech teacher. “It makes you look too casual,” he argued. Nonsense! Today you will notice that most of the best speakers you see use their pockets. One hand in a pocket makes a speaker look casual, professional and confident. There are cautions, though.
 - Keep your pockets empty so you don't jingle change or keys.
 - Use just one pocket at a time.
 - Don't over-use your pockets—it can look like a nervous habit.

The dreaded casualness my teacher warned us of, today makes a speaker look and feel confident.

Voice—A speaker’s voice is critical to his or her success. There are several things you can do to keep your voice “in tune.”

- ▶ *No dairy products.* Many people have allergic reactions to dairy products. This can cause the voice to sound raspy and coarse due to the build up of phlegm. A day before a major presentation, eliminate dairy from your diet: milk, cream, butter, ice cream, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, etc.
- ▶ *Vocal warm ups.* The vocal cords are made up of bands of striated muscle, just like your thighs and biceps. When you go jogging you stretch out your leg muscles. By the same token, your voice will sound better for that early morning presentation if you warm it up. On the way to your talk, sing along to your favorite music in the car. Also do vocal warm-ups by singing notes from as high up in your vocal range as you can go, to as low as you can go.
- ▶ *Stay lubricated.* If you do speaking for any length of time, i.e., half-day or full-day seminars, we recommend Ricola® mints. These are herbal, non-medicated throat lozenges that will keep your throat moist and your voice sounding smooth.

Pause—The pause is the “invisible” skill. All the other style hierarchy skills are things that you *do*. The pause is what you *don’t do*—that is, you stop speaking. It is the hardest of the skills to master, yet it is one of the most potent. A speaker who can pause—can captivate any audience.

When the speaker pauses, the audience pays closer attention. The speaker must then be ready for that attention and not embarrassed by it, as many novice speakers are. By pausing, you will focus the audience’s attention. You will also increase their retention of your content.

Pause as you begin your presentation and also at the end. Pause before and after critical points to imprint them in the minds of your listeners. To pause easily you will need to be very confident in your material and well rehearsed. A pause of three to four seconds is about right for effective business talks. Use a tape recorder and a watch to try the pause with familiar material. You may be surprised how hard it is to do. You may also be surprised at how effective it is.

Eye Interaction—“Looking directly at the people in my audience when I’m speaking just sucks the thoughts right out of my head,” said one workshop participant. At first, direct eye contact can be disarming for the presenter; but it may also be *the most effective style technique* a speaker can master.

Sustained eye interaction with individuals in the audience increases your credibility. It also reduces your nervousness. “What? How can that be?” you are saying. As one of our workshop participants remembered, “In high school public speaking class they told me to look at a spot on the back wall and *not* to look at people—that would make me too nervous.” Most of us can talk one-on-one easily, but put 30 or 300 people in the room and we get scared. So the trick is to pick out individuals in your audience, randomly around the room, and have short one-on-one conversations.

Speakers with impact tend to focus on *individuals* in the audience as they deliver key points. They stay with one person for a complete thought. Then their eye contact may shift naturally and smoothly as they transition to their next main idea.

To learn how to stay focused on one person at a time as you deliver these critical points, rehearse your talk with a group of associates. As you learn to focus on people longer, ask for feedback. Have people raise their hands as they hear a key point delivered by you without looking away. This will help train you to do it consistently. They will report feeling more connected to you and to your message. Eye interaction will then become one of your most powerful skills as a speaker.

Summary

As you master the skills of style, you will watch your confidence soar. More importantly, your audiences will pay closer attention and will retain more of what you say.

Oh, one more thing. Remember to smile—when appropriate. Your topic may be serious, but there’s no reason why you can’t look pleasant as you present it.

In the rest of this chapter you will find pieces on body language, controlling nervousness, preparation, characterization, dress and voice.

N.B. You will occasionally see terrific speakers who seem to have no style at all, or who ignore everything we've just mentioned. If they can electrify an audience without style, it's usually because they have a strong personal presence, a prior reputation (perhaps from a book) or content so powerful it carries the day—see the description of the Bob Galvin speech, page 20. But for us mere mortals, effective style is critical.

A Day With Chuck Mangione

Eight-year-old Victor Reyes-Umana stood next to jazz great Chuck Mangione “playing” Chuck’s flugelhorn. The rhythm section blasted support behind him. Victor had never played a musical instrument before, but he loved jazz. He actually made noises come out of the horn. Chuck adjusted the mic so we could all hear better. Chuck shouted words of encouragement to Victor. I was filled up with emotion. A truly magical moment was happening. A kid was learning not to be afraid. Chuck Mangione thinks music is about having fun, not about perfection. What a concept!

Chuck Mangione and his band were presenting a special children’s program at the College of San Mateo to support local jazz station KCSM.

As the band launched into “This Old Man,” Chuck invited kids to come up on stage. The audience began singing loudly:

*“This old man, he played one,
He played knick knack on my thumb,
With a knick knack, paddy whack,
Give the dog a bone,
This old man came rolling home.”*

Pretty soon I noticed the reed man helping a girl blow into his flute. She could make a few notes come out. The rhythm section continued pounding out the support. The girl’s parents sat at the front of the stage coming unglued with excitement.

A three-year-old boy banged away on the conga drums while looking up in awe at the professional percussion man with the taped fingers.

Soon there were children all over the stage. Three or four “played” on the electric piano. A ten-year-old boy stood at one of the mics trying to make noise with his violin. Throughout the audience, children and adults shook noisemakers that had been passed out. The rhythm section held it all together. By now, I was

on my feet shrieking like a banshee. A key line from “The Land of Make Believe” came to mind,

*“In your land there was a king
Who once said ‘I have a dream,’
Now, there’s a man who knew
The secret.”*

As I watched Chuck Mangione with all those children, it was clear to me that *he* is a man who knows the secret.

If, when you get up to speak, you hear a critical voice echoing down through the years of your personal history something like, “Children should be seen and not heard,” or “Speak when you’re spoken to,” say, “Thanks for sharing.” Keep in mind as you stand before that group, you have your own personal **PowerSpeaking**® rhythm section playing behind you. As another great musician, Dena Pappas, said, “It’s not about perfection. Let’er rip!”

Go out and buy a couple of Chuck Mangione’s CDs. It’ll make you feel good.

How to Beat the Snooze Factor

Ever been so bored or distracted by a speaker that you would give *anything* to stretch out for a little siesta? Or have you found yourself glancing at your watch every thirty seconds and wondering why the time is passing so slowly?

Have you noticed that often, these snooze-masters are high-level executives or technical gurus who should have long since developed better presentation skills? We have all suffered through such presentations and perhaps, just perhaps, we have been that kind of presenter at one time ourselves.

Boring presentations in business are costly in at least three ways:

- ▶ They hurt the presenter's career.
- ▶ The audience's time is wasted.
- ▶ The audience fails to get the message.

Two Communication Errors

Speakers can miss the mark for two reasons. First, boring speakers do not communicate *enthusiasm*. They lack energy, excitement and power. In an attempt to establish credibility, they become too academic and factual. Their talks are too detail-oriented to hold people's attention. While they may feel enthusiastic inside, what the audience experiences is the monotone voice, the lack of gestures and no eye contact.

Second, a speaker can have plenty of energy, yet demonstrate distracting visual or *vocal mannerisms* so severe that the audience simply is unable to pay attention to the content.

I recently heard a world-renowned authority on human brain function. I had been looking forward to the presentation with great anticipation. As he got rolling, though, he began to pace and speak in a rhythmic monotone. I glanced around the audience and saw many people with glazed eyes. His repetitive, distracting mannerisms actually put people into a light hypnotic trance.

Vocal mannerisms such as odd rhythm, a monotone voice, use of phrases and non-words like “you know,” “uh,” and long-winded sentences, create communication blocks for the audience.

Repetitive, unconscious, nervous gestures not only distract an audience’s attention, they communicate lack of confidence and nervousness.

Making Changes

Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, once said that dreams are “the royal road to the unconscious.” Similarly, in presentation skills training, video is the “royal road to the unconscious.” We become aware of our unconscious habit patterns by seeing ourselves doing them. This is the first step to change.

It is hard to be aware of our “style” and mannerisms while we speak. Video or audiotape feedback helps us to become aware of how we look and sound to our audience, which can help us eliminate annoying habits and boring delivery.

Videotape is becoming more readily available in many organizations and in presentation skills training. In our *PowerSpeaking*® programs, people see their tapes, analyze their style and make immediate changes.

Even more powerful than video, though, is “stop-action coaching.” This involves stopping a speaker as he or she is doing something that needs to be corrected (or reinforced). In this way, the speaker can incorporate changes during the presentation and start learning immediately the new, more effective style of delivery. To do this, get together a small audience, i.e., friends, colleagues or family, and ask them to make suggestions *as you deliver your talk*. While this will be disorienting at first, the long-term payoff in improving your style will be worth it. People in your future audiences will not be glancing at their watches every 30 seconds.

Of Liars and Speakers

Tentatively, Susan approached the lectern. Then she stumbled through a talk that was well-researched, but unrehearsed. She made few gestures. The ones she did make were held close to her body. Her voice sounded higher than usual, she spoke too fast and she fiddled with her hair and jewelry. Just signs of nervousness. Nothing to worry about, right? Wrong.

Susan undercut her credibility with her nervous mannerisms. In fact, her behavior at the lectern caused some people in the audience to wonder if she was lying. According to research from the field of kinesthesiology—the study of human movement—Susan’s delivery style reflected what people do when they are *consciously lying* to deceive the listener.

When people lie they:

- ▶ keep gestures close to the body and gesture infrequently;
- ▶ raise their vocal pitch and speak fast;
- ▶ fidget with their clothes, jewelry, hair, etc.

These are also behaviors we all exhibit when we feel nervous speaking before a group. Does the audience chalk it up to nervousness or do they unconsciously doubt what the speaker says? *Confident delivery is correlated with content believability.* To make sure you create no doubt in your audience’s minds about your excellent content and message, work on delivery by:

- ▶ using strong, bold, Zone II gestures;
- ▶ using your natural pitch and pausing;
- ▶ not fidgeting.

Absolutely essential: REHEARSE! If you are saying it out loud to the audience for the first time, they will surely pick up your nervousness. Don’t give them reason to doubt. For more information on this research, read *Telling Lies* by Paul Ekman.

The Perils of Adrenalin

Contributed by Mary McGlynn

“I get scared to death.”

“Total panic. It’s not for the faint-hearted.”

*“I get butterflies, sweat buckets and shake in my boots.
Other than that, it’s fine.”*

Those were some responses I got when I asked colleagues, “How do you feel when you give a speech?”

Unfortunately, the nervousness we experience at the thought of public speaking creates a response similar to being attacked: an adrenalin rush (which usually makes you feel *more nervous*). For the speaker, the key is not to *eliminate* this physiological response, but to learn how to control it and make it work for you.

Let’s look at some common physical reactions to speech-making and some suggestions for turning terror into manageable excitement.

Cotton Mouth—When you combine fear with a lot of talking and nervous smiling, the end result is a dry mouth. Have a pitcher or glass of room temperature water at the lectern. Use lozenges to keep your mouth moist. (Ricola® Natural Herb Cough Drops, for example.) To produce saliva, bite the side of your tongue or massage the roof of your mouth. Stay away from coffee and tea.

Sweating—Have you seen *Broadcast News*? As the neophyte broadcaster does the weekend edition for the first time, sweat pours down his face in a veritable river making his credibility as soggy as his shirt.

If sweating is a problem for you, a flimsy Kleenex will not do the trick. Use a large, cloth handkerchief. For women, dress shields (from high school prom days) are still available at the local dime store.

Freezing—Think about being “scared stiff.” Your muscles are rigid, your knuckles are white and your face is set in stone. You are the picture of terror. As difficult as it is to do, you can only combat the “frozen” look by forcing yourself to move. Unlock your grasp of the lectern and try a few gestures. Move away from the lectern as you make a key point. Strive for a heightened conversational style and connection with your audience through eye interaction and a feeling of passion for your message.

Note: Giving a superior speech also requires good physical balance. For women, high-heels or cramped feet will knock you off-kilter (physically *and* mentally), so wear comfortable, low-heeled shoes. (See “High-Heel Horror,” pg. 81)

High Pitch— Generally, the faster you speak, the higher your pitch. Try speaking more slowly. Pause between sentences and key points. Tape record your speeches and listen to yourself.

Lower your pitch by sitting in a chair and placing a book on the floor in front of you. Lean over limply. Read aloud to the floor and notice the resonance in your chest. Sit up and consciously recreate that relaxed lower tone. Breathing and relaxation exercises are key to lowering your pitch.

Hoarseness—Strained, loud talking and nervous tension can create hoarseness. The throat tightens and consequently, strains the vocal cords. Be aware of your body. Relax your throat. Depend on your diaphragm for volume. *Project* your voice rather than shout. If hoarseness persists, see an ear, nose and throat specialist to rule out a medical cause; then see a speech therapist for exercises to develop proper use of your voice.

Nausea—Nausea may develop as a result of adrenalin and other attack response chemicals pumping wildly through your body. If you do feel sick, slow, deep exhalation breathing will help.

Brain Death—This is a nightmare when it happens. Often we go blank because we memorize a talk and try to recall it word-for-word. To minimize the chances of brain death, use notes. Visualize stories so that words flow easily. When you’re in front of the room, pause, take a drink of water and allow your visual memory to bring back the image you had in mind through rehearsal.

Other Tips For Relaxation

In their book *Speaking Up*, Janet Stone and Jane Bachner suggest that the best way to reduce speech terror is through preparation (75%). Other ways include breathing exercises (15%), physical and mental preparation (10%).

Rehearsal—*Advance preparation is the key to developing a sense of confidence. When you are well rehearsed, you know what to expect. You can connect with your audience since the content is secure in your mind. Know and choreograph the opening of your speech so that you can come on strong.*

Breathing—Breathing exercises signal your body to relax. Just as you practice delivering the content of your talk, also practice relaxation breathing. Get comfortable. Focus on an object. Take a few deep breaths. Feel your body respond. Know that you can draw on that same relaxed feeling during a talk.

Physical and Mental Exercises—Try a few neck rolls. Alternate facial tensing with big, wide-mouth stretches. Also, tense and relax your whole body. Shake your legs, arms and fingers to get rid of that excess tension. Appreciate your preparation and knowledge of the topic. See in your mind the delivery of a successful speech—and then go do it.

Remember every speaker is affected by the perils of adrenalin but there are many options open to you. To turn nervous energy into focused excitement, take the time for rehearsal, relaxation breathing, and physical exercises. It's with that sense of control and preparedness you can turn the queasy stomach and frozen body into positive energy. That excitement can work for you.

“Do not fear mistakes. There are none.”

—Miles Davis
Musician

How to Stage a Dry Run

The Apollo moon shots were off course 90% of the time—and yet they always reached their destination (except Apollo 13). It was continuous feedback, followed by corrective action by the crew that ensured the success of the missions. In speaking, too, we need feedback. Without it, it's almost impossible to know if our speech is “on course.”

Some time ago I was the keynote speaker at the American Society of Military Comptrollers' annual convention in Denver. There were over 2,500 people from all around the world in attendance. I was determined to make this an excellent talk. While developing the speech, I decided to invite feedback from people who know about speaking. The idea of getting direct critiques from colleagues in a “dress rehearsal” presentation was terrifying. But the alternative of delivering an ordinary talk to such an audience was unacceptable.

That critique session was one of the most powerful learning experiences I've had as a professional speaker. To gain this advantage for your next major presentation, consider doing a dress rehearsal with feedback. Some tips:

The Right People—Invite people who have experience speaking and/or who know about your topic area. They should be people who care about your success and who work well in a group. Exclude the big egos. A good sized group is eight to ten.

Timing—Plan your rehearsal two to three weeks before your big talk. This will give you time to make content, visual aid and delivery changes as necessary.

Preparation and Rehearsal—Develop the content and visual aids well before the dress rehearsal. Even though you anticipate changes later, give your talk *out loud* five or six times (with visuals) before the dress rehearsal. Your rehearsal audience should see your talk as a finished product. Include a copy of your speech outline for them to follow along.

Setting—Book a conference or hotel room for your dress rehearsal. Duplicate as closely as possible the setting for your

big talk. Block out at least twice the allotted time of your talk for the feedback.

Although you won't have to pay people for their participation, plan to take everyone to lunch or dinner after the critique session. Remember to have coffee service.

Frequent Feedback—Build in at least three places for critique during the dress rehearsal session. Logical times might be after the main introduction, during the body of the talk and at the end. Allow at least ten minutes for each discussion period.

What's the Payoff for Them?—People who attend your rehearsal session will find it a very stimulating experience in improving their *own* speaking. They will be glad they gave you their time. As a final gesture of thanks, send them an audio or videotape copy of your talk. They will hear and see how you incorporated their suggestions.

The people who attended my dress rehearsal made invaluable suggestions. Most comments involved content rather than delivery. Someone even spotted a typo on one of my slides. My talk in Denver was far better than it would have been because seven people unselfishly gave of their time on a Saturday morning to give me constructive feedback.

So, whether you are preparing a major address or launching a moon shot, be sure to include feedback into the process. You will greatly improve your odds of reaching your destination.

What Speakers Can Learn from Actors

Do you want to be a more dynamic, persuasive speaker, trainer or business presenter? If so, watch show-business professionals. In fact, you may even want to take acting lessons.

“Hold on,” you say. “I am a business person. I give business (or technical) talks to boards of directors, internal staff people or customers. Acting isn’t for me! Leave that entertainment stuff to Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep. I have *serious* talks to deliver.”

Absolutely. Your message is important. That is why it has to be delivered well. Writing in *Success Magazine*, Therese McNally (an actress and former stockbroker) said, “Every time a business person makes a presentation or gives a speech, he or she is indeed performing.”

By intently focusing on content (facts, statistics, logic), we often lose sight of the purpose of our talk— to communicate. Television, theater and film professionals communicate for a living. They know how to hold an audience’s attention. By looking to them for pointers, we can become better at getting our messages across.

Audience Contact

I recently saw a stage show starring Joel Grey. As he joked, sang and danced around the stage, he had the audience in the palm of his hand. He did it by interacting with us and by acknowledging audience responses.

Business presenters can learn from Joel. For starters, get out from behind the lectern or the overhead projector. Move around physically—even move out into the audience. Along the same line, extended eye interaction with people around the room will greatly increase your believability and rapport. Eye interaction projects confidence. It also reduces nervousness because you get the sense of talking one-on-one to individuals rather than to a sea of faces.

Finally, make your audience feel a “part of the show” by encouraging responses or dialogue about your presentation.

Speaking with the Body

When we get up to speak, we usually do “what comes naturally,” that is, unconsciously. It may not be effective. For example, walking back and forth on stage without purpose becomes nervous pacing. Constant, unconscious arm and hand movements can also be distracting.

Gestures that help paint verbal pictures in the listener’s mind can be very effective. They should be thought through in advance, if not actually rehearsed. Voice range, pacing and intensity are other areas that need to be considered. Practicing these platform skills, especially with video feedback, will help the speaker to be more dynamic.

Actors work a lot with movement, gestures and voice. They become conscious of responses the rest of us are generally unconscious of. Presenters who are aware of how they use their bodies and voices are more powerful communicators.

Characterization

Outstanding presenters tell stories that enrich their presentation content. Stories give audiences emotional handles that help them grasp your meaning. Whether you are telling stories about yourself or about other people, try to become your characters. In your mind (and body), be back in the situation you are describing. The clearer you can see and feel it, the better the audience will get your message.

Rehearsal

Business presenters rarely rehearse. We spend hours writing and researching our talk, but never take time to actually rehearse it *out loud*. Rehearse with an audio or video recorder, or by practicing in front of family members or the bathroom mirror. This will greatly increase your confidence and impact.

“The art of acting consists of keeping people from coughing.”

—Sir Ralph Richardson

Stage Fright? Change Your Face!

“Action seems to follow feeling, but really action and feeling go together; and by regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not.”

—William James
Psychologist

John is gripping the lectern so tightly his knuckles are turning white. His voice is breathy and weak. His face is frozen with the look of terror: eyes wide, eyebrows up in the middle, lips thin and tense. Could it be that John is *increasing* his own fear through his face and body? Traditional wisdom and modern science say yes.

Around 1900 the great American psychologist William James suggested that bodily reactions create emotional reality, i.e., my body is stiff, therefore I'm afraid. Recent studies support this view. In the field of psychophysiology, researchers are finding that by changing our facial expressions, we can change our inner physiology and hence, our emotions. By altering facial muscles, people can recreate the physiological reactions of fear, anger, disgust, sadness, happiness and surprise. Researchers correlated changes in certain autonomic nervous system measures like: heart rate, skin conductivity, finger temperature, and respiration rate with facial expressions. Writing in the journal, *Psychophysiology*, psychologist Paul Ekman summarized the findings of a recent study: “Results indicated that voluntary facial activity produced significant levels of subjective experience of the associated emotion.”

What does all of this mean to John as he shakes and quakes at the lectern? His facial expression of fear is probably reinforcing the inner bodily sensation of fear. To begin feeling more relaxed, John needs to change his face. By smiling, using his eyebrows and relaxing his mouth, John can create the inner feelings of relaxed confidence. And so can all speakers. To start feeling relaxed, all we have to do is start *looking* relaxed.

The Sound of Your Voice

Contributed by Carol Fleming, Ph.D.

The Secrets We Tell!

With the sound of your voice, you are sending out a constant stream of signals about what is going on inside— your feelings, thoughts and attitudes, as well as indications of personality, social status, education and intelligence. People are expert receivers and analyzers of these signals. Are you sending the right message?

Are you inadvertently telling your listener that you are not sure of yourself or that you don't have the educational background to handle the job all because of the way you use your voice or pronounce your words? Unfortunately, people usually will not point this out to you because it is rude and difficult to do. Rather, they just won't give you the business. So how, then, can you learn how you really sound to others? It is not as hard as you might think, but it does take courage.

A Difficult Challenge

The average person has a terrible aversion to the sound of his or her own voice. There are several reasons for this. When we speak, all we know is our own internal meaning. (We can only guess about what the impact is on our listeners.) All of our mental circuitry is involved in the speaking process and we simply don't have the ability to observe ourselves objectively at the same time.

What You Can Do

Evaluating other people's voices, as well as your own, is the first step to understanding what unconscious voice patterns are. Here are some ways you can get the insight you need.

Tape Recorder—Using a quality tape recorder, record people talking in normal conversation. As you listen, ignore the content of what they say, but focus on how they say it. Listen for pitch

levels, speed, interruptions, quantity of speech, loudness, etc. You will become increasingly aware of how these features influence your opinion of others.

Modeling—Identify the speech patterns and voice qualities that you admire. It helps to have a model, for example, a radio or television broadcaster. First, *listen* to (but don't watch) the speaker. Then, turn down the volume and just *watch* the speaker. Notice the movement of the lips and how many of the speaker's teeth are visible. (People who mumble don't move their jaws or lips much and don't show their teeth when they speak.)

Record and Listen—Record yourself as you talk informally on the phone to a friend. Then, listen for your unconscious speech patterns on the tape. Awareness of these patterns is an essential part of the change process.

When we hear ourselves on tape, we may feel totally alien to the voice. You may think to yourself, "It doesn't feel like my internal 'me' at all." Remember those "expert analyzer" abilities we all have? Suddenly you are using them to focus on yourself. The tape recorder can make you become very self-conscious, but be careful not to be hypercritical.

Remember, we are constantly being evaluated by others by how we speak and use our voices. Like any learned behavior, voice quality can be changed. Make yours the best it can be.

"The devil hath not in all his quiver's choice, an arrow for the heart like a sweet voice."

—Lord Byron

Practice Makes ~~Perfect~~ Better

Contributed by Talya Bauer, Ph.D.

Have you ever wondered why some people can give a brilliant speech in front of a large audience while others “bomb”? The answer is simple— practice! Practice plays a vital role in whether the presence of an audience will lead to a spectacular presentation or a poor one.

In the early 1900s, E. Meumann, an exercise researcher, discovered the amazing effect of audience presence on performance. In front of others, his subjects lifted more weight than they ever could alone! At first researchers thought that doing tasks in front of an audience lead directly to enhanced performance. But over the years, the research results were conflicting. Sometimes the presence of an audience helped to enhance performance and sometimes performance was hampered.

Light was shed on this paradox in the 1960s when Robert B. Zajonc presented his theory that helped to explain these conflicting results. His explanation involved “dominant responses.” When a set of behaviors are simple or well-learned, they become dominant responses. When complex tasks are attempted under stressful conditions, like giving a presentation in front of an audience, people are likely to revert to their dominant responses.

What does this mean for you if you have a talk to give in two weeks? It means that practice is vital to your success. The mere presence of one other person raises anxiety or arousal levels by touching off basic alertness responses. In other words— we get nervous. When nervousness sets in, our reactions become more automatic (dominant response) and we are in danger of reverting back to bad habits like pacing, avoiding eye contact or nervous fidgeting.

Even though we may know better, without practice, the most effective responses may allude us. While this can sound frightening, it doesn’t have to be. Now that you know about rehearsal, you can use the audience to your benefit. Studies

show that overlearning or overpracticing is essential in maintaining desired performance during periods of emergency and stress. The more you've rehearsed your presentation skills and material, the more your dominant response will be to give a spectacular talk!

"It is impossible to get better and look good at the same time."

—Julia Cameron
The Artist's Way

Dress and Appearance

Just as inappropriate gestures can detract from a speaker's substance, the dress and appearance of a speaker can do the same. On the day of your big presentation dress appropriately for the audience and occasion. Dress comfortably so that you can move freely across the stage. Wear darker, solid colors for greater authority and be sure your clothes are well-tailored. Here are some more specific tips:

Tips for Women

- ▶ Wear a jacket for credibility.
- ▶ Wear business appropriate neckline and hem.
- ▶ Gain stability by wearing lower heeled shoes with closed back and toe or flats.
- ▶ Wear natural or subtle colored hose.
- ▶ Keep hair soft, controlled and away from face.
- ▶ Avoid distracting, noisy jewelry.
- ▶ Wear a tasteful amount of makeup.

Tips for Men

- ▶ Take everything out of pockets!
- ▶ Wear ties to belt-buckle length.
- ▶ Generally use a four-in-hand (small) tie knot.
- ▶ Pay attention to the length of sleeves and cuffs.
- ▶ Have a slight break in the length of slacks or suit pants.

By paying attention to your dress and appearance, you will eliminate the risk of distractions that may reduce the impact of your message. Be aware of this critical aspect of your style and you will increase the overall impact of your presentation.

High-Heel Horror

Contributed by Mary McGlynn

“Strong, stable presentation. Direct and to the point. I applaud you.” Little did the evaluator know that he had also witnessed a revolutionary act. Before the talk, I had dumped my high-heels. Sensible, flat shoes forever!

For too long, women have set themselves up for speaking failure by dressing poorly. Wobbly, nervous legs perched on high-heels inevitably take our minds off the solid content of any presentation.

Every day, women walk into presentations with a disadvantage. When the normal amount of nervousness is coupled with two- or three-inch heels, we have a disaster waiting to happen. It does not have to be that way.

Wearing high-heeled shoes is often expected in business settings. We hear comments like, “It’s businesslike,” or “Heels look appropriate with my business suits,” or “They make me feel taller.” According to Susan Brownmiller in her 1984 book, *Femininity*, the issue of femininity is also paramount to understanding our drive for the sleek heel. She says that high-heels:

- ▶ make the foot look smaller;
- ▶ are usually light and flimsy in construction;
- ▶ limit freedom of movement as the physical energy is redirected to maintaining balance;
- ▶ reverse the functional reason why we originally chose to wear shoes;
- ▶ create a sex difference that impedes our ability to walk;
- ▶ are a hindrance that no man in his right mind would tolerate.

Times have changed. Today we have a choice. No longer are we stuck with two choices: high-heels or ugly, “practical” shoes. Flats are everywhere. They are sleek and professional. They are appropriate for business and casual attire.

For your next presentation, consider the benefits of flat shoes:

- ▶ They offer stability so that you can concentrate on your message.
- ▶ Even though the adrenalin may be pumping, you can count on your feet as a strong, anchored base.
- ▶ Movement to make a point or to get closer to your audience is done with greater ease and more fluid, graceful motion.
- ▶ Just as rehearsal gives you greater control of the content, the decision to wear flats will give you greater control of your body.

As one buyer for a larger shoe store put it, “The majority of women have gotten some sense. Comfort is critical. There are now decent-looking flats. Now a woman can have style and comfort.” Professional women are turning their backs on the very high-heel. Suggestions for buying shoes include: buy leather, buy quality, buy comfort, work with a salesperson that knows how to fit your foot and knows the product line.

For your next presentation try wearing lower-heeled shoes. Your comfort and balance are too important to be taken lightly.

The Bozo Zone

Contributed by Robert Fish, Ph.D.

Poor Phil. In his position as manager, he has to both sit in on a lot of presentations and give a lot of presentations. He's bored by the former and frightened by the latter. When he listens to others' talks, he's judgmental and critical, "Why don't these zombies get a clue and come to life?" Yet, when it's his turn, he becomes the same talking-head.

What's going on? Why is it Phil can be so clear on what he likes and doesn't like in a presentation, yet can't even come close to getting it right himself? Is it that good speakers are born good and Phil and we ordinary mortals are doomed to perpetually put our audiences to sleep?

Genetics is not the answer to this mystery. The answer is in the interrelationship of two factors: the fear of the Bozo Zone, and our inability to accurately judge how we're coming across to an audience.

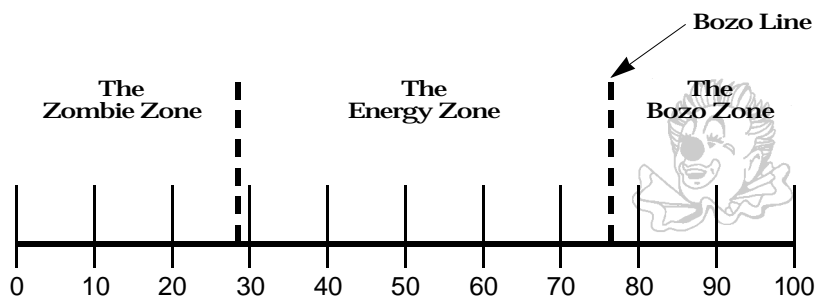


Figure 1 - Reality
(Very Scientific)

First, let's define the Bozo Zone. The continuum in Figure 1 is a measure of Phil's energy during a presentation. At the far left is zero. Phil is in a catatonic state. As we move up toward 10%, he talks, but his lips hardly move, his head slowly bobs up and down, his eyes are fixated on either the script or a spot on the far wall.

I call this the **Zombie Zone**. There is little life in the speaker, little energy coming across to the listeners. Phil is in a state of contraction, trying to become as small as possible.

As we move up the continuum, at about 30% or so, Phil uses gestures, looks directly at people in the audience, sounds relaxed and conversational, and seems to actually be enjoying speaking. The audience is involved, listening, enjoying the talk.

I call this the **Energy Zone**. It's the area we all aim for because we know that it's here that real communication can take place. Phil is no longer in a state of contraction, but now is in expansion, opening up.

What happens if we move up to 50%? Phil becomes more animated, moves about the stage area freely, is perceived as enthusiastic and involved. That's good.

But it's starting to get dangerous. Somewhere at about 70%, hard to say exactly where, a terrible, deadly line is crossed. Phil becomes so animated, the gestures, movements, and voice so exaggerated that he is no longer perceived as sincere. Phil becomes a phony. The line has been crossed from the **Energy Zone** into the dreaded **Bozo Zone**.

Why this zone is so feared is that from this area the speaker has lost credibility. When we think about it, credibility is all Phil really has, the audience's willingness to accept him as a credible source.

We all fear entering this zone with good reason. No one willingly and consciously goes there unless it's for comedic effect.

In fact, our fear of the **Bozo Zone** is so strong that if given only two choices, being in the **Zombie Zone** or the **Bozo Zone**, we would all choose the **Zombie Zone** without hesitation. Our explanation would be that we'd rather be considered a boring speaker but a credible source than a phony. Our instincts about this are right.

Okay, you may be thinking, but there are more choices. Why don't we choose to speak in the **Energy Zone**?

This brings in our second factor, our inability to accurately judge what zone we're in.

When Phil stands up in front of a group to speak, a strange and marvelous thing takes place: he becomes afraid. Adrenalin is pumped into the blood stream. Heart rate and blood pressure rise; breathing becomes shallow and rapid.

The response creates what many have called “an altered state of consciousness,” or in extreme cases, “an out-of-body experience.”

How objective can Phil be at this time about what’s going on? Not much. But watch. We’ll suggest that Phil gesture while speaking. In this altered state, any gestures that are more than the twitching of the fingers **feels like** the Bozo Zone. And since Phil instinctively backs away from that zone, he stops gesturing, and there he is, frozen in the Zombie Zone.

For Phil, the Energy Zone exists as only a thin, thin sliver between the Zombie and Bozo Zones (see Figure 2). As soon as he begins to become expressive, it feels as though he’s rubbing his shoulder up against the border of the Bozo Zone. “Back off, back off,” his mind screams. “Red alert!”

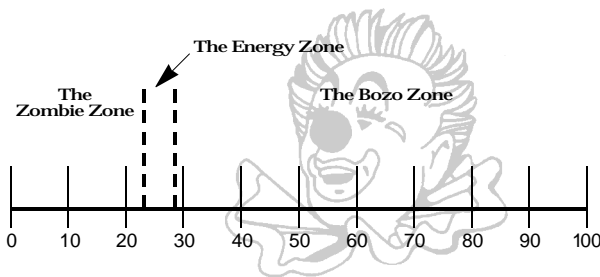


Figure 2 - Phil's Perception

The truth is, the Energy Zone is broad and expansive. It’s there, but Phil can’t feel its presence as long as he’s in that altered state of consciousness.

The easiest way out of this dilemma is for Phil to use gestures while he is videotaped. Then play the videotape back. Phil is initially dumfounded. He’s expecting to see a fool, a clown, wildly gesturing and losing all credibility. Instead he sees a speaker using gestures, nothing more.

Watch Phil now. He’s still nervous, but he’s willing to override his inner voice that says he’s going too far. His gestures feel uncomfortable but look natural and enthusiastic.

And his audiences like the change, too. Phil’s no longer speaking in the Zombie Zone. He’s gone to pure Energy.

III. The Staging of Speaking

“Elephants don’t bite; it’s the gnats and mosquitoes that get you.”

—Joel Weldon
Professional Speaker

The content and the delivery can be world class but if the staging is ignored, the presentation can bomb. Staging is often overlooked, yet it is critical. This chapter covers the two aspects of good staging: the environment and the people.

Environmental concerns are things like: equipment, lighting, temperature, visual aids, and sound. People issues involve: disruptive behavior, question-and-answer sessions, audience participation, and panel discussions. All of these are covered in this chapter.

Working with Hotels: Advice from the Experts

Contributed by Mary McGlynn

When you are giving a talk and it's not on your turf, what can you do to ensure success? To find out, we went to two recognized experts. John Parke is the director of marketing at the San Francisco Airport Marriott and Carlos Gonzalez is the former banquet manager from the Garden Court Hotel in Palo Alto.

John and Carlos were in agreement. If you want everything to go smoothly, be sure to do three things:

Communicate your needs well in advance. This is no time to be secretive or last minute. Tell your meeting planner everything so nothing is left to chance. What are your AV requirements? How do you want the room configured? Will you need any last-minute technical support services? What about lighting?

Put everything in writing. When information is written, fewer interpretation problems crop up. John estimated that 95% of all problems develop because erroneous assumptions are made or oral instructions are forgotten or misinterpreted. Send your room diagram ahead, complete with dimensions. List all the required equipment. Explain your microphone needs.

Get agreement on what you, the meeting planner and the hotel staff are each responsible for. Leave nothing to chance.

Arrive early! Last-minute, late-arrival speakers create ulcers for themselves and for the hotel staff. By getting there early, you will have time for positive interactions with the hotel staff well in advance of your presentation.

When you are comfortable, the speech or seminar is more likely to go well. Check everything in the room. Use the microphone. Check the room arrangement. Know who to call in the event of a problem and get familiar with the person in charge. Once you feel comfortable with everything, go for a walk so you can mentally and physically prepare for a dynamic presentation.

What about the intense time about half an hour before the presentation? John suggested you keep calm—and talk to the right person. Problems are often created because of unexpected last-minute requirements. Don't tell the AV technician *and* the banquet staff *and* the waiters of a last-minute change. Talk to the convention service manager. He or she is the person to handle the problem.

A smile, a little humor and a “thank you” go a long way during those tense few minutes before the presentation, according to Carlos. The Golden Rule (treat others the way you would like to be treated) gets golden results. Carlos gives a personal example, “Last week when Mr. Gilbert came to do his seminar at the Garden Court, I came in on my time off because I knew a building across the street from the hotel was going to be torn down that day. I also knew the seminar room he had chosen was going to be very noisy. Within a matter of minutes we rearranged the location of the seminar, we adjusted the design of the room and we were ready before the first participant walked in. Mr. Gilbert really thanked me. I felt good about my job. I felt I made a difference.”

One last piece of advice comes from John. Be sure to tell the hotel *everything* so there are no surprises. An example he cited occurred when three different groups were running individual seminars in the same logistical area of the hotel. Suddenly a marching band appeared as part of an opening ceremony for one of the groups. Had the hotel staff known about the marching band, alternative arrangements could have been made for the two other seminars. “With clear communication, everyone wins: the speaker, the meeting planner, and the hotel.”

So the next time you are speaking away from the office, take the advice of experts: communicate effectively well in advance, get to know the hotel staff member who can solve your problems and put everything in writing. When you heed the advice of John and Carlos, success will be yours on any turf.

Equipment, Materials, Environment

Speaking and training programs often require miscellaneous audio-visual support items. The lack of these little things can torpedo your program. Don't let the "gnats and mosquitoes" get you. Use this list to check that you have taken care of everything ahead of time.

Equipment	Needed	Materials	Needed
Flip Chart / Pads	_____	Adapters	_____
Overhead Projector	_____	Chalk	_____
Screen	_____	Eraser	_____
35mm Slide Projector Bulb	_____	Extension Cords	_____
Projector Table	_____	Marking Pens	_____
VCR Playback Unit (Size:)	_____	Paper	_____
TV Monitor	_____	Pencils	_____
Jacks / Cables	_____	Pointer	_____
Microphone	_____	Scissors	_____
_____ hand held		Screwdriver	_____
_____ lavalier		Tape (masking & gaffers)	_____
_____ wireless		Tweezers (jammed slides)	_____
Lectern	_____	White Out	_____
Tape Recorder	_____	Batteries	_____
Chalkboard	_____	Videotapes	_____
Projection Unit	_____	Audiotapes	_____
LCD Panel	_____	Flip Frames**	_____
Computer	_____	Transparency Film	_____
Software	_____	Name Tags	_____
Clock	_____	Post It Flags	_____
Laser Pointer	_____		

Environment

Number of People _____

Seating Arrangement

Theater	Conference	Herringbone
Classroom	Horseshoe	Rounds

Special Notes about Arrangements

Locations

Heating	_____	Lighting	_____
Ventilation	_____	PA System	_____
Rest Rooms	_____	Telephones	_____

How To Do Introductions

Picture this: you're at a large convention to introduce one of your company's new products. You're not on the agenda to speak, but you have been asked to introduce the speaker. How are you going to do it in an effective, professional way? Our model will help.

A proper introduction will establish rapport with the audience, build audience enthusiasm for the speaker, establish the speaker's credibility and make the speaker feel welcome. There are two equally critical components of introductions: verbal and nonverbal.

The Verbal Component

Topic	Tell the audience what the topic will be.
Interest	Relate the topic to the audience's interests.
Speaker	Give the speaker's background and qualifications to speak on the topic.
Name	Say the name at the end of the introduction.

The Nonverbal Component

Position	Have the speaker standing in position and ready to come on.
Clap	After you say speaker's name, <i>you</i> start clapping. This cues the audience to start applauding.
Shake Hands	Welcome the speaker with a handshake and turn over control.
Leave	Exit the stage area.

The verbal component might sound like this:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Our next speaker is Bob Smith who is going to introduce our new product release. This is important to all of us because of its huge earning potential for our company. Bob is Marketing Director for Asia Pacific. Please help me welcome, Bob Smith.

Understanding how to give an effective introduction will set the stage at a formal convention, as well as at an informal meeting (simply tone down the nonverbal component).

Try this model at your next convention or meeting to warm up the audience and at the same time, raise your own credibility by portraying confidence and organization.

“If I went back to college again, I’d concentrate on two areas: learning to write, and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.”

—Gerald R. Ford

A Speaker's Nightmare: The Out-of-Control Audience

It was the first day of a week-long conference for a small, strife-ridden, high-tech company. The day's meetings had ended at 4:00 PM and people adjourned to the bar. Then there was a "social hour" from 6:00-7:00. Afterwards, four different kinds of wine were served with dinner. The audience was loud and boisterous. In fact, they were roaring drunk. It was 8:45 PM—after a long dinner. And I was the "motivational" speaker.

By the time I came on, the group was hurling insults at each other, at their competition— and at me. It was just short of a food fight. What did I do? Opened with my serious, thought-provoking Oliver Wendell Holmes quote, of course. One of the ring-leaders at the back of the room slid down in his chair, rolled his eyes skyward and let out a loud groan. It went downhill from there.

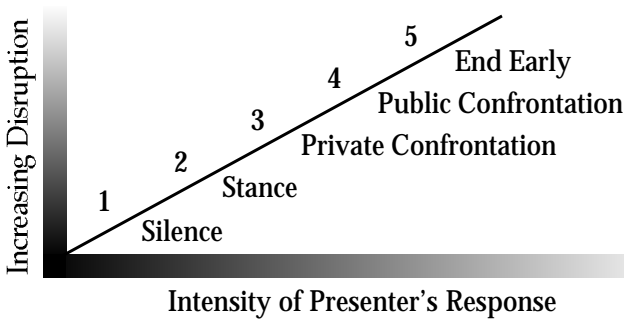
How does a presenter control disruptive audience behavior? What would you have done?

While most speakers *rarely* have to deal with such outrageous audience behavior, you can expect minor disruptions often.

Be aware that:

- ▶ you do not have to put up with rude audience behavior;
- ▶ your audience wants you to take charge of inappropriate and disruptive individuals;
- ▶ you can use a series of graduated responses to gain control.

The graph shows how the intensity of your responses should increase as the disruption gets worse.



Let's take the example of people talking during your presentation. Your increasingly stronger responses might look like this:

- 1) Stop talking. The unexpected silence from the front of the room will almost always bring attention back to you.
- 2) As you continue talking, walk over and stand physically near the talkers.
- 3) Confront the disruptive people privately during a break and enlist their cooperation.
- 4) Confront them publicly during the program and ask them to stop or to leave.
- 5) End the program early.

Remember, you always have the final option of ending early if things get too far out of control. Even pros use this strategy. When Art Linkletter recently faced a drunk and indifferent audience, he asked himself three questions:

- ▶ Am I being paid?
- ▶ Do I ever want to come back?
- ▶ Do I care about anybody here?

The answer was “No” to each question. At that point, he shortened his talk to “about 35 words” and ended early. According to Linkletter, “You do not owe an audience anything who won't give you the courtesy and respect of their attention.” Amen.

So, what would I do today if faced with the same drunk and disorderly audience? First, I would not attempt to give a serious, “motivational” presentation after dinner. After-dinner talks need to be short and they need to be funny. Failing that, I would follow Art Linkletter's advice and end early.

Remember the next time you face disruptions in an audience—be it a speech, a training program or a staff presentation— don't let them spoil the show. You have a wide range of strategies for dealing with out-of-control audiences. These tactics will keep you in control. Your audience will applaud you for it and you'll be one step closer to a more confident attitude toward speaking—even in the worst of conditions.

Dealing with Hostile Questions

Imagine this situation: you have just completed the most important presentation of your career to a large and responsive audience. You put in weeks of preparation. Your visuals were excellent, your delivery flawless and the audience (including important decision-makers) loved it.

After the applause dies down, you ask if there are any questions. Suddenly, a hand shoots up and you hear an angry voice say, “Well, that may be all well and good, but it hardly matters when your projects are consistently late and over budget!” A hush falls on the crowd and all eyes are on you. How do you handle it?

First, Deal with Feelings—To put the angry questioner at ease and to increase your credibility in the eyes of the audience, you must acknowledge the questioner’s feelings. To do this, paraphrase—that is, say in your own words— what you believe the person is feeling. Do this nonjudgmentally, reflecting the vocal tone and body language of the questioner. The purpose here is to let the person know that you understand his or her concern. Note: your response does not show agreement, only acknowledgment.

If you state the concern accurately, the questioner usually will nod his or her head in agreement with your restatement. This is your goal. The head-nodding often will be accompanied by a noticeable physical relaxation, because the person now knows you have heard his or her concern.

Next, Deal with Facts—Only after you have shown that you really understand his or her *emotional* position will the questioner be able to hear the logic of your response. Too often we jump right in with an intellectual answer to an emotional statement. All this does is further antagonize the questioner.

Then, Answer Whole Group—Once you have agreement from the questioner that you really understand both the content and the feeling of the question, turn physically and move toward the whole audience.

Make the question everyone's concern. Avoid setting up a one-on-one dialogue with the questioner. Don't make eye contact with him or her as you finish your answer. This way, you will not look to the questioner for approval. Asking for approval can trigger a second or third follow-up question. Your intent should be to move on quickly to other questions.

Here's What It Sounds Like

Using the original hostile question, the following is an example of the process we just described.

Questioner (*frowning*): "Well that may be all well and good, but it hardly matters when your projects are late and over budget!"

You (*with feeling*): "Sounds like you are irritated that I painted a rosy picture in my speech when our projects are late and over budget. Is that what you mean?"

Questioner (*nodding and relaxing a bit*): "Yes."

You (*turning away from the questioner and addressing the whole audience*): "This is an important issue. Early in the year when our strategic objectives were still in flux, yes, we did miss some deadlines and were 5% over targets. In the past nine months, though, we have been on schedule with high-quality products at, or under budget. Our future performance will be as consistent. Next question (looking away from the angry questioner to the other parts of the audience)?"

The audience silently applauds your masterful skill.

This process will help you handle difficult questions. Your response will show your respect for differing viewpoints and it will demonstrate your lack of defensiveness. The effect will be increased audience participation. Now you are ready to face any audience.

Q & A Strategies

Your speech is over. Now the hard part starts: the question-and-answer period. This is when you have the special challenge of looking confident and prepared, even though you don't know what's coming next. Here are some tips to make it go well.

Style—Remember to maintain your solid delivery style: stance, excellent eye interaction, bold gestures, etc. (see Chapter II).

Keep answers short—Q&A is a time for audience input and participation. Short answers allow more people to participate.

Anticipate questions—Advanced planning will help. Even prepare extra visuals you could use during Q&A if necessary—but not in the body of the talk.

Repeat the question—This helps if you have a large audience or when your session is being taped.

No questions—Be sure to wait; it may take a while. Also, you may “prime the pump” by asking your own question.

Too few questions—If you run out of questions before you run out of time, wrap up. Audiences rarely get mad when a speaker ends early.

Argumentative or tangential questions—Use deferral. Politely let the questioner know that you appreciate his or her point and can meet after the session to talk further. Then take the next question.

Don't know the answer—Admit it. Volunteer to research the answer and get back to them. You may also ask if anyone in the audience knows the answer.

Timing—Include Q&A time in the total time you have. Don't let your Q&A run into someone else's time.

Don't end with questions—After the last question, have a memorable close. This can be a well-delivered story, quotation or humorous bit that reiterates your core message and wraps things up on your own terms.

Keep these strategies in mind and your next Q&A session will add value to your overall presentation.

How to Moderate a Panel Discussion

- John:* “This has got to be the most boring panel I’ve ever heard.”
- Bill:* “That first speaker went on for 15 minutes. Why didn’t somebody stop him?”
- John:* “And you can’t hear them. They all seem to be afraid of the microphone.”
- Bill:* “Why doesn’t the moderator take charge? What a wimp.”
- John:* “I’d rather be out shooting a game of golf. That would be a better use of my time.”
- Bill:* “You got that right. Let’s go.”
- Both exit noisily through rear door.

The panel discussion can be a powerful presentation format. It also can be a disaster if poorly managed. If you are invited to organize and/or moderate a panel, what can you do to ensure success? Here are some tips.

Panel Members—Obviously you want to choose people who have something to say. But it is equally important that you avoid people who are self-centered egomaniacs. The panel discussion is a team event. Invite people who are good team players. As much as possible select panel members to reflect audience demographics, i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, income levels, etc.

Timing—If you have a high need to be liked by everyone, forget being a panel moderator. An effective moderator is a bit like a traffic cop. Your first responsibility is to your audience. Your job is to keep the panel members within their time limits.

When inviting people to join your panel, let them know very clearly and directly what the limits are on their presentations. Also, let them know that you will *verbally interrupt them and stop them* if they exceed their time limits.

Physical Setup—Since panel members will be seated, always request a podium (raised platform) or a stage so they can be

seen by the audience. You may have people seated at a table or just seated in a semicircle. In either case, the best position for the moderator is in the middle. This gives you greater visual contact with all the panel members and also gives you a strong position from which to control the flow.

Microphones can be a real pitfall for a panel. Panel members are most often not professional speakers, and usually they're intimidated by a mic. If panelists don't use the mic they won't be heard—which means the audience will become bored. (That's when John and Bill decide to spend the afternoon on the golf links.)

Make sure you have at least one microphone per two panel members. Show panelists how to use it in advance. Encourage them to move it closer or take it in hand each time they speak. If they forget, *stop them in their presentation to remind them*. (Do not be afraid to interrupt panel speakers to correct logistical problems.) The audience will thank you for it.

Audience Participation—A great way to cap off your panel discussion is to allow time for the audience to get involved. The audience may address questions to the panel as a whole or to individual members. If it's a smaller audience with no mic, make sure you repeat the question so all can hear. With a larger group, provide a mic for audience participation.

Your Role—Remember the traffic cop image. It's your job to keep everyone within the time constraints. You also need to remain neutral in terms of the content. Encourage panel members to have a big finish to wrap up—and to keep it short.

As you finish, thank the audience for their attention and participation. Then with great enthusiasm, thank each panel member and encourage the audience to give them a strong round of applause.

If you follow these simple but essential tips, your panel will be a great success. Who knows, you may be able to keep John and Bill in their chairs rather than on the first tee!

The Athenian Myth

Do you remember in high school, a group of super-popular kids who seemed to have it made? They were socially advanced. They knew about drinking, smoking and having sex way before everyone else. They wore the right clothes and had the right friends. In a word, they were cool. And you and I were not. Or so we thought.

Most people wanted acceptance from this group. Approval from them made you feel great. Disapproval could wipe you out for days. Does all this sound familiar? In my high school the males of this group belonged to a club called “the Athenians.” They wore black jackets. They could put you down with a scornful look. Performers of all kinds—but especially speakers—were very vulnerable to their harsh judgments.

At our 30-year high school reunion, our former school president, John Rose (see the “John Rose Farewell,” page 22), was giving some welcoming comments to the 250 people attending the gala event. Sure enough, sitting there, right down front, at a large round table, was a group of five Athenians—still hanging out in their clique. Still being judgmental. As John got into his welcoming speech, the Athenians started with their snide remarks. As the minutes went by, John got more and more rattled. By the end of his talk, he was angry and defensive. The whole evening was tainted by this event.

For any of us who speak to groups, the specter of this kind of audience reaction generates a lot of adrenalin. As I watched John sweating bullets on stage that night, it suddenly dawned on me. Five wise guys were creating overwhelming anxiety for John while 245 other people in the room were having a great time and enjoying John’s remarks.

Bill Cosby once commented that in every audience there will be a person he nicknamed “the face.” He sits there, arms folded, pouting, full of condemnation. Cosby used to play right to that person in an attempt to win him over. Now he just ignores these

people and instead plays to the rest of the audience who are enjoying themselves.

Every time I see those people in my audience, I try to remember the high school reunion. I say to myself, “Hey, let ’em eat cake. Everyone else is having fun. I’ll just focus on the rest of the appreciative audience.” So the next time you see those Athenians in your audience, remember the other 99% who think you’re great. There is life after high school.

What Audiences Want

The current business buzzword is “customer satisfaction.” Likewise, to be successful speakers, we must have “audience satisfaction” as our goal.

The key to satisfying your audience is to give them a presentation that:

- ▶ is tight and well organized;
- ▶ is delivered with enthusiasm;
- ▶ involves them.

We asked a cross-section of our business audiences, “What is wrong with business presentations today?” The picture that emerged from over 250 responses could not have been more emphatic.

Business and technical audiences are tired of speakers who use too many visuals, include too much detail and are poorly organized. Boring delivery or reading a talk also puts off audiences. Poor audience control or no audience interaction is also irritating.

Specifically, the responses fell into these three categories:

SUBSTANCE Poor organization Too much detail	38%
STYLE Monotone, boring delivery Reading overhead slides No gestures, movement, eye contact	44%
STAGING Too many visuals No audience interaction Poor audience control	18%

Presentations delivered “on the fly” will gain few points. Too much minutiae will not work either. One person identified the problem as “*an overemphasis on the importance of the detail.*”

The old Sergeant Joe Friday approach (“Just the facts, Ma’am”), is simply too boring for today’s audiences conditioned by the fast pace of television. Audiences are not content to sit passively and be talked at. They want to participate.

The survey information makes it clear what audiences *don’t* want from a speaker. What can you do, then, to guarantee you’ll be an audience-pleaser next time you take to the podium?

Substance—Have a clear core message. Keep it short and to the point. Save the detailed supportive information for the handouts. State your conclusion or point of view early in the talk and again at the end. Keep in mind that people remember longest what they hear first and what they hear last. Conclude with an action step. Tell them what you’d like them to do with the information you’ve given them.

Style—Make it big, bold and purposeful. Remember, being effective “on stage” requires a bigger presence than talking one-on-one. Build into your presentation schedule time to rehearse. It’s almost impossible to have a powerful delivery style when you are doing it for the first time. Rehearsal, to be of value, has to include standing up, moving around and delivering the talk *out loud*.

“Thinking about it” is not rehearsal. If possible, practice in front of other people. Work on all the style skills: stance, movement, gestures, voice, pause and eye interaction. Practice with your visual aids.

Staging—Include the audience. Ask them relevant questions and get a show of hands. If appropriate, have a question and answer session. Keep your answers short to include as many people as time allows.

As a speaker, your audience *is* your customer. You wouldn’t sell your customer a defective product. Similarly, since you know what audiences want, it’s now possible to give them a “zero defects” presentation.

Business presentations are just too important to your company and to your career to take casually. Put in that extra time. You will soon become known as a speaker who knows how to satisfy an audience.

IV. The Power of Speaking

“My physicist brother says ‘Give me a lever and a place to stand and I’ll move the world.’ I say to him, ‘I’ll do something even tougher. Give me 1,000 words and I’ll change an attitude.’”

—Kristin Clark
Hewlett-Packard

Ultimately, your purpose in developing your speaking skill is to impact people and effect the way things turn out. This chapter presents ways to maximize your impact with any audience. We also look at the strategies of three great speakers: Abraham Lincoln (at Gettysburg), General Norman Schwarzkopf and Tom Peters.

Speakers Tell It Like It Is

What has been your worst speaking nightmare? How did you handle it? We recently asked these questions to the readers of our **PowerSpeaking**® newsletter. The problems cited most often involved:

- 1) the hostile audience;
- 2) the impromptu speech; and
- 3) non-English speaking audiences.

Problem—When I was suddenly asked at a conference to give an impromptu brief explanation of why massage often reduces pain in terminally ill cancer patients, to an audience full of doctors.

Solution—Knowing that some of those doctors would be skeptical and want statistics and long-term research data, I told them a *story* about one patient, a 14-year-old boy dying of cystic fibrosis and what happened in the family dynamics after I taught his father how to massage him. They *loved* it.

—Helen Campbell

Problem—Speaking to a bunch of sales reps who had a preconceived negative attitude to the material I was presenting.

Solution—Switched to an interactive style presentation so I could listen to their concerns.

—Stephen Lencioni

Problem—Speaking with a very confrontational (prospective) customer about technical issues with my V.P. of R & D present!

Solution—Tried not to panic, took a deep breath, put one hand in my pocket and gestured with the other, addressed the customer's agitated feelings as well as conveyed our technical message.

—Geoff Orth

Problem—Delivering someone else’s presentation before an audience expecting miracles.

Solution—Rehearsed as though I had written it. Then relaxed by knowing that I know the script, the audience does not! So they won’t know if I make a mistake! Worked great!

—Gerard J. Mariani

Problem—Being asked at the last minute to speak on a topic that I knew nothing about.

Solution—Tried to draw “experts” from the audience into the presentation.

—Craig W. Pampeyan

Problem—Speaking in a foreign country to a foreign audience in a semi-hostile situation.

Solution—Went slow, attempted to win them over with factual information, anecdotes and style.

—Daniel H. Diltz

Problem—Speaking to a group of about 300 Korean engineers who didn’t speak much English.

Solution—It was a technical software demo of computer graphics and fortunately pictures spoke louder than words for the most part. (Some translation also helped.)

—Scott Wolfe

Problem—Speaking to Japanese businessmen through a translator. They looked down at the floor the whole time.

Solution—I’d asked about their culture beforehand and that helped me understand why they were looking at the floor.

—Debbie Sweet

Problem—I remember one audience that was so dead I considered checking a few of the members for vital signs. No feedback during presentation.

Solution—I just plowed ahead as lively as I could feeding off my own internal energy resources. After the talk, the audience came to life and I received more than the usual, positive feedback. It's still one of my most puzzling situations.

—Charles Hardeman

Problem—If it's been awhile since I've given a speech, I find I'm more anxious for *perfection*. In other words, if I feel rusty, I'm more afraid of the audience.

Solution—I focus on my audience's needs and take the focus off me. I practice my speeches like crazy. I only speak on topics that I have researched well and have been personally involved with.

—Carolyn Kay Masters

Problem—I was speaking to a group of college students (about 600). The goal: get them to exceed their contributions to our organization from the previous year. *Forgot* what I was saying—total blank screen!

Solution—Took a breath and said, “You may not believe this but I just forgot what I was saying! Could someone refresh my memory?!” Someone did, I continued and the contribution to World University Service that year was 25% over the preceding year!

—Deborah J. Zeigler

Problem—Coping with a rock 'n roll dance in room across hall.

Solution—Stopped until management took care of delaying the “music” until we were finished.

—John A. Shults

Problem—I had a woman in the audience who wanted to discuss one point I was making. I tried to move on to other topics without success.

Solution—I finally told her that I needed to continue but would be happy to discuss it off-line.

—Karen Lewey

Problem—Delivering a one-hour presentation with a recently, surgically repaired broken leg while on codeine.

Solution—Took more codeine.

—James Aguilar

Problem—I had to give a sales presentation to a potential client in the clothes I wore on the airplane the night before when my suitcase didn't arrive.

Solution—I made a joke of having an excuse to wear comfortable shoes and went on with the presentation.

—Cheryl A. Karpowicz

Problem—A hot room at Lone Mountain College, on a hot day, with heaters that wouldn't turn off.

Solution—Opened all the windows, took off my jacket, invited others to do so, too—and kept my talk short. Q & A was held outside in the shade.

—Linda Marks

Problem—A bunch of drunks after a long happy hour and dinner.

Solution—I don't do after-dinner speeches any more.

—George Morrissey

“Four score and seven years ago...”

On November 16, 1863, Abraham Lincoln rose to address 20,000 people on the battlefield at Gettysburg. In the three minutes it took to deliver the 272-word “Gettysburg Address,” he changed our understanding of the Constitution and political rhetoric forever.

In his book, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Garry Wills gives us a whole new view of the impact of that compelling speech. For starters, Wills challenges the long cherished myth that Lincoln hastily wrote the talk on the back of an envelope on the train to Gettysburg. Historical evidence indicated he worked on the talk for weeks before leaving Washington. Lincoln was a studied grammarian and wordsmith. His legal briefs were composed slowly with great care.

According to Wills, the speech delivery was shocking to the audience because of its brevity. They had just heard a classical two-hour oration by Edward Everett. Certainly they expected something longer from the president. Lincoln’s simple vocabulary and tight organization was an idea whose time had come. Political oratory would be changed forever after Gettysburg.

Lincoln’s delivery was enhanced by his love of practicing Shakespearean speeches. Also, his high pitched tenor voice helped carry his words to everyone there. (Imagine addressing 20,000 people today without amplification.)

The most powerful aspect of Wills’ thesis, however, is that the talk at Gettysburg literally changed the meaning of the Constitution and the nature of the country. Prior to Gettysburg, America was a collection of states often called, “these United States.” Afterwards, the United States became one nation.

Although it appears in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution says nothing to the effect that, "...all men are created equal." But, with that statement, supported by the speech's powerful prose, Lincoln redefined what the founding fathers had in mind. As Garry Wills points out, "By accepting the Gettysburg Address and its concept of a single people dedicated to a proposition, we have been changed. Because of it, we live in a different America." What power the spoken word can have.

From the Trenches to the Podium— What Speakers Can Learn from the General

After the Gulf War, General Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander of the Allied Forces, became a folk hero. Why? First, military expertise. Second, communication expertise.

What can speakers learn from the general's success? Plenty. His style was powerful and natural, his content engaging and his character irresistible. Let's look at each in more detail.

Style—Schwarzkopf used his whole body to communicate his message in a way that enhanced his credibility and his likability. In briefing sessions, he stood beside the lectern and used strong gestures. His voice, pitch and rate of delivery were varied. Eye interaction with the audience was direct. Most of all, his face was very expressive as he covered wide-ranging topics from military strategy to sympathy for the families of those killed in the line of duty.

Content—While his style was essential to his media success, it was the general's content that took him beyond the ordinary. His briefings were marked by plain talk rather than jargon and acronyms. It was obvious that he knew the numbers and the details yet could get technical when necessary; but he kept the language clear and direct for the media.

His presentations focused not on his own accomplishments but on the work of others—either U.S. or allied troops. His presentations were rich with analogies, like when he compared troop movements to the “Hail Mary” play in football. To make key points he often used the “Rule of Three”:

There are a lot of people who are still saying that the objective of the United States was to capture Iraq and cause the downfall of the entire country. (Pause) Ladies and gentlemen, when we were here (points to map) we were 150 miles from Baghdad and there was nobody between us and Baghdad. If it had been our intention to take Iraq, if it had been our intention to

destroy the country, if it had been our intention to overrun the country, we could have done it unopposed from this position. But that was not our intention.

Humor is another way the general captivated his audiences. When asked by a reporter, “What are your impressions of Saddam Hussein as a military strategist?” he replied, “He is not a strategist, nor is he schooled in the operational arts, nor is he a tactician, nor is he a general, nor is he a soldier. Other than that, he is a great military man.”

Character—Norman Schwarzkopf’s successful content and style are built on the foundation of his character. Ultimately, it’s his world view and self-esteem that made him so appealing. For example, he expressed modesty and humility when asked direct questions about his role in the success of the Desert Storm campaign. He gave credit to others. Paradoxically, when asked about the war he often responded more like a dove than like a general, “Any military man worth his salt doesn’t want to go to war because he knows that going to war means killing people.”

Probably the most disarming and appealing thing about the general was his vulnerability. During his interview with Barbara Walters he teared up twice, once when she inquired about his relationship to his father and again when he talked about his children. What an irresistible combination: a battle-hardened general who is a respected leader and a human being who is in touch with his feelings.

In summary, what can speakers learn from Schwarzkopf’s extraordinary popularity?

- ▶ **Content:** Know the details, but speak honestly and clearly about the big picture.
- ▶ **Style:** Use a strong delivery style that is based on who you are.
- ▶ **Character:** Give credit to others, see both sides of the issue and don’t hesitate to speak from emotion as well as intellect.

Don't Even Think About Getting It "Right"

Tips from Tom Peters

Tom Peters is the co-author of In Search of Excellence. He is also one of the best business speakers in the country today. His July 22, 1991 management column in the San Jose Mercury News offered nine suggestions for speakers. It is reprinted here with permission. ©1991 TPG Communications.

We all need potent persuasive skills to rope in outside money and supporters from time to time. A knack for communicating in "public" is vitally important. Having been a 150-times-a-year, for-profit yakker, I offer this advice:

Practice Makes Better—Obvious as it sounds, too many ignore it. There are damn few natural composers, golfers or race car drivers. And there are no natural speakers—at least I've never come across any. You get better at speaking by speaking and speaking.

Join Toastmasters—Toastmasters International is the Alcoholics Anonymous of the speaking world. Its ranks include generals, pastors and politicians, plus hundreds of thousands of scared speechless engineers, accountants, supervisors and vice presidents, to name a few.

Toastmasters' "guidelines" for good speaking are a touch too rigid for my taste, but the core idea is sound: you learn to get over your stage fright by starting small and constantly practicing. Seek out a local chapter and sign up—large companies sometimes even have their own chapters.

Forget All the Conventional "Rules" But One—Frankly, most laws of speechmaking—keep your hands out of your pockets, don't say "uh," lead off with a zinger—are garbage. But there is one golden rule: stick to topics you deeply care about and don't keep your passion buttoned inside your vest. An audience's biggest turn-on is the speaker's obvious enthusiasm. That's as true for a pitch to purchase a \$200,000

computer system as it is for a plea to save the environment. If you're lukewarm about the issue, forget it!

Stories, Stories, More Stories—Charts and graphs have their place and a pretty prominent one in many business presentations. Nonetheless, even an analytically inclined audience will remember one poignant comment from a survey respondent (“this company really doesn't listen to the likes of us”) long after forgetting your multicolored bar chart showing the firm's “openness to ideas” at 2.62 on a seven-point, sociometrically valid scale.

For Heaven's Sake, Don't Write It Out!—If spontaneity isn't everything, it verges on it. That hardly means winging it: careful preparation spawns spontaneity. But it does mean never, ever writing it out in full. If you do, you become a slave to your exact wording and inevitably lose 75 percent of any emotional impact.

Don't Even Think About “Getting It Right”—After decades of giving speeches, from five minutes to five days (with breaks!) in length, I've yet to be satisfied with one of them. But tomorrow is another day. Forget the “this is my only chance to shine” baloney. If you're worth a darn, you'll get lots of chances to shine.

Breathe!—I'm no pro when it comes to meditation. I get flush and breathless before any speech. One answer is to close your eyes (or not) and take five or 10 deep breaths (even in front of others) before going up on stage to chair that big meeting.

Get Away from the Podium—You're probably not a stiff around the office and almost certainly not at home. Why be a stiff when you're making an important presentation? Put your notes on index cards (written in bold letters if your eyes, like mine, ain't getting younger), so you won't be nailed to the lectern. Then wander around the table, into the crowd, about the platform. Look comfortable and your audience will be more comfortable, too.

Loosen Up—You're not going to convince 'em anyway. Speeches aren't about turning archenemies into cheering supporters. Presentations are mainly opportunities to reassure those who already agree with you that you're a horse worth betting on. So try to relax and enjoy yourself, to present “excited you” as excited you—which is just what the audience wants.

Acting vs. Speaking

Occasionally in a *PowerSpeaking*® program, someone will say, “This is just acting technique.” Is it just acting? What are the differences or similarities between acting and speaking?

First of all, both actors and speakers are performing. Both want to keep their audience’s attention. The similarity ends there. An actor portrays a character he is not. An actor uses someone else’s (the playwright’s) words. Speakers are themselves, and they speak their own words. When you speak, it’s your point of view you express. It’s very demanding to be yourself, not just a character.

The goals of speakers and actors are quite different. A speaker wants to connect personally with the audience. Actors perform in front of an audience; interaction is not the goal. Take eye contact, for example. A speaker needs direct, sustained eye contact to both build credibility and to get feedback. Typically, an actor focuses on other actors, not the audience.

The main difference, though, is intent. When you, as a business presenter, speak before customers, senior management or your staff meeting, big things can happen: sales, product launches, hiring decisions or capital equipment purchases. The economy and people’s lives are affected. Actors, on the other hand, are entertainers, and only occasionally perform in a work that has an effect on people’s lives.

As you admire and learn from the talent of show business greats, keep in mind that when they perform, we are entertained. When you perform, the economy moves and the wheels of progress turn. Here’s your Oscar.

Quick Tips for Speakers

Projector Meltdown

True story. In the middle of an important technical presentation to a large group, the speaker was shocked to see his 35mm slide projector suddenly burst into flames. The fan stopped working and the projector overheated. The carousel with all his slides literally melted. What to do?

Almost without missing a beat, the presenter reached into his briefcase and pulled out duplicate visuals in the form of overhead transparencies. The presentation was completed in fine form.

Moral: always have backup visuals for major presentations.

Ken Blanchard on Body Language

“If you want to become a good public speaker, watch other speakers to see how they use their bodies. For example, the good public speakers I’ve observed walk with their shoulders back and their heads high and use a lot of hand and arm gestures.”

Ken Blanchard is the author of *The One-Minute Manager*.

The Carl Kammerer Strategy

One of the stars of the 1959 University of the Pacific football team was a linebacker named Carl Kammerer. The big rivalry that year was with Arizona State University.

At 10:30 Friday night, before the big game with ASU, Carl walked into the stadium alone. He sat on the 50-yard line—for a long time. He visualized Saturday’s game: the noise, the colors, the other players. He visualized himself playing his best game.

As a speaker, you too can benefit from this kind of winning preparation. Get to the site of your presentation early. Become familiar with the room. See yourself giving a fabulous presentation. See the audience responding warmly. Positive visualization is one of the most effective tools you can use to give an outstanding talk.

By the way, UOP won that game and Carl Kammerer was the key factor.

Good-bye to An Orator

On November 6, 1996, Mario Savio died. For those of us whose lives were shaped by the sixties, he was an icon. He was catapulted into history when he became the most visible leader of the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley in the fall of 1964. He was as eloquent as he was committed to political change. On October 1, 1964, he mounted the top of a police car and spoke with such clarity and passion that thousands of students became united in a cause to bring the university to a complete standstill. The issue involved a university policy that banned students from passing out political literature on campus. Pretty tame stuff by today's standards.

Mario Savio had not been a public figure or an orator before the Free Speech Movement. The urgency of that particular moment in history somehow called forth from him oratory that would lead a movement and set the tone for many of the other student protests across the country that would later erupt as a result of the Vietnam war. Savio had a way with words that could bring together politics, poetry and personal action. His most memorable words from that time that became emblazoned in the hearts and minds of his youthful audiences were these:

“There comes a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part, you can't even passively take part. And you've got to put your bodies on the gears, and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus. And you've got to make it stop.”

Shortly after saying these words, he and the other students did, in fact, bring the university to a halt. Almost 800 protesters were arrested. A few months later the university changed its policy.

What Savio did so well in that speech was to use a powerful metaphor of the university as a giant machine which could only be stopped by selflessly throwing our bodies upon the gears. Hard times have the potential to bring forth great oratory that can

shape future events. Think of Lincoln at Gettysburg, or Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, or Winston Churchill's World War II speeches.

Most of us will never speak in such august circumstances. But, we can learn from the masters. As we bid farewell to an orator that helped to shape the political consciousness of many young people in the sixties and beyond, let us never forget the power of words.

V. The Business of Speaking

“How can I trust someone to manage a multi-million dollar project if he or she can’t manage a half-hour speech?”

—Bill Hewlett
Co-founder, Hewlett-Packard Co.

Effective speaking is becoming as important in business today as knowing how to read a balance sheet or prepare a strategic plan. In this age of television, video and teleconferencing, business presenters can no longer retreat into the “Aw shucks, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking”excuse for the lack of skills.

This chapter presents ideas for handling a wide range of business speaking situations.

The Seven Myths of Business Speaking

Bill Johnson (pseudonym) called our office on Wednesday afternoon in a panic. He had a major speech to give Friday morning and wanted help. Bill is vice president of human resources at a fast-growing Silicon Valley high-tech company.

He was new to the job and had already been called upon to deal with sexual harassment issues in three different cases. His talk Friday was to outline his short- and long-term approach to this highly charged issue. In addition to the entire human resources staff, three vice presidents from other areas and their senior managers were going to be there. Bill was expecting 65 to 70 people in the audience. He was sweating bullets. This was going to be the most critical presentation of his career.

Unfortunately, our respective schedules allowed no time for a meeting. In desperation, he invited me to attend his presentation and prepare a critique. At least we would have a baseline to work from for future improvements.

On Friday morning I attended Bill's 30-minute presentation. His talk lacked energy. His attempts at humor fell flat. People squirmed in their seats. There was a lot of coughing. The audience gave him the standard polite applause. He had bombed, though, and he knew it.

In his desire to persuade his audience, Bill consciously took *himself* out of the speech and became a hollow shell simply reciting facts. There were seven things he did—or rather, failed to do—that dramatically reduced his effectiveness. The mistakes he made were based on hopelessly outmoded ideas he picked up years ago in high school and college public-speaking classes.

These mistakes are so common in business presentations we see today, we've dubbed them "The Seven Myths of Business Speaking."

Myth #1 Avoid the microphone; it's awkward to use.
Just project.

Myth #2 Always start with a joke. It warms up
the audience.

- Myth #3** Never look directly at people—it will make you too nervous. Look above their heads or at the back wall.
- Myth #4** Don't use gestures. Arm-waving is distracting.
- Myth #5** Stand still when you speak. Moving around makes you look nervous.
- Myth #6** Don't get emotional. People are persuaded by logic and facts.
- Myth #7** Never, never swear in a speech, it would offend your audience.

Reviewing Bill's talk the next week, we both realized he had been victimized by each of the Seven Myths. He was confused. He followed all of the rules he learned years ago, and yet his talk failed. Bill seemed dejected as he got up to leave the office. I asked why he was so concerned about the problem of sexual harassment. Playing the devil's advocate, I said, "Aren't most of these accusations coming from women who just want to get even for receiving poor performance reviews?"

He spun on his heel, and in three minutes delivered the most powerful speech I had heard in years. His voice and gestures were strong. He moved around as he spoke and looked me dead in the eye. He was clearly outraged about people being treated this way at work. He also worried about the company's reputation and financial exposure if these allegations were true. He spoke convincingly and he spoke personally.

When he finished, I commented that all he had to do to win the hearts and minds of his next audience was to speak as candidly and as passionately to them. My advice was, "Just be yourself." The trick was, how to do that in front of a large, critical corporate audience. Clearly, we had to help him dump those outdated myths about speaking.

In just four weeks, Bill had to address the same audience about what progress was being made. Having this deadline helped with his motivation. He now saw how important it was to get beyond those high school and college myths about speaking.

- Myth #1** First, Bill practiced using a hand-held microphone. He learned to hold it four to six inches away from his mouth and to grasp it strongly in one hand.

- Myth #2** He gave up the opening joke. He decided to begin with a startling statement.
- Myth #3** Watching effective speakers and trainers, Bill realized the importance of direct eye interaction with audience members. Looking at the back wall really created more nervousness, not less. He learned the skill of looking directly into the eyes of the audience.
- Myth #4** Bill's gestures loosened up naturally as he spoke from his convictions. Small gestures held in close to the body just didn't work. Large gestures did. The strong, one-arm gestures were especially powerful.
- Myth #5** Movement away from the lectern had seemed impossible, being both too assertive and off-mic. Now that he could hold the mic, he found moving from one side of the room to the other at key transitions in his talk not only possible, but effective.
- Myth #6** Fired by his personal commitment, the statistics that had been so dry before now took on new meaning. He used stories and delivered them with enthusiasm. He saw that it took more than just facts and logic to persuade an audience.
- Myth #7** During one practice session, Bill got so fired up he said, "To hell with this tired excuse that sexual harassment victims bring it on themselves. There is simply no justification for this behavior in our company." Bill paused, stunned by the power of his own rhetoric. He wondered if it was okay to swear. A Bill Cosby quote came to mind: "I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody."

Finally the day came for Bill to give his second talk. He approached the lectern confidently. He put down his note cards, pulled the microphone toward him, looked directly at the audience and began, "The cancer of sexual harassment in this company has the potential to put us out of business. It must be stopped now!" You could have heard a pin drop. Every eye was on the speaker.

As he launched into the body of his talk, Bill maintained strong, direct eye contact with audience members as he completed each thought.

People were riveted. I can only describe his gestures as “surgical.” He used them to illustrate key ideas and made them big and bold. His stance beside or in front of the lectern made the gestures more powerful. He even added emotional intensity and a couple of swear words. The audience shared his outrage.

In addition to statistics, Bill used stories and anecdotes to get his message across. He talked about the long-term benefits of a work place free of the scourge of sexual harassment. Senior management nodded their approval. The audience was clearly persuaded.

What struck me was how Bill’s courage to move beyond the Seven Myths freed him to become himself, and therefore, a persuasive and effective speaker. Good technique and rehearsal had helped a lot. But what sold Bill’s audience was not technique, it was his authenticity.

Speaking from the Heart

Contributed by Rachel Oppedahl

I want to tell you a story about truth and beauty in an unlikely place: a 1990s American corporation. But like most things deeply true and beautiful, this story begins with pain.

On October 30, 1996, I was working in the communications group of a small but growing fresh juice company on the California coast. Odwalla was—still is—a creative, chaotic place, full of hardworking, idealistic people who are drawn to it (and similar companies, like Ben & Jerry's and Patagonia) for a variety of realistic and romantic reasons.

On that morning in October, Odwalla's founder, Greg Steltenpohl, and our CEO, Stephen Williamson, received the call that must be every food company's nightmare: people were very sick, and our product seemed to be the culprit. The health inspectors said the contaminant was a rare and virulent strain of an otherwise common bacteria called *E. coli*, and that a number of people in the Pacific Northwest were ill—including children.

We were horrified. This small, passionate juice company had made its name promoting healthy food and community service—and here we were, making people sick. The media came crashing down on us that first day, before even we had the details of what was happening. In the days and weeks that followed, more and more people became ill from the *E. coli* bacteria: all told, more than sixty victims in several western states. For several months, employees worked grueling schedules to handle the crisis and a business turned upside down.

About a month after that first phone call, on a Friday morning in November, Greg called the communications group together to tell us the unimaginable: a child infected by the *E. coli* bacteria had died the night before. Her name was Anna Gimmestad, and she was sixteen months old. I remember feeling the blood drain from my face, then my body falling down some dark tunnel.

But I said this was a story about truth and beauty. And so it is.

Honest Ground

This is the story of a company full of people who responded to a crisis with heart. From day one, Greg and Stephen and the executive staff opened our doors to public health agencies; reached out to consumers; spoke frequently and candidly to the media; and generally created an open, compassionate environment in which we could rise to meet this tragedy. It was an almost religious experience for me. Here I was, a forty-three-year-old woman, an escapee from the denial school of corporate communications, a confusing blend of idealist and cynic, witnessing the most extraordinary company-wide display of courage and integrity I'd ever seen in a business setting.

Let me tell you something: Odwalla had *no* formal "crisis communications plan" as it's conceived of in mainstream corporate America. That humane, intelligent response you witnessed during the *E. coli* contamination last fall happened because in the middle of the crisis, people made ethical decisions. Period. A handful of senior managers at Odwalla went straight to their consciences and asked, *What is the right thing to do?*

What a concept. Ignore the lawyers, jettison the spin doctors. Let's just use common sense and decency to make our decisions. And lo and behold, all of the necessary mechanics of "crisis communications" worked themselves out. Odwalla received well-deserved praise from the press and public for their forthright response.

Don't get me wrong. Odwalla was not a monastery. To my eyes, there were as many big egos and petty politicians in residence as any company I'd worked for. Yet during those days, swept up in the force of ethical leadership, people rose to the best in themselves.

Turning the Soil

Now comes the second part of this story, the part closest to my heart. I remember the day, about four weeks after the crisis hit, that I was able to finally turn my attention from fire fighting to thinking about the next issue of our employee newsletter.

I walked around the halls of our Half Moon Bay digs that morning, looking into the faces of my co-workers and thinking about what we'd all been through— were still living through— and saying to myself, “Good God, what could I possibly do with an *employee newsletter* that would do justice to this experience?”

I procrastinated for days. When I finally tackled the content outline, everything I came up with felt trivial.

I was having a heart-to-heart with a long-time Odwalla employee named Bonno Bernard when the gift finally came. Bonno closed her eyes, took a deep breath, looked at me and said, “You know, I find myself wishing we could all come together in one room, and light candles, and sit with each other, and cry, and just take turns saying what it's been like to go through this—what it means, what's in our hearts.”

Of course. We needed to come together in a circle— figuratively speaking—to process this terrible tragedy. We needed to heal. The next issue of the newsletter had to read like a transcript of many voices, speaking directly from every corner of the company. It would be like reading an account of a tribe, sitting in a circle, passing the “talking stick.”

New Blooms

And so my tape recorder became the talking stick. For two weeks, I did nothing but ask employees to tell me about their experiences during and after the worst days of the crisis. Many were small-group interviews, often done via conference phone with outlying offices. Some were one-on-one interviews, just me and an employee who was taking time out from a frenzied schedule to tell his or her story.

I'll never forget Jeff Hemmen, a delivery truck driver, a big guy with a cheerful personality, breaking down in tears not two minutes into our interview. Out on the city streets and in the stores, drivers like Jeff experienced more trauma than the rest of us. “In those first few days of the crisis, people's reactions gave me the sickest feeling... They looked at me as though I had leprosy.” Or Dave Smith, a driver who, after a week of backbreaking “crisis management” at the refrigerator shelves, suffered a verbal drive-by shooting: “Baby killers!” “My reaction was intense depression,” he said. “There were times I wished I could put a bag over my head.”

“I’m just thinking back to that first week and how intense it was,” said Ron Smith, Vice President of Technology at Odwalla’s Dinuba juice processing plant. “We were all putting in incredibly long hours... When I heard the news about Anna’s death, I had to leave the plant. I went to the city park and found a piece of grass, and laid there for about an hour just watching the leaves falling off the tree... Somehow, seeing the leaves fall made me feel a little better, seeing that everything cycles.”

Fortunately, there were many inspiring stories. Jeff Hemmen said that after the first few days, “There was a huge amount of community support. People on the street would say, ‘Hang in there! You’re a good company.’ I actually had one store that made their own handwritten signs for the coolers, telling their customers, ‘This juice is really good. Buy it now!’”

And so it went, in every interview. Heartfelt accounts of what had happened in this region, in that sales office, in one area of the production floor. It was the most intense, loving, painful, meaningful experience I had ever had in my work life, doing those interviews. People—and I mean everyone, from delivery truck drivers to vice presidents—spoke of their pain, their exhaustion, and of lessons learned.

There came a day when I transcribed the last tape, finished the desktop layout, and sent this sacred thing—all twenty-eight pages of it—to the printer. Then I took a week off.

The newsletter was distributed a few days before I came back from vacation. When I returned, the response from employees allayed any doubts I had about whether I’d done the right thing in publishing all of those raw accounts. The first email I read that Monday morning was from Odwalla’s long-time, beloved fleet manager, Jon Stuart:

“Just a note to thank you for the newsletter. It is a wonderful and uplifting collection that has brought tears to my eyes again and again. I immediately wanted to send a copy to everyone I know, to give them the true, ‘inside story’— one that I am extremely proud to have been a part of. Thank you for this very meaningful effort in helping us all understand ourselves and each other through this crisis.” Jon

Others came:

“The newsletter is fantastic. I laughed, I cried. Thank you.” Dave
“I want to thank you. I was having a particularly long and harried day when I got the newsletter...I took my copy out into the sun to read it. It was a perfect Davenport afternoon—I even saw whales spouting out at sea. Reading all the stories and experiencing what others saw and felt, just made such a difference. I felt myself breathing deeper and feeling calmer. It was exactly what I needed to get re-energized and centered. Thank you.” Christie

Seeds of Change

I will be forever grateful for what the Odwalla experience taught me. Once and for all, I learned the power and *rightness* of radical honesty in the workplace. In my career as a writer-editor, I’d always resisted—as much as I could—corporate “blah blah.” But never had I worked for a company that encouraged this kind of humane and intelligent dialogue—even in black and white. I remember my brief meeting with Greg Steltenpohl when I was trying to decide what to do with the newsletter. His advice to me: “Whatever you do, it’s got to be REAL.”

In my experience, the Odwallas of the business world are still few and far between. To me this is sad and confusing, given all we know about the effects of honesty: trust, loyalty, and inspiration, to name a few.

If you are reading *PowerSpeaking*® News, you are probably in the business world. You were on my mind for days before I finally sat down to start this account, which Rick Gilbert asked me to write. I wondered, “How does this story relate to *PowerSpeaking*® News and to the people who receive it?”

The truth is, I’m still not sure I have an answer to that question. Forgive me. All I know is, it feels right to tell a story about truth-telling, to people who may be speakers, or employers, or corporate “communicators” in one way or another. As hokey—or high-horse—as it may sound, I want to say that the truth can and does set us free to do our best work, as human beings.

Facing On-Air Interviews with Confidence

Contributed by Jerry Johnson

The well-known talk show host burst into my office. “I’ve really got him this time!” he said, a sadistic grin on his face. Waving a print-out from the *New York Times* Information Service, he told me, “I’ve got the goods right here.”

What he had was a quote by an upcoming guest gleaned from hours of computer research showing an inconsistency on a controversial issue. This talk-show “star” had found a hole in the guest’s armor. And, true to form, a couple of days later he conducted a self-serving interview that embarrassed the guest, but resulted in a news wire story that prominently featured the host’s name.

In my years in television and radio, I’ve found that virtually no one is immune from the often unrelenting questioning or even traps laid by on-air people like this talk show host. I’ve seen it happen to celebrities, news makers, and most certainly, to CEOs or corporate spokespersons who are in some way defending their company’s actions.

Whenever you deal with the media, it’s important to realize that the odds are stacked against you. I do not say this cynically. I’m telling you how it really is. Consider this:

- ▶ Modern media’s job is to get you to say something “new,” often something you don’t intend, or want to say.
- ▶ The talk show host or reporter has the control in an interview. We used to laughingly say, “I’ve got all the buttons!” This means that the on-air person controls who speaks when, and for how long.
- ▶ As a guest, you are going into unfamiliar territory. Your lack of experience may be taken advantage of in order to shape the interview or story as the media person desires.
- ▶ As a guest or interviewee, you are merely a portion of programming material to be manipulated into the show’s

format, or in the case of news stories, to fit the piece the reporter has been assigned.

- ▶ The intentionally fast pace of most talk shows and interviews can be very disconcerting. If you're not careful, you can find yourself rushing to speak, making ad libs, and, in general, forgetting your own goals in the interview. This is part of the power play in electronic media.

Edward R. Murrow once said that objectivity is impossible for a news person. "We are each prisoners of our own experiences," he said. "The best we can hope for is to present a fair and balanced picture." Morrow was a man of principles and high professional standards. Unfortunately, in today's highly competitive media dog fight, fairness and balance are often sacrificed in the struggle for higher ratings. Anyone who deals with the media must be aware of this and take precautions.

Okay, so you're scheduled for the "big interview." What to do? Here are some tips:

- ▶ Be prepared. You can bet that interviewers know exactly what they want out of a session. You should have an equally clear picture of what you want.
- ▶ Keep it simple. Have one or two main points you want to make and don't expect to accomplish more than this.
- ▶ Stay focused. In the glare of lights, or when microphones are open to the world, fear and stage fright can creep in.
- ▶ Repetition is what sells. An impression isn't made in modern media by a single statement. Make your one or two points. Make them again. Work them into the conversation, elaborating on them at every opportunity.

I love media. Some of the most exciting years of my career were spent in radio and television. Media is a game, just like many other things in life. If you and I hope to stay on the field, we have to know how that game is played. Good interviewing!

Managing the Media

“She’s a bitch!” said Newt Gingrich’s mother to CBS reporter Connie Chung’s question, “What does Newt think of Hillary Clinton?” Chung had implied confidentiality to Mrs. Gingrich by saying to her, “Just whisper it in my ear.” The next day it was on the front page of every newspaper in the country. So much for “off the record.”

How can we avoid the trap that Mrs. Gingrich fell into? In today’s fast-paced, media-oriented business environment, there’s a good chance we all will face the media sooner or later.

My “15 minutes of fame” came in 1984 when I was quoted at length in the *San Jose Mercury News*. An old high school friend, Pete Carey, was doing a story on what it’s like to work in Silicon Valley. Pete is a Pulitzer Prize winning investigative journalist on the staff of the *Mercury*.

After three years with Hewlett-Packard, I had just started a new job with Amdahl. Pete wanted to interview me for the article. As I spoke, he wrote furiously with a stubby pencil on a little yellow pad. His enthusiasm and frantic writing made me become bolder in my comments. Pretty soon, I was on a roll. There was no stopping me!

Several weeks later I was stunned to see my reckless statements quoted in the *Mercury*:

The companies will do a hell of a lot to make the engineers’ lives pleasant for them, including toleration of all kinds of weird behavior. For example, they’re allowed to bring their bicycles into the building, hang up sweat socks over the partitions, and stack empty soft drink cans 10 feet high.

The companies have to do it because these kids are on the cutting edge of technology. Of course, what they don’t know is by the time they’re in their mid-30s, their technology is dead as a doornail, and they’re burned out and wondering what the hell happened to them.

As you can imagine, my new bosses at Amdahl were less than thrilled by my bold statements to the media. I had made the mistake of winging it in a media interview.

Recently my partner, Mary McGlynn, handled a media event much better. In 1993, she was president of San Mateo County's Commission on the Status of Women. A controversy erupted on the commission. An angry letter was written to the San Mateo Board of Supervisors who sponsor CSW. The letter was "leaked" to the press.

Just back from a business trip, Mary found a message saying that the *San Francisco Chronicle* wanted to talk to her. She was interviewed on the phone by a *Chronicle* reporter. He tried to get her to respond to the emotionally charged allegations in the letter. Rather than responding from emotion, Mary repeated her well-thought-out position over and over, "We are accomplishing a tremendous amount." She then supported her position with concrete examples: the remodeling of the Battered Women's Shelter, the "Ask A Lawyer" program, and the state legislation influenced by the CSW. "So, as you can see, we are accomplishing a tremendous amount."

Mary used the very effective PREP model for handling impromptu speaking situations: P (position), R (reasons), E (example), P (position).

She stated her position, explained why she felt that way, gave concrete evidence to back it up, and closed with a restatement of her position.

I recently interviewed Pete about how we can best handle media interviews. He had some good advice:

- ▶ If you're going to talk to the press, you're well advised to tell the truth. A lie or distortion will come back to haunt you, especially on a big, rolling story.
- ▶ If you don't know the facts, or how you feel about it without some reflection, get the facts before you start talking about it. Tell the reporter, "Look, I'm not trying to duck you. At this point, I'm not sure how to respond to your question."
- ▶ If you're in a job that requires you to deal with the press, i.e., public relations for a large company, a CEO of a small company, political office of any kind, you should be ready.

- ▶ If you have any buttons that can be pushed, have your friends and family tell you what they are, so you can be forewarned. Do some self-analysis.
- ▶ It is important to be even more clear on television. You don't get a chance to go back and clarify your position like you can with a reporter. On a news program, they'll just take the best sound bytes and go with it.
- ▶ When you're going to sit down with a reporter, make sure that you set clear goals. Don't just wander around.

In summary, if you must face the media, be prepared. Don't just "let 'er rip" like I did. Decide what your message is and then use the "PREP" model to get it across. And when Connie Chung says to you, "Just whisper it in my ear," you say to her, "Sorry, I don't do windows, or 'off the record.'"

Welcome to the 90s: Speaking to a Culturally Diverse Audience

Contributed by Lu Ellen Schafer

Five minutes before I was scheduled to speak to a group at a high-tech company, the meeting planner said to me, “Oh, by the way, we invited twenty engineers from Asia to listen to your presentation. I’m not sure how much English they know.” I hurriedly adjusted my speech to make it more accessible to the visiting engineers. Had I not done so, I would have bombed. As it turned out, they were able to not only get the gist of what I was saying, but also be involved in the audience participation segment. Audiences aren’t what they used to be. An increasing percentage of them include foreign-born employees comprised of both foreigners on temporary assignment in the United States and immigrants. With a few minor changes in our presentation, we can fine-tune our delivery so that we are understood by everyone in the audience.

Let’s face it. English is not an easy language. It is filled with idioms and slang. To make matters worse, we run our words together. “Whaddayathink?” sounds nothing like the English taught in Japanese, Korean or Middle Eastern classrooms.

Here are five tips that are guaranteed to make your material more clear and accessible to culturally diverse audiences. While scarcely perceptible to native-born Americans, the changes I am suggesting below will be deeply appreciated by the foreign-born members of the audience. The results you get will far outweigh the effort.

Do Your Homework

Make it a habit to ask in advance if there will be foreign-born participants in the audience. Find out where they are from, and if possible, how long they have been here. Asking these questions

will give you helpful information as well as position you as someone aware of current demographics and their impact on the industry.

Slow Down and Use Natural Pauses

Speaking slower...with natural pauses...will allow everyone...a chance to absorb...your message. Trust me...it works like magic.

Saving Face

A Chinese proverb states, “Without face, life is pointless.” While no one likes to be humiliated, our culture is much less concerned with saving face than most. We’ll often “give it the old college try” and laugh good-naturedly at ourselves. As presenters, however, we must take care to ensure that foreign-born participants never feel the deep shame of losing face while they are in our audience.

Here are three pointers:

- ▶ Don’t call on foreign-born attendees unless you’re sure they understand.
- ▶ Give the instructions for an activity twice. (This is a good practice with any audience, as it allows you to pick up those who temporarily drifted off.)
- ▶ During a small group discussion, discreetly circulate to make sure your instructions were understood correctly.

Seeing Is Believing

Use visuals. Be sure that your key points are either on a handout or on the overhead. Spoken English is much harder to follow than written English. If an audience member gets lost, he or she can quickly refer to something in writing.

Watch for Culturally Specific Examples

References to our common culture—the Cosby show, a touchdown, Fourth of July picnics—brighten our presentations and draw the audience in. Many of the references, however, only work for those intimately familiar with our culture. Don’t omit them, but sprinkle in stories and references that will resonate with foreign-born participants, too. (Try more “universal” themes such as the joys and challenges of having children, a first trip to

a new country, the desire for success, the importance of good friendships.)

Recently, while speaking to a group of American and Taiwanese business people, I used the phrase, “It’s a piece of cake.” I then turned to the men from Taiwan and said, “Or as you would say, ‘It’s like turning over your palm.’” They were impressed and pleased that I had used a phrase from their own culture, and I’m sure that my credibility rose in their eyes.

Whether we’re addressing an audience of 10 in a technical workshop, or a crowd of 3,000 at a convention, all of us strive for the same thing. We want our words to have impact; we want to make a difference. By adding the above techniques to our repertoire, we markedly increase the chances that all audience members will understand our message and that we will accomplish what we set out to do. As a Peruvian sage wrote, “All is transitory save for the impact we have on each other’s lives.”

Corporate Employee Meetings with Pizzazz!

Sporting a white wig, marketing director Woody Shackleton sprinted down the aisle at Network Equipment Technology's "All Hands" company meeting. He did his best imitation of Phil Donahue as he interviewed skills in the audience with rehearsed humorous material. The questions and answers related to company issues and drew gales of laughter.

An example:

Q: "What does ISO 9000* mean?"

A: "I swear zero defects—by the year 9000!"

Why would a company create such a diversion from the "real business" of an all-company meeting? Communication and morale, for starters.

The company's former CEO, Dan Warmenhoven, knew how critical these all-employee meetings were to the success of the company. He was determined to maximize the communication value and enjoyment of the meetings. With those goals in mind, Dan began working with our company in early 1991. What we have learned in the production of these employee meetings may be of help to your organization.

Executive Pain

Only when senior executives are convinced that the old way of communicating to employees isn't working (i.e. overhead-driven recitations of numerical data), will a change be made. A new approach to communication can't work without top-level support.

Employee Participation

Of course, the content of corporate communication meetings will be determined at the executive level, but the planning and delivery of the program can be handled by both management

**ISO 9000 is an international quality standard being adopted by many American companies.*

and non-management staff. This can add variety to meetings that may have become all too predictable.

The “Creative Committee”

In planning humorous segments, remarkable things happen when you get people together who know the company and have a well-developed sense of humor. Be inclusive. Get people from marketing, R&D, administration, sales and manufacturing. Use brainstorming. A lot of the ideas won't work. Those that do, though, will likely be better than one person could generate alone.

Benefits of Participation

When senior-level people give up some of the control of these corporate meetings, they make a strong statement about trust and about participative management. The employees who get involved also get recognition and a sense of inside knowledge about what's going on. Most people are eager to be involved.

Format Variation

People will look forward to meetings that are interesting and a bit unpredictable. At one meeting, Dan invited four people from very different segments of the company to report on how they saw the year progressing. At another meeting, a major customer shared his experience with the company. A third meeting involved a takeoff on the Johnny Carson *Tonight* show. We brought in a band, featuring a “Doc Severinsen” trumpet player. Dan did a Carson-style monologue about the year in review, then interviewed a series of “guests” (employees) who spoke from their perspectives.

Corporate meetings such as these can be critical in getting employee buy-in to ongoing programs. Dan said:

People used to find All Hands Meetings an imposition. Now they look forward to them. The interest level is much higher now, and so is the level of motivation. People know what the company is doing, and what they need to do to keep N.E.T. growing.

Know the Culture

The key to a successful meeting is input from representative groups around the company. A more entertaining format works best when it reflects real issues people care about; otherwise, it's just a diversion. You will have to determine what works best in your own environment.

Promoting Yourself and Your Business Through Speaking

Contributed by Robert Middleton

If you're a consultant, lawyer, accountant or professional of any kind, you know moving up in your career takes successful "personal marketing." Typically, selling yourself takes the form of membership involvement in organizations, staying in touch with your network and, of course, gaining a reputation for excellent work.

I've noticed, however, that one of the most powerful methods of personal marketing is frequently avoided altogether. I'm talking about public speaking. Fear and a lack of skill are often given as reasons for avoiding this valuable marketing tool, but it usually comes down to the fact that people just don't know where to start.

Beyond Promotion

Promoting yourself through speaking has numerous benefits: positioning yourself as an expert in a particular area, saving time by connecting with many people at once and developing a large pool of prospective clients from your audience. An added benefit is that the process of organizing a presentation relative to your profession adds to the depth of your knowledge and increases your confidence.

There are many opportunities for public speaking. Most of them don't pay anything, but that's not the intent here. Business and service organizations, college extension classes, conferences and alumni groups frequently are looking for speakers.

Getting Booked

To get booked, use a very straightforward approach: call, mail and call again. Call to locate the decision-maker in the

organization. Say you have a topic that might be of interest to their group and ask to mail some information. Next, mail a package containing the following: a cover letter giving an overview of your topic and why you think the group would be interested, a short professional biography and a short write-up on your topic suitable for reprinting in their newsletter. They'll often reprint it verbatim. Also include any brochures or marketing materials that demonstrate your professionalism.

Finally, call back in a few days to see if they are interested and want to schedule a date. Some groups plan a month in advance, some six months or more. But the talks most difficult to book, frequently are the best. Persistence in follow-up really pays off here.

Making the Talk Count

When you give your talk, make it informative and useful to the audience—not an extended sales pitch. Practice your talk many times, especially before your first presentation. Include audience participation if possible. Leave time for questions and answers. Always promote yourself in an understated way, “If you would like to receive my newsletter, please give me your business card.”

You may not be the world's best the first time out, but with practice, you'll discover that speaking to promote your business is not only profitable, it can also be a whole lot of fun.

PowerSpeaking® Helps Land Big Sale

On December 13, 1991, Linda Wallace made, perhaps, the most important presentation of her career. On December 17, her company, Rucker Fuller, an office furniture supply company, was awarded a \$3,000,000 contract to be spread over three years. The client commented later that the presentation had been a critical part of their decision to buy from Rucker Fuller. What was behind this winning presentation?

Because Rucker Fuller's management knew that excellent presentation skills are critical in today's cost-conscious, highly competitive sales environment, they made an investment in training. All their sales reps took **PowerSpeaking**®.

Linda's presentation was to a San Francisco-based law firm. With over 450 employees in four California locations, the client was upgrading its offices and needed lots of new furniture. They opened the bidding to three companies. Each group had just 30 minutes to make their pitch. In a word, pressure!

Linda began by meeting with her management to go over the core message, "You can depend on Rucker Fuller" and several key points that were supported by Rucker Fuller stories. She crafted the presentation, then gave it to the sales staff and received valuable feedback. She had one more dry run with senior management.

During those critical 30 minutes in front of the client, Linda's preparation really paid off. It's not enough to have high-quality products and services. Wins like this also take outstanding presentation skills and lots of preparation. The Rucker Fuller management is also to be congratulated for putting its resources into staff training. They got an excellent return on investment and the payoff will be long-term.

How To Coach Senior Executives

A harried vice president plops herself down at your desk and pleads for help. She must do a major presentation and has no idea where to begin. What to do? Get personal.

My work with a number of senior speakers across a wide variety of organizations has left an indelible impression on me. When they get personal, they get good. Over and over again, I start by suggesting we go back to childhood. I ask how what they're doing today relates to their pasts. This rich vein uncovers stories that reveal the depth of the person and leaves the audience deeply connected. Here are a few examples.

A Slide Rule and a Calculator

A 55-year old manager had to announce to his 300 subordinates significant organizational changes that would affect everyone's reporting relationships.

His own job was going away, and he would be finding something new. He began by sharing the story of his first job out of college. He was laid off a week after he arrived. He told the audience that from that point on, he's had a flexible approach to his career. He used the props of a slide rule and a calculator to show how important it is to adapt to change.

High School Chemistry and Corporate Education

The president of an educational consortium realized that the roots of her passion about adult education go back to her high school chemistry class. In speaking to potential corporate clients, she wanted to connect at a personal level. She told them how she "aced" chemistry in high school because she could memorize things like the periodic table of elements. But when she took a placement test in college, they advised her to take chemistry, because she obviously knew none of it. She was devastated. Years later she observed that too much of our contemporary corporate education and training programs also focus on rote learning that does not relate to daily work.

Her company is committed to changing that. She spoke in front of a giant periodic table of elements.

Dave Brubeck and Paul Desmond

A senior product development manager who loved jazz, made a presentation about the need to develop business partnerships. His message was that while these are difficult, they can be very worthwhile.

He drew a parallel from jazz history to the world of business by describing the tumultuous beginnings of the Dave Brubeck Quartet. Paul Desmond, the alto saxophone master, had virtually forced himself on a reluctant Brubeck. It was Brubeck's wife who could see the potential in the partnership. As the product manager spoke, he played "Take Five" in the background. The audience clearly got the message—and loved the music.

Each of these senior people had reluctance about speaking before large groups. Yet, their positions demanded it. When they made the connection between their personal life histories and their business topics, the reluctance became enthusiasm. The next time you are called upon to help a senior executive pull together a critical presentation, encourage him or her to draw on personal stories. The audience will love it, and it will energize your reluctant executive speaker.

Working with Novice Speakers

Suddenly, you find yourself chair of your group's program committee and it's your job to find and work with speakers each week (or month). Most of them will be content experts, but novices at speaking. What can you do to manage the process? To find out, we interviewed Fritz Brauner who has been active in the speaker recruitment and management process for the past six years with his Burlingame, California Rotary Club. Fritz estimates he has been through the process over 250 times, since his club uses speakers on a weekly basis.

PowerSpeaking: With the demand for a program every week, how do you select and recruit speakers?

Fritz Brauner: One approach is to see an article in the newspaper that looks interesting. If the person is local, we'll call or write and see if they want to come talk to us. Another approach is to do a program analysis by topic so we get a balance during the year. We set up a number of topic areas like: business, government, education, entertainment, and so on. Once we decide on the topic, we use our networks to see if anyone knows someone in that area who could talk to us.

PS: Do you look primarily for speakers with good presentation skills or for speakers with good content?

FB: My observation over time has been that if the subject matter is very interesting, then the speaker's skills don't need to be that great. But if the subject matter is marginally interesting, then the speaker's skills had better be very good. The best program, of course, is an excellent speaker with an excellent topic.

PS: What can you do as the meeting planner to help the nervous, inexperienced speaker do well?

FB: Use a question and answer format. Come up with questions your group might want to hear about and ask the speaker simply to respond to them in the talk. Recently, for example, I gave a speaker a list of questions. After a few introductory comments like, "It's nice to be here," he pulled out a legal pad and began,

“Fritz asked me to talk about a number of questions that come up in our work. The first one is, ‘What do you do if...’” He spent five minutes on that one and then said, “Another question Fritz asked me was...” and so on. The list of eight or ten questions became the format of his talk. This made it easy for him to give the talk. He didn’t have to worry about preparing a formal speech. This makes it very easy for the non-experienced speaker.

PS: What other tips do you have for making the process go smoothly?

FB: What you do before, during and after the presentation can help a lot. After the person has agreed to speak to your group, send a letter of confirmation. A week or two before the talk, call to confirm the date. Ask for a written introduction in advance. Give the speaker an overview of what the issues are in your group before the talk. On the day of the speech, take the speaker around and introduce him or her to everyone. Make the person feel welcome. Be ready with questions at the end in case no one in the group has questions. Develop a transition from the talk to the next part of the meeting that acknowledges the value of the presentation, for example, “Thank you, Bob. That was most enlightening. I know we all will be wiser investors (or whatever) after today. Next on the agenda is...”

Finally, be sure to write the speaker a thank you note. That means a lot.

PS: Thank you Fritz. Those are some excellent ideas. I know we all will be wiser meeting planners after today.

FB: You’re welcome. By the way, do you know someone who can speak about...

VI. The Technology of Speaking

“Don’t tell me the details of how you got the data, just tell me what the data means.”

—Ralph Patterson
Engineering Manager

“My purpose is to make sure people hear the message and don’t get lost in the details.”

—Ken Braly
Computer Consultant

“We can get information all day and night. What we need is knowledge.”

—Steve Schramm
General Magic

The engine of our economy is manufacturing. The fuel for that engine is technology. New products are dreamed up and developed, usually, by scientists and engineers in R&D labs sprinkled throughout the Fortune 500 and all the way down to small start-up companies. A good technical presentation can be a first step in the development of a new product.

This chapter is about the technical presentation and some of the more technical aspects of speaking.

“Science and technology are more properly the engines of our economy than capital formation.”

—Robert Solow, Ph.D.
Nobel Prize-winning Economist, MIT

The Five Elements of Successful Technical Presentations

Steve Roberts is about to make a presentation to an overflow crowd in a large corporate board room. Steve is a world-class scientist. His Ph.D. in physics is from a prestigious Ivy League university. His expertise is in fiber-optics. In addition to authoring numerous scientific articles in this area, he holds two patents. Six months ago senior management approved the funding of his project. Today's talk is a checkpoint presentation to management and to his technical peers.

Steve is excited to present the progress his team has made in the development of fiber-optic transceivers that will dramatically reduce the costs of high-speed, multimedia networks. He walks to the front of the room with an armload of detailed overhead transparencies. The overhead projector is already on. The bright light on the screen dominates the front of the room.

Steve looks out nervously and sees an audience of technical colleagues dressed in jeans mixed with senior management and people from marketing, all dressed in shirts and ties.

His goal is to get continued funding for his project, more computer power, and approval to hire three more engineers. He knows the budget is limited, but he is unclear about who else is competing for the funding.

Steve says, "Good morning," then puts up the first of many black and white, hard-to-read overheads. He apologizes to the group, "I know you can't see this from where you're sitting..." He faces the screen and begins reading the overheads. Ten minutes into his presentation, his peers are still interested in the exquisite technical detail he is discussing. Unfortunately, because he is facing the screen, Steve fails to notice that the CEO and his staff are shifting in their chairs and have become bored.

Steve did not receive the funding he wanted. His project came to an end a few months later.

His story has been repeated many times in high-tech environments. And so has the outcome: stagnating careers and missed product opportunities.

Technical Presentation Issues

At the heart of new product development is R&D. The life or death of a new product often depends on a stand-up technical presentation. The presentation skills of technical people are therefore critical to new product development and to our economy as well. In the words of Nobel Prize winning economist Robert Solow, “Science and technology are more properly the engines of our economy than capital formation.”

In the area of presentation skills training, the needs of technical presenters are not being met. Recently, we did an in-depth survey with technical presenters and technical managers to see what they needed. We interviewed 27 engineers and scientists from a broad range of high-tech companies.

People were asked to comment on what they needed to improve their own technical presentations, and to reflect on technical presentations in general. The concerns they expressed addressed five basic areas:

- ▶ analyzing the audience and their needs;
- ▶ conveying the meaning of the data;
- ▶ using visual aids effectively;
- ▶ understanding the different types of technical presentations and their objectives;
- ▶ extemporaneous presentations.

In the complex and demanding arena of the technical presentation, each of these areas requires special skills.

Audience Analysis

In contrast to general business and management speaking, the technical presenter needs to understand, at a very sophisticated level, who is in the audience and what they want. This is what Steve failed to do. He wanted to let his peers know the details of the project, but didn't know how to present the project's business potential to management. This error cost him dearly. Audience analysis takes a little more time, but pays back big dividends. Here are some things you can do.

Before the Meeting. If you are not sure who your audience will be, these strategies will help:

- ▶ Review the meeting agenda and objectives for clues about what attendees are looking for.
- ▶ Contact the meeting organizer and/or attendees in advance and ask them about their expectations.
- ▶ Meet with a senior person from another department—let’s say, sales and marketing—and explore what their interests are in the topic and what they would need from you during the meeting.
- ▶ Prepare information and “hold-out” slides as back-up material in case the discussion gets into related areas that were not on the agenda.

During the Meeting. In the event you are not able to do this preparation before the meeting, here are some real-time, in-meeting strategies:

- ▶ Talk with people as they enter the room and explore with them what their goals are for the meeting.
- ▶ Begin your presentation with a quick audience survey, i.e., “How many of you are specifically interested in seeing the results of our code review on release 3.0 of our new ABC software package? Let me see a show of hands.” A follow-up question could be, “How many are primarily interested in seeing our marketing data and positioning strategy relative to the competition? Show of hands.” This survey will help you decide which direction to take to give them what they want.
- ▶ Be aware of audience nonverbal feedback to you. If it is clear they are not liking what you are presenting, stop your presentation and ask them directly what they would rather hear about. Be prepared to change directions. This is a gutsy and dramatic strategy, but can breathe new life into a dying presentation. (See Steve Schramm’s article, “They Didn’t Want Statistics,” page 164.)

The Meaning of the Data

Technical presenters are trained to be objective. It is hard sometimes for them to take a position on the information they

present. It seems too much like “selling.” However, in our survey, technical managers were clear in their need to have presenters take a position. As one put it, “Don’t just tell me how you got the data, tell me what the data means.” In other words, don’t be so objective.

Technical presenters need to identify what the core message or thesis statement of the presentation is, and repeat it a number of times during the talk.

Repetition helps the audience stay focused and to remember the core message at the end. Examples of memorable core messages:

- ▶ *Design process*: “Testability is a critical part of IC design.”
- ▶ *Quality*: “Quality is our competitive advantage in the 90s.”
- ▶ *Commitment*: “Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.” —Thomas A. Edison

Visual Aids

Visuals have an often fatal attraction for the technical presenter. They can become a crutch. It’s easy to believe that the technical talk *is* the visuals. Survey respondents were clear about this: use visuals as an aid to the talk, not as the talk itself. *The presenter is always more important than his or her visuals.* Technical talks are about human communication, and effective communication does not happen when the speaker is reading words and numbers off a screen.

Handouts

The most popular visuals, according to a study reported in *Communication Briefings*, are handouts. Handouts allow the presenter to rest assured that people will leave the meeting with all the technical detail, but he or she will not have to cover it all from the front of the room. In addition, including copies of the visuals allows people to pay more attention to the presenter and not worry so much about note taking.

Computer Generated Visuals

For some technical presentations, recently we have seen the overhead projector being replaced by computer generated visual aids (multimedia). Usually this involves a liquid crystal display (LCD) panel used in conjunction with an overhead projector, or a projection device like an “InFocus” or “Proxima” machine.

This allows the presenter to bring up visual data directly from a computer during the presentation. For talks that require complex layering effects or movement, or even video and sound, this can be a real plus. The drawbacks are poor image quality, and that the lights must be out (or at least dimmed). This also usually means the presenter must sit at a keyboard typing commands in the dark. That is a formula for curing insomnia. (See “Multimedia Madness,” page 156.)

Computer Video Interface

The solution to these problems may be in a new technology that translates computer information into a video signal. This allows the presenter to show computer data on a television monitor. The lights in the room stay on. The cost of this technology is about ten percent of LCD hardware. The drawback is that even a large TV screen is limited to a group size of twenty to thirty. The overwhelming benefit is that the speaker can be seen. (For large groups of a hundred or more—like at a technical conference—a video projection unit can be used with a full-sized screen.) An infrared remote control can also be used to allow freedom of movement so the speaker is not tied to the mouse or keyboard.

Types of Technical Presentations

Across diverse types of technical presentations, audiences vary, goals are different, and the challenges are unique. Our survey revealed at least six basic types of technical talks.

The Technical Proposal—The audience includes senior management. The goal is to get funding, and the challenge is not to make it so technical that you exclude a business focus.

The Technical Update—The audience is management and technical peers. The goal is to communicate project status.

The Checkpoint Presentation—Again, management and technical peers are the audience. The goal is a “go or no-go” decision and the challenge is to avoid project cancellation.

The Pre-Sale Customer Presentation—The audience is customer management and technical people. The presentation is about information and persuasion, with the goal of making a sale.

The Post-Sale Support Presentation—Customer technical people are the audience. The goal is status review, problem resolution and customer satisfaction.

The Technical Convention Paper—The audience is technical peers, and the goal is to communicate information and perhaps to gain visibility in the field.

When a presenter understands the array of goals and challenges for these different talks, suddenly the depth of technical materials presented, the types of visuals used, and even the closing recommendations become much clearer.

Steve, the expert on fiber-optics, was doing a “checkpoint” presentation with a singular decision goal: go or no-go. He pitched it to his technical peers and failed to take into account the needs of senior management.

Impromptu Presentations

Technical presenters may be asked to discuss their work in a meeting on an impromptu basis, with no time to prepare. Or as often happens, a person’s manager will toss a stack of overheads on the desk and say, “Will you do this talk for me in twenty minutes? Something came up and I can’t make it.”

One effective approach to this challenge is the “PREP” model. PREP is an acronym for: Position; Reasons; Example; Position. Begin by stating your position on the issue. Next, logically support why you feel that way. After your reasoning, give an example or an illustration to anchor your point. Wrap-up with a restatement of your position. The power of this model is in the repetition of the core message at the beginning and at the end, with supporting evidence in the middle. The PREP strategy will help the unprepared speaker seem knowledgeable and confident.

Summary

If Steve Roberts had considered these five major issues, chances are his project would have received the additional funding he needed. He would now be a product champion and a hero to his staff and to senior management. So keep in mind the five critical elements that emerged from our survey. They may be the difference between product success and product failure.

PowerSpeaking® Gets Academic Evaluation

In 1995, Ray Kessler completed his master's degree in speech communication at San Francisco State University. His thesis research was a rigorously designed study of the effectiveness of *PowerSpeaking*® over time.

“Outcome studies” like this are very difficult to do, for several reasons. First, you need to get third-party “objective” evaluations of the participant’s speaking ability before and after the training session. (Most participants feel they’ve made great progress after the program. The trick is to see if other people—in this case, the person’s manager and an outside speech expert—agree.) Second, you’d like to know if the skills are still there some period of time after the training, say, three months later. Third, it’s a challenge in today’s nanosecond corporate change environments to find people in reporting relationships stable enough over time to do pre- and post-training tests.

Ray’s study, “Beyond ‘Smile Sheets:’ Evaluating A Presentation Skills Training Program For Industry,” addressed all of these problems. In the literature, there are many outcome studies done with college students. They are a captive population. It is easy to get pre- and post-training data with them during the course of a semester’s work. Ray’s study is unique because there are almost no outcome studies done in industry. People just move too quickly. Additionally, few in industry will spend the resources necessary to do a long, complex study.

Over 50 people at a number of our client locations participated in the study. We are grateful to them for the time and effort they contributed to furthering our knowledge about what makes good training work. Ray’s research confirmed four major research questions:

- ▶ The training works. As perceived by participants, their managers, and an independent presentation skills expert, *PowerSpeaking*® makes people more effective speakers.

- ▶ Participants see more improvement. While managers and the outside expert saw significant improvement, the trainees thought they improved even more.
- ▶ Excellent rating lasts over time. Two to three months after the training, participants still rated *PowerSpeaking*®'s effectiveness as “excellent.”
- ▶ Supervisors liked what they saw. Based on participants' performance before and after the training, supervisors rated the training program as “good.”

Ray's study showed that, while not easy, it is possible to do a long term outcome study of training in industry. In addition, we were pleased that a scientific study confirmed what we intuitively knew about the effectiveness of *PowerSpeaking*®.

Multimedia Madness

A presenter walks into a corporate presentations room carrying a large suitcase. He unloads a bulky liquid crystal display (LCD) device and spends the next 15 minutes connecting it to his laptop computer and getting it positioned on top of the overhead projector. The front of the room is now dominated by a large screen, an ugly overhead projector and a tangled mess of extension cords and connector wires.

Before the presentation begins, the shades are closed and the lights are turned off. The presenter sits in the dark at the keyboard of his laptop and starts typing. Bullet points come in from the right, from the left and from the top. The image quality on the screen is hard to read from anywhere in the room. Eyelids droop. Heads fall as people all around the room begin to drift off to the Land of Nod.

Does this scene sound familiar? This communication disaster is an example of what we are lauding these days as “Multimedia!” It’s new. It’s hot. Hardware and software multimedia products are selling briskly, for all the wrong reasons.

Multimedia has become a very expensive crutch for some speakers. Nervous presenters—which includes most of us—do not want to be the center of attention. We feel awkward and embarrassed standing in front of a group. How reassuring it is to know that there are now lots of products out there called “presentation software” that promise to save us. Ads imply that all we have to do is create our visuals and presto—the talk is done. We are off the hook. All the audience has to do is read the screen. Hopefully, they won’t look at us at all.

A review of presentation software programs in *MACWORLD* (July, 1994) began:

Whether you’re selling an idea to five midlevel managers at your company or addressing 500 colleagues in a convention hall, presentation software allows you to organize your thoughts

and gives your audience something to look at besides your sweaty brow.

The ideas that we can use visuals to divert the audience's attention, and that the presentation is nothing more than the visuals are fatally flawed. These ideas may sound good at first. Ultimately, though, they result in poor communication. Like it or not, the presenter and his or her message is always more important than the visuals, no matter how fancy they are. Stand-up presentations are about *human communication*—not about reading words on a screen or watching a movie. To be believed, to be persuasive, we have to show up!

Multimedia is only the next stage in the development of visual aids. For years, business and technical presenters have overused and hidden behind their overheads. Today we simply have a more glitzy, complex version of the same old problems. We are able to put our graphs and charts on a disc, bring in our laptop computers and run it all through an LCD panel. Even though the hardware is extremely expensive (and cumbersome to operate), the screen images are often hard to read. You have to ask yourself if bullet points twirling around on the screen are worth all the hassle and expense. Since these special effects rarely improve communication, my answer is no. Let's not make the same mistakes with multimedia that we've been making with overheads all these years.

So what *does* enhance communication? A presenter who is well-prepared, confident and at ease in front of a group. This kind of presenter uses visuals as *aids* to the presentation—not as the presentation itself. With limited time to prepare for a speech, I would advise a presenter to spend more time on his or her skills as a speaker and less time on learning elaborate presentation software packages. A more confident speaker with simpler visuals will always be more effective than a timid speaker with fancy visuals.

Here are some guidelines for using visuals in general and multimedia in particular:

- ▶ First, ask yourself if you need visuals *at all*.
- ▶ If you do need visuals, go first with the simplest formats, i.e., flip charts, overheads, handouts. Think of multimedia

last, not first. (Keep in mind that handouts are the most popular visuals with audiences.)

- ▶ Whatever format you select, remember to keep visuals big and bold, easy to read and understand. When possible, use color and graphic images rather than word slides.
- ▶ If your visuals and your message would be greatly enhanced with movement, sound or video, then think about using multimedia.
- ▶ If you do use multimedia, think about going through a large screen TV rather than an LCD panel device.

Running your visuals directly from your computer to a TV has many advantages: the lights can stay on in the room, there is less hardware to deal with and it's less expensive.

With flat panel technology developing rapidly in the United States, in a few years, say the experts, a typical conference room will have a simple screen two feet by three feet and only three inches thick hanging from the wall. You will just plug in your computer directly. Lights stay on. Good-bye to overheads, LCD panels and dark rooms.

Speakers, no doubt, will still be sweating bullets. The best ones, though, won't lean on techno-gadgets for salvation. They will, as they've always done, remember that they have a human message to carry to other humans. You can rest assured that all the dancing bullets and snazzy graphics in the world will never replace the human touch.

“Many presentations rely on low-resolution devices to communicate information—reading aloud from images projected up on the wall from computer screens or from the dreaded overhead projector.”

—Edward R. Tufte
Professor of Statistics
Yale University

Presentation Graphics: Research Findings

A recent study conducted by the 3M Visual Systems Division indicated that some of the hot, exciting presentation graphics programs may be overkill. When not used with care, the newer presentation formats can actually detract from audience retention.

The study found that when on-screen, real-time effects are used, it's best to keep them simple. These findings were summarized in *Meeting Management News*.

According to this research, audiences respond best to a speaker who uses technology as a presentation aid. Response declines rapidly when the speaker takes a back seat to complex on-screen visuals that appear “canned” to the audience.

Key points in the research report show that presenters can improve the audience's perception of their presentation with:

Simple computer-generated graphics—Whether displayed on an overhead projector, projection panel or monitor, these graphics boosted the audience's perception of the speaker as well as its comprehension and retention—so long as the chart conveyed relevant data. Not surprisingly, “art” added to presentations with little linkage to the topic being presented detracted from the audience's understanding of the presentation.

Animation—A glitzy multimedia presentation won't help an unprepared speaker impress his or her audience, the project found. But a good speaker can use animation very effectively to boost audience retention. The most effective animations proved to be among the simplest, such as bar charts that grow or text revealed line by line.

So, when you are tempted to use your portable computer and liquid crystal display panel on top of the overhead projector to really wow 'em, remember to keep it simple. *You* are still the star of the show. Your visual aids are just that—aids.

Hello: CD Rom!

Goodbye: Flip Charts, Overhead Projectors, Slides, Dim Lights, LCD Panels, and Computers!

Reading the recent literature in multi-media, computer-based presentation visuals, you'd think CD ROM technology is going to make everything else obsolete in one fell swoop. Since today's technology allows us to put 600 slide images on one 5" disc, and with compression technology, be able to include full video and sound capability on that same disc, these wild claims may not be too far off.

For years we had been using simple flip charts for all the visuals in our two day *PowerSpeaking*® and *HighTechSpeaking*® programs. These low-tech visuals were adequate for our needs. The problem was they were very time intensive. A trainer had to prepare the charts for each program at a cost of about one and a half hours per workshop, plus one chart pad of paper. We recently switched over to a Kodak CD ROM technology that has made our lives much easier, and saved many trees.

If you or your company makes a lot of visual-based presentations, you may want to explore this new technology. Here's how it worked:

Step one—We transferred our visuals into PowerPoint®. We simply hired a consultant to do this for us rather than struggling to learn the program ourselves. We gave her all our flip chart images, and a week later we had our 32 flip chart pages on PowerPoint® slides. (Cost = \$350)

Step two—We took a floppy disc with these slides on it to a job shop that turned the digital images into actual 35mm slides. This step took about three working days. (Cost = \$75)

Step three—We took the slides to another job shop where they were transferred onto the CD. This took another four working days. (Cost = \$150)

Step four—We purchased a special Kodak CD player that hooks directly into a television monitor. The CD player comes with a programmable remote for easy presentation. (Original cost = \$450; today's cost = \$79)

For slightly over \$1,000 we have saved ourselves hours of preparation time and simplified our whole presentation. We saw our ROI on this investment within a few months. But, there are pros and cons of using this technology as we soon found out.

Cons—Once you make your CD, you're stuck with it. You can not go in and change your presentation at will. If you need to change the images, you will have to go back to step one and prepare a new CD. Additionally, since the image is presented through a television monitor, you will be constrained by the need for a modern, good sized monitor (say, 28" to 34") to show to an average sized meeting of 10 to 25 people.

Pros—Because this is shown on a television screen, there is no need for any kind of projection device, i.e. computer hooked to an LCD panel with the lights off. The speaker is still the main event. The room stays lit. This whole technology is about 1/10th the cost of a lap top/LCD panel set up. It is light weight. It is simple to operate. You show up with only a 10 ounce CD player in your briefcase that hooks to the TV "video in" slot with an RCA jack. You can store massive amounts of data on one CD, and program your 600 images to show in any order you choose.

We use this for our training sessions, and people comment on the great looking visuals and then ask, "Where's the computer that's driving all this?" We respond simply, "There is none."

If you need to alter your visuals before your presentations, consider using a laptop with built-in CD-ROM capability. That way you get the storage capacity of the CD with the flexibility of a modifiable software program like PowerPoint® all in one unit. Dump the projection technology. Keep the lights on and show your visuals through a television monitor. With CD-ROM you have massive amounts of storage at your fingertips, and with the lights on, you are still the main event, not the visual aids.

Visual Aid Options

Type	Ease of Use 1-10	Cost 1-10	Prep Time 1-10	Audience	Impact	Advantages	Disadvantages
Handouts	1	2	2	All	Low key	Data-dense, easy to read	Distraction from speaker
White Board	1	1	1	Internal, staff meetings, small groups	Casual, low tech	Cost, prep time, interactive	Small group, no pizzazz
Overheads	4	3	5	All	Low key, economical, audience friendly	Ease of use, high audience contact, lights on full	Seems low tech, older technology, requires a printer
35mm Slides	5	3	5	External, management, sales, conventions	Professional, sharp	Photo quality	Lights out, linear presentation, less interaction
Laptop with LCD or projector	10	10+	10	Sales, high tech, senior management	Up to date, high tech	Multi-media, ease of changes to content, no printer needed	Hard to use, computer crashes, lights out, too glitzy for some audiences, extreme cost
Laptop with scan converter to TV, + remote	8	6	10	Sales, high tech, senior management, small group	Up to date, high tech, more focus on presenter	Multi-media, ease of changes, no printer needed, full light, less cost	Hard to use, computer crashes, moderate cost, smaller group size
CD ROM to TV or projector, + remote	6	4	10	Sales, high tech, senior management, small group	Up to date, high tech, more focus on presenter	Huge cost savings, ease of use, no crashes, full light, data dense	No changes possible to disc, smaller group size

Let's Not Get Lost in the Technology

Contributed by Steven Kirsch

As vice president of a company that makes desktop publishing software, I recently delivered an unusual message to a large audience of people who use computer-aided publishing tools.

The message was simply this: we need to remember not to get carried away by the technology. Better looking overhead transparencies and 35mm slides don't necessarily mean more effective communication.

With the variety of desktop publishing and presentation tools available today, it's easy to believe that our presentations will be better just because we use these tools. Nothing could be further from the truth.

These tools can help you produce legible slides and reasonable-looking documents quickly and easily. No more, no less. But that's really all you need.

We have to remember that the point is not how to make better slides, the point is how to give better presentations. So after you've purchased your software, if you really want to communicate better, get some training on how to give more effective presentations!

People spend hours and hours preparing their visuals. But most of us haven't spent any time at all learning how to use the simple, effective presentation tools we were born with. Just a few hours of professional coaching on the effective use of gestures, eye contact, voice, staging, organization and content can make a world of difference.

I mean, what good are good-looking slides if half your audience is asleep?

*“Audiences tend to perceive users of overhead projectors and acetates as down-to-earth and approachable, smart with a presentation buck, and unafraid **to put themselves, not the media, at center stage** (emphasis added).”*

—Presentations Magazine, October, 1997

“They Didn’t Want Statistics...”

Contributed by Steve Schramm

My most difficult speaking situation occurred early in my career. I was to give a technical talk to a large group of senior, experienced engineers. I did a lot of research, collected statistics and organized a speech that I thought was very detailed. I thought it would be impressive to the audience. After about ten minutes of rattling off information, it was obvious that the audience was disinterested and bored. I was blowing it big time. I went another minute or two, jumping to what I thought were interesting points, but no change.

I handled it by stopping my speech, looking out into the audience and saying, “I can see that what I’m saying is not what you wanted or expected—what were you hoping for?”

After a pause, when people realized I wasn’t going to continue, one person said that they didn’t want statistics— they wanted real examples from situations I had seen or experienced. When other people agreed, I related some experiences and invited the audience to also share some personal stories, which they did. It went much better for the rest of the hour.

“The mark of a truly educated person is to be moved deeply by statistics.”

— George Bernard Shaw

“Oh Yeah?—Says Who?” Things We Know For Sure About Speaking

“Content is only worth 7% of your total impact as a speaker.”

Oh yeah? Says who? Aphorisms like this are often presented to trainees as gospel out on the “slippery slopes” of communications training. Don’t believe everything you hear.

The source of the above statement is the work of Dr. Albert Mehrabian, a social psychologist at UCLA. The statement is often misrepresented. It’s used in presentations training to convince participants of the importance of nonverbal communication. The problem is, it is largely irrelevant. Mehrabian’s work focused on interpersonal communications—not public speaking.

Like everyone else in the presentations training field, we have a certain point of view about what speakers should do to maximize their effectiveness. Much of this is based on personal experience, hunches and observations. Some of it, though, is based on actual empirical studies. What follows are things we know *for sure* about speaking because they have been documented in the scientific literature.

Substance

Fact People remember longer material at the beginning and at the end of a presentation.

Application State your core message loud and clear at the beginning and at the end of your talk.

Source Crowder, R., “Auditory and Temporal Factors in the Modality Effect,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1986, pp. 268-278.

Fact Speech retention is enhanced by core message repetition.

Application Repeat your core message at least three times during your talk.

Source Ross, Raymond S., *Understanding Persuasion*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1990, p. 162.

Fact Stories have stronger impact than statistics.

Application Include stories, applications or examples to illustrate your statistical information.

Source Martin, J. and Powers, M., "Organizational Stories: More Vivid and Persuasive than Quantitative Data," in *Psychological Foundations of Organizational Behavior*, Barry Staw, Ed., 1983.

Style

Fact Delivery (style) has more impact than content, organization or visual aids.

Application Develop a confident delivery style. Take time to rehearse.

Source Weaver, R. (Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH), "Delivery: Forty Percent of Technical Briefing Effectiveness," Paper, Society for Technical Communication, Denver, CO, May, 1987.

Fact Of all the speaker's style techniques, eye contact is the most powerful influencer of comprehension and credibility.

Application Learn to look directly into the eyes of audience members for extended periods—like the completion of an entire thought, or core message.

Source Beebe, S., "Effects of Eye Contact, Posture, and Vocal Inflection Upon Credibility and Comprehension," Paper delivered to the Speech Communication Association Convention, 1978.

- Fact** People who are lying use few gestures (if any), fidget, speak fast and have a high vocal pitch.
- Application** To increase credibility, speak in a lower tone, speak slower, and use expansive “Zone II” gestures.
- Source** Ekman, P., *Telling Lies*, Berkeley Books, New York, 1985.
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- Fact** Deep, regular breathing reduces anxiety.
- Application** Decrease speech nervousness by breathing deeply before you go on.
- Source** Longo, D. and vom Saal, W., “Respiratory Relief Therapy: A New Treatment for the Reduction of Anxiety,” *Behavior Modification*, July, 1984, pp. 361- 378.
-
- Fact** What, when, and how much you eat dramatically affects your speech performance.
- Application** Eat a light meal of protein and carbohydrates no more than two hours before your speech. Do not eat fats.
- Source** Wurtman, J., “Preperformance Meals: Eating for a Winning Presentation,” in *Managing Your Mind and Mood Through Food*, Rawson Associates, New York, 1986, pp. 121-143.
-
- Fact** Mental practice can increase your actual performance.
- Application** Visualize yourself delivering an outstanding presentation as you prepare. Intersperse visualization with rehearsal.
- Source** Swets, J. and Bjork, R., “Enhancing Human Performance: An Evaluation of ‘New Age’ Techniques Considered by the U. S. Army,” *Psychological Science*, March, 1990, pp. 85-96.

Fact Variation in voice volume and pitch enhances the audience's perception of speaker competence.

Application Dump the monotone delivery. Use vocal variety in presentations.

Source Scherer, K.R., London, H. Wolf, J.J., "Paralinguistic Cues and Audience Evaluation," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 7, pp. 31-44.

Fact Deliberate pauses make a speaker seem more competent and increase retention of main points.

Application Use pause before and after important points for greater impact.

Source Leathers, Dale, *Successful Nonverbal Communication*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, New York, 1992, p. 225.

Staging

Fact Using visual aids increases the audience's retention of your presentation by 55%.

Application Enhance your spoken message with visual aids. (Warning: do not over-use visuals or audience attention may fade quickly.)

Source Zayas-Baya, E., "Instructional Media in the Total Language Picture," *International Journal of Instructional Media* 5, 1977-1978, pp. 145-150.

► Technical Wiz at 30 —Speaking Pro at 50

Fact Because of the nature of brain physiology, we are better at working out abstract, complex problems in our youth, but slowly lose that skill with age. Applied skills that demand interpretation, wisdom, and judgment improve with age. The ability to speak and write improves from age 50 to 70.

Application Cheer up: there are some benefits to aging.

Source Mark, V. and Mark, J., *Brain Power*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA, 1989.

So, remember, the next time some communications guru makes a wild statement about eye contact, visual aids, or content you just say, “Oh yeah? Says who?”

Microphones: What You Don't Know Can Hurt You

Contributed by Mary McGlynn

- ▶ Tap...Tap...Tap. "Can you hear me in the back?"
- ▶ "I don't need a mic. I'll just project."
- ▶ Head down to microphone level, leaning forward, "Ah...ah ...is this on?"

Microphones have the potential to turn a speech into a nightmare for the speaker and the audience. Good microphone technique separates the amateur from the pro. The effective use of a mic will add to your presentation success.

Major Types of Microphones

Hand-Held—A hand-held mic is the workhorse of all microphones. It is designed to be touched and can take some rough treatment. It should be held six to twelve inches from your mouth at a 45-degree angle or less. If a mic is held vertically, it may pick up feedback from ceiling loudspeakers, and holding it close to the mouth can produce distortion.

An important speaking skill is comfort using the hand-held microphone. Usually this type of mic is held in a goose-neck holder attached to the lectern. Prior to the talk take control by:

- ▶ pulling the microphone out of the goose-neck to develop a sense of ease, control and smoothness;
- ▶ checking the length of cord available when you move away from the lectern;
- ▶ practicing a portion of your talk with the volume controls set so that you sense the relationship between your varying vocal levels and the position of your mic.

Remember, as you turn your head, move the mic.

With a hand-held microphone, it is critical to be aware of the placement of the loudspeakers in the room. To avoid feedback, stay *behind* the speakers.

Clip-on— There is good news and bad news. The good news is that clip-on mics give you freedom to gesture, to operate equipment, to point to items— to get involved in the talk. The bad news is that they are prone to feedback, have a less stable sound quality and are more fragile.

The lapel mic clips onto your tie, shirt or blouse about four inches below your mouth. It has a cord that leads to a connector (usually attached to the speaker's belt), which in turn has a cord leading to the public address system. When walking with the microphone, watch the cord. Grab it, control it and don't let it intimidate you. The loose cord leading to the connector at your belt can be hidden under a blouse or shirt or just put in your pants or skirt pocket.

Women should: wear a jacket and a blouse with buttons so there is a place to attach the mic. Avoid jewelry that may interfere with the mic. Both men and women should minimize noise coming from clothing rubbing against the mic.

Wireless—Nothing to restrict freedom of movement; no cords to trip over. Sounds like heaven, doesn't it? These mics can be hand-held or lavalier types. The disadvantage of the wireless mic is the vulnerability to competing radio signals. Also, they can cause you embarrassment if you forget to turn them off after leaving the stage.

Microphone Use

After considering which mic to use, the next issue is how to use it effectively. Here are some tips that will give you the look of a pro:

- ▶ Use your normal tone of voice; there's no need to yell.
- ▶ Go to the room early and test the system in advance on your own time, not the audience's time. Try on the mic. Move with it. Make it your own. Check the volume levels. Know where the loudspeakers are so that you can avoid feedback.
- ▶ Do not blow into a microphone. Test it by snapping your fingers or counting.
- ▶ Before saying the first word, adjust the microphone to your satisfaction.

- ▶ Avoid holding the mic with both hands. Change hands with the mic occasionally.
- ▶ Use a mic when there are 50 or more people in your audience.

Finally, it boils down to this: if the audience can hear your message better with a mic, use one.

The Ultimate Visual Aid

So you thought PowerPoint®, overhead projectors and mechanical pointers were hard to use? Well, we can all take a lesson from G. S. Brindley, a British physiologist. According to Newsweek magazine (September 16, 1996), Dr. Brindley addressed the American Urological Association with astounding results.

The story in Newsweek concerned how middle aged men are turning to hormone therapy to fight the ravages of age. Apparently various hormones like melatonin, testosterone, and DHEA are helping men maintain the vitality of their youth. Of course, a topic covered related to male potency. Various chemical approaches were described. But the most memorable involved a new product being sold by Upjohn called an “erection injection.”

Several years ago, Dr. Brindley was making a presentation about this new product at a meeting of the American Urological Association. He described how the drug worked and how, in even the most forbidding circumstances, the injection would get the desired results. At the conclusion of his talk, he announced that just before he came to the stage he had injected himself. He then stepped to the side of the lectern, lowered his pants and showed all the living proof. Audience members crowded to the stage wondering if this wasn't just some novelty store prosthesis. But no. As Newsweek put it, “It was all Brindley.”

So the next time you struggle to find the off/on switch on that overhead projector, or silently curse your malfunctioning LCD panel, remember, things could be a whole lot more challenging.

VII. The Biology of Speaking

“Right now, at this very moment, for better or for worse, the food you ate at your last meal or snack is affecting your mood and behavior.”

—Judith Wurtman, Ph.D.
Nutritionist

The vehicle for getting your message across is your body. Managing your diet and caring for your voice can pay off in successful presentations. This chapter tells you how.

A Speaker's Diet

At 9:30 AM John gave his presentation to senior management. The future of his project and his department hung in the balance. He started slowly and went downhill from there. He felt heavy, unable to collect his thoughts. While everyone was polite enough, he did not get the funding he requested.

What happened? Was he unprepared? Was he too nervous? Were his biorhythms off that day? Any of these things could be true. What is more likely, though, is that the rich, cream-filled Danish he ate at 8:15 AM did him in.

Judith J. Wurtman, Ph.D., in her book, *Managing Your Mind and Mood Through Food*, has an entire chapter on eating strategies for making winning presentations. Her suggestions include:

Eat Light—Avoid heavy, rich meals before you present; however, don't starve yourself. You need food in your system for energy.

Time Your Meals—Plan to eat about two hours before you speak so most digestion will be complete when you take center stage.

Eat Low-Fat, Low Calorie Foods—High calorie, high-fat foods are harder to digest and divert blood to the digestive process. Include carbohydrates and protein for greater mental alertness during your presentation.

Wurtman's book offers other tips, including conference and banquet eating, avoiding jet lag through diet and eating to ease stress.

Care and Feeding of Your Voice

Contributed by Jerry Johnson

Commercial radio broadcasting was my career for twenty-five years. I have been on-air talent, newsman, TV and radio talk-show host and an executive with ABC radio.

Over the years, I've discovered many things about the voice. People frequently abuse it. The following cautions will help you take better care of your voice.

Voice Hazards

Dairy Products—Milk products contribute to the build-up of phlegm and mucus (frogs in your throat). If you're nervous, like before a speech, the problem is worse.

Vocal Strain—The vocal apparatus is very delicate. Any type of strain, whether yelling at a football game or compensating for a bad PA system, results in hoarseness, laryngitis or worse.

Strong Throat Sprays—A newscaster colleague once lost his voice for a month after “pushing it” through a sore throat by using a strong spray. Vocal cords are delicate tissues that need TLC, not punishment from chemical band-aids.

Smoke—If you speak a lot and still smoke...what's there to say? Smoker's throat, smoker's cough and the sound of a voice that has been tortured with smoke should convince anyone that smoke is cruel and unusual punishment for the voice.

Coffee and Hot Tea—Both contribute to the dryness of throat and mouth tissue, which is especially bad just before making a presentation or speech.

Voice Treatments

Hot Water—Drink it all the time. I have used it in place of coffee for years and it's great! Hot water has a taste and is terrific for your vocal apparatus (and entire body). You can also add some lemon. At a speech or presentation, I request plenty of hot water. It works!

Salt Water—Gargling with salt water is absolutely the best treatment for a sore throat. Do it frequently, every half-hour if possible. It is also a good treatment just before giving a speech, a meeting or a major sales presentation.

Steam—Breathe hot steam into your mouth, nose and lungs. This is the best treatment I've ever found for hoarseness, sore vocal cords and laryngitis. Hot steam from a shower will do, but I get better results from a tea kettle on the stove. Drape a towel over your head, inhale the steam for as long as you can, take a break, then do it again. You'll feel the results almost immediately. The secret is moisture and heat. Your voice loves both.

Throat Lozenges—Use good quality, gentle, but effective throat lozenges. Many of the popular products are not worth buying, in my opinion. The best one I know of is Ricola® Swiss Herb Candy, imported by Richter Bros., Inc. Look for it in drug stores, health food stores and supermarkets.

An ABC colleague of mine was assigned to cover Britain's military action in the Falkland Islands. He was away more than three weeks and punished his voice daily. He got chilled on shore and aboard ship. He didn't get much sleep, smoked steadily, never stopped talking and frequently shouted to make himself heard over poor telephone lines back to the States.

My friend returned very ill. He had an acute case of strep throat with other complications and could not say a single word for six weeks. His voice never fully recovered from the ordeal.

As with so much of life, common sense is crucial. This is especially true on health matters and those related to the voice. As a manager, salesperson or speaker, your voice is your most important asset. We only get one voice. Take good care of yours.

VIII. The Future of Speaking

*“The day after I took a **PowerSpeaking**® workshop, I went on to teach my 30 first-grade students to be speakers. Surprisingly, they enjoyed it and each week they couldn’t wait to get up to talk. When these kids reach adulthood, they won’t be afraid to speak out.”*

—Pauline Binkley
First Grade Teacher

In our **PowerSpeaking**® training programs we hear countless tales of childhood humiliation in some long-ago, but not forgotten, public-speaking nightmare. Often the emotional scars of the experience remain long into adulthood. This does not have to happen. In this chapter we’ll meet some adults who believe kids can master this skill and some kids who have.

PowerSpeaking® for Kids

“Suzie” was so painfully shy that she could not even say “yes” or “no” to simple questions asked by her teacher. She could only respond with the help of another student. Suzie was a first-grader at Gomes Elementary School in Fremont, California. Fortunately for Suzie, her teacher was Pauline Binkley, a 30-year veteran of elementary education. She knew that Suzie needed help right away.

Pauline was searching for some way to draw Suzie out without singling her out. As fate would have it, Pauline attended a one-hour *PowerSpeaking*® seminar and received a copy of our audiotapes. She listened carefully and decided to adapt these lessons for her first-grade class. In the fall of 1991 she began teaching *PowerSpeaking*® to her students. At the end of that first semester, her principal, Bill Senning, visited her class to see the kids speak. He later gave Pauline his strong support, “You know, if anyone had asked me, I’d have told them that you just couldn’t teach first-graders to do what I saw this morning. There are probably a lot of people who would say that six-year-olds are too young to learn public speaking, but your kids knew gestures, posture, projection, eye contact and they knew how to deliver with style. Hey, you’re damn good!” This was the encouragement she needed.

Each year since then, Pauline’s students have been receiving *PowerSpeaking*® training. The students love it. The parents love it. In fact it is so successful, the Fremont School District has distributed 300 copies of Pauline’s new teacher’s guide, *PowerSpeaking*® For Kids, to all of its primary grade teachers.

At six years old, the children have fewer fears of speaking in front of a group. Pauline observed that, “Kids love it. Some come through the door saying, ‘Are we gonna do *PowerSpeaking*® today?’ Sometimes I have to get a hook to get them off the stage. Even the shy ones take a deep breath, give their speech, and when it’s over, they grin from ear to ear. It warms your heart to see it.”

Pauline realized that there was nothing generally available for teachers who wanted to teach public speaking in the lower grade levels. Knowing the success she was having in her own classroom, she thought other teachers might benefit from *PowerSpeaking*® as well. When the district offered her a “mentorship,” she decided to write a guidebook for other teachers. The result is a large format, 75-page book that teachers can use to set up their own speech programs for grades K through 3.

Pauline Binkley is a remarkable teacher with heart and vision. She was a shy child and said, “I wish I had the education I am giving to these children. I would’ve gotten over this fear, rather than it getting more ingrained as time went on.” We applaud Pauline’s work. We are so proud to be associated with this program in the public schools that will make a difference in so many lives.

Decades from now, Suzie, the shy little girl that got Pauline going on this project, may be in the California State Legislature, or in The United States Senate. At some distant awards dinner, she will get up to speak. With tears in her eyes, she will fumble for the right words, “...and you know—it all started with a first grade teacher who really cared. Her name was Mrs. Binkley.”

Coaching Young Speakers

Contributed by John Warren

“Before this class, I was really shy and hardly ever spoke to anyone. Now I can speak freely to people.”

“I got a lot out of it and would recommend it to others to overcome nervousness. I learned to stand, gesture and not to appear nervous.”

“I was afraid of being laughed at. I’m glad I took the class because it taught me how to be confident and not nervous in front of a group of people, whether they’re your friends or not.”

This feedback from young speakers reflects the impact of speech training for kids. One of the best ways for you to reinforce the skills you have is to teach them to others. And who better to teach them to than an eager group of kids? You could start at home with your own children and their friends or offer to teach a class at a local school, youth club, recreation center or through a Toastmasters club.

You can pass the baton of knowledge and skill to the next generation and give them a head start! Start by coaching them on a project or presentation they have to give in class.

The gains in both self-confidence and speaking skills coincide with three easy-to-teach behaviors which the students pick up very quickly (quicker than most adults!). First, work on a solid, well-balanced stance. Since most students are taking physical education or are involved in sports, encourage them to use the same balanced stance they would use playing softball, tennis or shooting free-throws in basketball. They understand the analogy of balance right away. Second, encourage them to use gestures to describe the action in their talk. Kids are much less inhibited than adults in this area, especially when they are given permission. Help them learn ways to visualize the words they are saying and help their listeners to “get the picture.”

Lastly, have them work on making eye contact with one person at a time in their audience. That tip alone seems to help them get over the fear of speaking to a group.

Your involvement could be as informal as coaching your own kids at home or as structured as a formal class. If the idea of the Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program is of interest to you, you can get more information from your local Toastmasters club.

The skill and confidence to speak powerfully is not only important to you, it's important to our youth and our future. Share your knowledge, reinforce your skills and pass the baton to others.

Diana Bock Knocks Their Socks Off!

Eleven-year-old Diana Bock got up to address 400 professional speakers at the National Speakers Association annual meeting in Palm Desert, California in 1991. She had never spoken in public before. Her voice was shaky. A couple of times she forgot what she was saying. She pushed on.

When she finished, those 400 professional speakers leaped to their feet and gave her a thunderous ovation. Diana's self-confidence soared. Today, she still feels stronger because of that momentary success. What happened?

The trip to the NSA Conference and Diana's participation in the youth program had been planned for some time. Her father, Wally Bock, had encouraged her participation and asked her to think about making a presentation. What to talk about? Diana's best friend, Connie Khamvanthong, is from Laos. The story of how Connie and her family got from war-torn Laos to Richmond, California would make a good speech, Diana thought. She was right.

The family's escape was a harrowing experience. The high point was their crossing of a raging river at night to find freedom in neighboring Thailand—the first step to getting to America. One of the boats overturned in the river and many possessions were lost. They almost lost one of their children.

Diana used the river as a metaphor for all the challenges we face in life—all the fearful things we must do—all our inner self-doubts. She had that audience spellbound as she told this gripping story. Obviously nervous throughout her talk, as she ended her brief presentation, she concluded, "... and by speaking before you here today, I'm crossing my own river." The audience went nuts!

As a parent or mentor to a young person, you can give them encouragement to start speaking and the courage to "cross their own river." They'll wave back at you with gratitude from the other side.

How to Get More Practice

Contributed by John Warren

If you have completed the **PowerSpeaking**® training, you have taken the single, best step to improving your confidence and competence in public speaking. However, presentation skills, like other skills, require ongoing practice if they are to be maintained and developed. With a little effort and advance planning, you can turn every speaking opportunity into a practice session from which you can learn and grow.

The best way to get the feedback you need is to have someone videotape your presentation. Later you can review the tape to examine the overall impact.

The next best option is to audiotape the speech. Audiotape is readily available and easy to set up. For the best quality recording, attach a lavalier microphone from the recorder to your clothing, four to six inches from your mouth. When you review the tape, listen especially for the tone and quality of your voice, how effectively you pause and the words you use to illustrate key points.

In addition to the kind of feedback you can get from video and audiotaping your own talks, you can get many more opportunities to speak and sharpen your skills by joining a Toastmasters club. Dedicated to helping its members improve their speaking, listening and leadership skills, there are literally thousands of Toastmasters clubs around the world and guests are always welcome. Club members are very supportive and can provide you with the opportunity to experiment with your speaking style in a non-threatening environment. For a listing of the Toastmasters clubs near you, contact Toastmasters International, 714-858-8255.

The time you invest in continued practice and development of your speaking skills will pay big rewards in both increased self-confidence and your ability to influence others by your powerful presentations.

IX. The Soul of Speaking

“All I do is initiate the structure and the skills, assume the stance and just let go. The creativity emerges with power. It touches lives and heals me—and that heals everyone else. One person can make a difference. If we follow our own hearts, we can walk other people along with us.”

—Annee Delaware, R.N.

Speaking can be exhilarating. Being able to influence how people think, feel and act is a talent that can change the world. It starts with you. It’s an inside job. At its essence, speaking is not about style, technique or perfection. It’s about you, the speaker.

In this book you have learned a lot about the techniques of effective speaking. But keep in mind, that’s only the mechanical part. Far more important is the essence of you and your message.

The articles in this chapter are about the personal aspects of speaking, not the technique. Since at the heart of any great speech is passion, we will end where you should begin.

Divine Dissatisfaction

A wise old sage once said, “There are really three talks: the one you plan to give, the one you give and the one you wish you had given.” From the rank beginner to the seasoned professional, speakers are rarely satisfied with their performances. This is as it should be. This “divine dissatisfaction” keeps us striving to make it better next time.

Artists and performers take little comfort in the success of a current piece of work. They’re driven by their passion for the next project. Speakers would be well-advised to follow their lead.

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action. And because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique.

If you block it, it will never exist through another medium and will be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours—clearly and directly; to keep the channel open.

You do not have to ever believe in yourself or your work. Keep the channel open. No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction at anytime. There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction—a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others.

—Martha Graham
Dancer

I used to be elated by the success and crushed by the failures. Now I realize it’s not the highs and lows that count. It is the work that matters.

—Paul Simon
Musician

If something goes wrong, I say ‘OK, luck of the draw. Maybe next time.’ I’ve watched a lot of people go stark-raving crazy if they push too far—they meet obstacles they can’t overcome. I say, ‘I’m going to be the best I can and that will be good enough.’ The point of my photography isn’t to make a sharper picture than everyone else. It’s to have emotional content that communicates.

**—Galen Rowell
Photographer**

I’ve never come off the stage at the end of a performance and said, ‘Tonight, everything was perfect.’ There will always be some little thing that I’ll have to get right tomorrow.

**—Jessica Tandy
Actress**

My preference among the 35 books I’ve written is always the next one. I’m an old pro. And the job of a pro is to move on to the next task.

**—James Michener
Author**

After decades of giving speeches, from five minutes to five days (with breaks!) in length, I’ve yet to be satisfied with one of them. But tomorrow is another day. Forget the ‘This is my only chance to shine’ baloney. If you’re worth a darn, you’ll get lots of chances to shine.

**—Tom Peters
Author**

Technique + Soul = Impact

There is a new “infomercial” out advertising a video about improving your golf game. What impressed me was how many physical gadgets they use to help the beginner learn to shoot straight. It is all about developing proper technique.

The same can be said of learning to speak effectively. Certain techniques get results, others do not. It is not a mystery what works. Development of technique and style is the foundation of the expressive arts: painting, dance, writing, music, etc. I would add speaking to that list. Without the foundation of technique and style, the presenter does “what comes naturally.” What comes naturally is, in most cases, ineffective. Video feedback and professional coaching can speed the development of technique and style. The result is a more powerful presenter.

But this foundation is just the beginning. With only technique and style, the speaker may seem a bit like a robot doing nothing important very well. The other critical ingredient is what I call “soul.” Soul is your passion, your commitment, your strong position.

It’s been said that speaking before groups is the #1 fear. I don’t believe it. I think what we really fear is taking a strong position, speaking with conviction.

Recently, during a large group workshop I conducted, a woman got up and spoke out strongly on the issue of world hunger. Another person commented, “That speech had soul.” It is our willingness to mean what we say, not just be entertaining, that gives our presentations power and humanity.

Paul Horn, the great jazz flute player, addressed this issue eloquently:

At some point in a musician’s life and development, his instrument becomes purely a tool, an extension of himself. This is when the theory and the technical problems of the instrument have been overcome and he no longer thinks about them. He’s free just to play, to be an open channel, to let the creative force within express itself effortlessly through him and his instrument. If all the

technical knowledge is now automatic and acting from a subconscious level, what is coming out? The essence of his being, all that he has experienced in life, all the people he has met, all the places he has been and all the sufferings, frustrations and joys. His attitudes, his moral and ethical values and most important, his inner feeling and convictions about God, the master creator.

So as you learn the technique and style of speaking, also reach deep inside for the essence of your reason to speak. The combination will make you a speaker with impact.

Living in the Moment

Contributed by Jerome Johnson

Education in California was his topic. David's voice quivered with anger and emotion as he told how state lottery money promised to the schools, is siphoned out "the back door" by politicians in Sacramento. And how, as a result, the promised millions of dollars never get to the kids and teachers. The participants were deeply moved. Everyone felt the conviction behind David's words.

One of my favorite sections of the *PowerSpeaking*® workshop is what we call, "Speak with Conviction." That's the time when participants, like David, are asked to speak for a minute or two on something that they have strong feelings about.

What I and my FGA trainer colleagues see over and over again, is that when people reach inside themselves, when they dare to speak out, magic happens. The magic has to do with connecting with the audience. The connection occurs when the speaker's "self" is put aside. When the "self" is no longer a barrier between speaker and listener.

One of the major struggles in life seems to be this matter of getting the "self" out of the way, even for a little while. Granted, some people seem to have a harder time with this than others, but most of us can identify with the issue of talking too much about "me!"

There is an apocryphal story about a man who had visited his therapist twice a week for ten years. Each time he spent 50 minutes pouring out his tale of woe. There seemed to be no end to what he suffered, no limit to all the wrongs he felt others did to him. One day the shrink interrupted the man's litany of self-pity. "I have a prescription for you," she said. "My advice is to go down to the ocean and sit there for six hours. Take a good, long look at something bigger than yourself!" In today's parlance, the therapist was saying, "Get a life."

Our “self” is that part of us that is always concerned about how we are doing. The “self” wonders about how others see us, what they think of us, whether or not they accept us. The “self” is often concerned about outward appearances, especially when we get up to speak before a group. Do I have egg stains on my tie, does my bad hair day show, will they notice that my shoes aren’t shined? The list of concerns is endless, but the bottom line is the same. When we’re aware of our “self,” we can’t be fully aware of our message. So, we’re probably not communicating very effectively.

Selfless Photography and Speaking

One of the ways I’ve been able to lose my “self” over the years is by my practice of photography. Whether I’m making images with my cameras or printing color transparencies in the darkroom, there are times when I’m really “into it.” Time is suspended. I never think about being hungry or thirsty. My focus is totally and completely on what I’m doing.

It’s important to each of us that we know how to “lose our ‘self.’” It is especially important when we’re giving a speech. As long as I am aware of my “self” as I stand before an audience, I’m not fully conscious of what I have to say. The “self” acts as an invisible, but impenetrable barrier between my message and those I want to reach.

This holds true for any kind of speech. Whether you’re talking with your staff or engaged in a one-on-one conversation, to the degree that your “self” is in the picture, you are not totally involved with your message.

Here are some suggestions on how to lose your “self”:

- ▶ Think back over your life to those times when you were so involved with something that you lost track of time.
- ▶ Does some activity currently hold that kind of appeal for you? It could be biking, rock climbing, even making love. Get in touch with the feelings you have when your “self” is absent. How is it for you when you are so present to the moment, so involved in what you’re doing, that you’re thinking of nothing else. That’s a moment of losing “self.”

- ▶ Realize that same feeling can be replicated. Once we get in touch with losing “self,” it can be part of our life on a regular basis.
- ▶ The next time you give a speech, make sure you have an emotional connection to what you’re saying. If it’s purely an intellectual exercise, it will sound that way, sterile and dry. But, if you feel something, if you’re convinced of the importance of your message, then the door is open for magic to happen.
- ▶ When we put “self” away, we are truly present to the moment. At times like that, we are actually living our life! We’re not thinking about something in the past or future. We’re aware only of the now!
- ▶ When we are able to lose “self” even for a moment or two, we are truly dealing with something bigger than ourselves. We have a worthy task, or an important message. Our focus is outside ourselves. Every great spiritual tradition suggests that as a worthy goal.

Photography and speaking offer this to me. Whether it’s working on a photograph, giving a speech I care about, or hosting my own radio programs, at times nothing else exists except the image, or the next word to be spoken.

When David spoke with conviction, he transcended his “self” for a time, and people were moved. The exhilarating experience of losing “self” can be yours as well!

Stand Up and Speak Out: Spontaneous Speaking— The Oratorical Equivalent of Bungee Jumping

Contributed by Melinda Henning

It happens in a flash of insight. Ideas churning in your mind for weeks crystallize instantaneously into one incisive statement. You're startled to realize you know exactly what to say, and the strength of your conviction propels immediate expression. That's the brand of speaking I admire most: spontaneous speaking. Leaping past your inner critic, you stand up and speak out with both creativity and courage. If you've experienced spontaneous speaking yourself, you know the thrill. For one riveting moment, you trusted your mind and your heart in the presence of others. There definitely is risk: you can't predict reactions. But the reward might be a lasting and positive impact.

An Asian engineer in a high tech company, for example, practicing a speech in a *PowerSpeaking*® program, circled verbally around his position on the damaging effects of cultural stereotypes. As time ran short, he paused for several seconds. His widening eyes revealed an "ah hah!" of discovery. "I am asking you to be color blind!" he finally concluded. "Color blind. For just one nanosecond." The image created by those few words contained the essence of his whole speech. And that ending statement wasn't planned. It happened in the pause, and he let it.

In case the term spontaneous speaking reminds you of speaking in tongues, let me clarify. I am not referring to mindless "spouting off," channeling or street corner preaching. *Spontaneous speaking* reflects a moment of personal brilliance, when the best in one person's uninhibited brain power and heartfelt energy meet an audience ready to listen. A rare creative synergy of necessary elements is what makes this communication marvel so deserving of our notice and respect:

- ▶ a quick and elegant combination of previously unconnected thoughts (the mental process);
- ▶ an effortless distillation of these thoughts into a cogent sentence or two (finding the words);
- ▶ a gut-level sense of conviction about your message (emotional energy); and
- ▶ an audience that can understand (an appropriate context).

Spontaneous speaking can occur in the most domestic of settings, in business or academic meetings, at commemorative gatherings—anywhere a group shares a purpose or topic. It may be motivated by righteous indignation, by love, and at times by an uncanny sense of humor. Always, though, precisely the right words take life quickly, as if beyond our control. We don't plan this; we just allow it.

Politicians occasionally share moments of spontaneous speaking, although most of their comments are judiciously planned. President Clinton departs from his prepared text, playing off audience interaction, when speaking on something he cares about deeply. It worries his staff. They think of it as “the oratorical equivalent of bungee jumping,” according to *Newsweek*. His first State of the Union address announced unequivocally his commitment to comprehensive health care reform (instead of only hinting at it, as in the text). “*All our efforts will fail,*” he intoned, away from the TelePrompTer, “*unless we also take this year—not next year, not five years from now, but this year—bold steps to reform our health-care system.*”

Children can be masters of spontaneous speaking. They're less inhibited than adults. One Christmas, my two young sons (then six and eight) and I were baking gingerbread cookies together, and the boys were quizzing me on astrology. They wanted to know what sign they were born under and what the signs meant. (This was at a time when these two pals also wrestled daily with the rivalry typical of their ages, and Ryan, the younger one, chafed frequently under his bigger brother Gavin's bossy directives.) The minute I replied “Cancer” to Gavin's question about his birth sign, Ryan shot like a pogo stick up onto a chair, arm raised and finger pointed in proclamation, punching up every word, “*Scientists have not been able to figure out **how** to cure cancer!*” We all fell into peals of

insightful laughter. (Of course this same good-natured proclamation is offered again, 15 years later, whenever Ryan disagrees with his older brother.)

As in bungee jumping, to feel the thrill, you'll have to be willing to take the risk. Once, my two sons and my partner Richard and I were in a packed movie theater as the film *Dark Man* appeared on the screen. We had hastily chosen this movie from the brief newspaper review, promising a "classic adventure story contrasting archetypes of good and evil." Sounded like wholesome family fare. Yet the first five minutes displayed more consistent, close-up, graphic violence than any normal person would choose to see in a lifetime. I was appalled! All my worries about violence permeating society, all my wishes to stop it surfaced and merged. Without prelude, I stood up and spoke out right from my seat, loudly enough to be heard by the entire balcony, "*I am not going to pay money to support this kind of senseless violence!*" Then to my sons, "*And I certainly am not going to pay money to feed this toxic imagery into the brains of my children!*" I stomped out and demanded a refund at the box office. But I embarrassed my family so much, they're threatening to write their own perspective entitled, "Sit Down and Shut Up!"

My guess is that we've all had such moments of inspiration, when we've suddenly found just the right words to say at just the right time. It's the courage to say them that often is lacking. I want to encourage you to declare your serendipitous insights more often. Let yourself speak out when you're jolted by a rare combination of creativity and conviction. It's worth the risk. That moment when you are moved to speak may be one time your words can make a real difference.

Reclaiming A Dancer's Soul

Contributed by Katherine Abbott

A year ago as a **PowerSpeaking**®/**HighTechSpeaking**® trainer, I realized there was something missing in my introduction. I would say to my students:

“Good morning, I am Katherine Abbott and I have been in the technical industry as a training and support professional since 1980, teaching operating systems like UNIX, Microsoft NT, and DOS. I have been speaking and training for 25 years. In 1990, I started my own training company and developed The Tech Trainer’s Advantage™, a course to teach corporate software trainers to teach more effectively.”

My goal in the introductions was to establish my technical credentials. I am proud of my technical background. But there was something missing. I was hiding the fact that I had also been a dancer. I was concerned that the technical people in our programs would see my dance background as too “soft.” I would lose credibility.

This realization led me on a journey that helped me reclaim a part of myself that I had left behind many years ago.

Mom said that I was dancing as soon as I could walk. But, looking back, it’s the picture of me at seven years old in my green satin costume with the black tap shoes and green bows that makes me know I was born to dance. I loved practicing those dance steps on the hardwood floor of our dining room. I was at home on stage singing “There’s No Business Like Show Business,” or “Another Opening, Another Show.” It was where I belonged. I would lie on my mom and dad’s bed and watch while they got dressed up to go dinner dancing. I would jump up on the bed to help my mom zip up her dress and help my dad fasten his cuff links. Dad would say, “Looks like you want to go with us, honey.”

I was fortunate to be in a family that supported me in being a dancer. My love for dance culminated in bachelor’s and master’s

degrees in modern dance. I studied with Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Paul Taylor, Alwin Nikolais, and I taught at the university level for five glorious years.

Then suddenly when I was 35 years old my personal life began falling apart. My marriage was on the rocks. My husband and I had been in therapy for years and we still couldn't figure out what in the hell was wrong. We were definitely headed for a divorce. We had a beautiful six year old son. I had to be self-supporting and a single parent. I had to make more money, become more mainstream, become marketable. I was in survival mode.

This wasn't all bad. I entered the computer field as a training and support professional. I had a real knack for software. I rode the incredible success wave of the PC industry. My love for teaching was the common thread that made my career change work. But I realized how much of myself I had given up the night I saw "The Turning Point." Shirley MacLaine's character chose family over dance, and Anne Bancroft's character chose dance over family. I no longer had either. I sat in the car crying hard for what seemed like hours. But, there was no turning back. I had to keep moving.

As my computer career progressed, my love for speaking emerged. I became president of several business organizations. I began training and coaching trainers and speakers. In 1990, I fell in love with the *PowerSpeaking*® course. This was a program I wanted to teach. And teach I have. Beyond doing this wonderful work, my friends at FGA have become my biggest cheerleaders in reclaiming my dance background. They keep sending me tapes and books on being an artist. I am remembering that I am one. *Oh, is that what is missing in my introduction at the beginning of class? I think so.*

Part of the reclaiming process has been the search for my master's thesis dance tape. In 1974, I choreographed an evening of dance as a requirement for my degree. I kept a copy of my written thesis, but because we didn't have videos back then, it didn't occur to me to keep a copy of the film of the dance. So in May, 1996, I began searching for the tape.

After months of calling various people who told me to call someone else, I received the message I had been waiting for. The voice on the phone said, "Hi Katherine. This is Roy Webb from the University of Utah Special Collections Department." He said,

“The good news is that I found your tape. The bad news is that the format is reel-to-reel and we don’t have machines to convert it to video.” He continued, “But I know a company in New York City that can do it for you for about \$200. Are you interested?” I was ecstatic. Roy and I made plans on how we could accomplish the task of getting the film converted to video. With his help, and a couple of calls to New York, it was done.

A few weeks later, I got a call from Gail Clarke, the person who converted my tape. She said, “I saw your dance, Katherine, and I think you’ll like it.” My heart was pounding. I was closer to recovering an important part of myself. She also said that Paul Taylor and Twyla Tharp were bringing their old tapes in to be restored. Just being associated with those two incredible dancers gave me goose bumps.

Two weeks later, I found the tape on my doorstep. I rushed into the house, shoved the tape into the VCR to watch what I had created 23 years earlier. My mind and my heart were racing. Would the dance look elementary? Would the film be in color? Would the costumes look out of date? Would the poet and musicians be shown at the beginning? Would there be sound?

Well, the quality of the tape was poor, the film was in black and white, all the camera shots were from a static spot at the back of the theater, and the sound was distorted. But, the dance was still wonderful. It seemed like just yesterday that people from the audience were coming up to me after the dance was over with tears in their eyes to hug me and tell me how moved they had been by my choreography. It was still real.

Sometimes the timing of events in life are so perfect. I watched my tape twice that Thursday night. The next day we were having a trainers meeting, and Rick and Mary added one more thing to the agenda. The last item was to watch Katherine’s new found dance tape. When the tape was finished the FGA team gave me a standing ovation, flowers, and a toast to my success.

In recovering my dance tape, I have also recovered a part of my soul that I had left behind in order to survive. Finding it gives me permission to begin incorporating dance back into my life. Now, in my introduction on day one of *PowerSpeaking*® / *HighTechSpeaking*®, I can be all of who I am: a mother, a teacher, a technical trainer, a trainer of trainers, a speaker...and...a dancer.

I am now using dance analogies again in my classes. During the visual aid section, I explain to the students, “Your content has to stand alone. Your content has to be powerful without visual aids. When I was choreographing, the dance had to stand alone. The movement had to be exciting without music. When the movement worked, then I would add the music, the costumes, and the lighting. Only then would I have an incredible dance. Create strong content. Add visual aids only if you need them to communicate your message.”

My introduction has changed. Now I say, “Good morning. I’m Katherine Abbott. I’ve been presenting most of my life. I started performing as a dancer when I was this tall (seven years old). My love of dance led to a BA and MFA in modern dance and five years of teaching at the university level. Then in 1980 I had to be more marketable so I...”

Today, at 50 years old, I am still that little girl in the green satin costume with the black tap shoes and green bows. I am a dancer. Owning my talent again is making my life richer. Dance is pouring in and filling my soul again. I can pass that richness on to my students.

Dear Reader: *Are you leaving something out of your introduction?*

Dad Was a Speaker

Carl's eyes filled with tears. His voice cracked. He lovingly recounted how a high school teacher's influence had stopped him from "becoming a bum." Carl was sharing this heartfelt story with 200 people in my program, "Fire in the Belly: The Essence of Change." People told me later he was a crusty retired Army colonel who was not noted for being vulnerable like this. When we express the gratitude we feel for mentors who have helped us along the way, we may experience some strong emotion.

My dad was a business speaker. He was in the insurance industry. His territory was the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California. Before ascending to higher levels of management, he was on the road quite a bit doing business speeches. He even attended night school to enhance his speaking skill.

Only in the past few years have I fully appreciated the enormous influence my dad had on my career direction. He made it clear to me that people who communicate confidently would move ahead. He encouraged this skill in me at an early age. At the drop of a hat, I'd be up showing off for my parents' friends.

In the early days of television, we used to watch the prize fights every Friday from Madison Square Gardens in New York City. Dad would model, then encourage me to get up in the middle of our living room and mimic the announcer. Holding an imaginary microphone in my left hand and raising my right arm straight above my head I'd bellow out, "Laaaaadies and gentlemennnnn, welcome to *The Friday Night Fights* brought to you by the Gillette Cavalcade of Sports..." Growing up, I was never at a loss for encouragement to get up and speak. When I ran for school offices, it was my well-honed speeches that got me elected.

Because of all this, public speaking was never a fearful thing for me. It was an exciting vehicle for self-expression and accomplishment. As a youngster, though, I never imagined it

would become my life's work. Clearly, in this aspect of my life, my dad was my mentor.

Later in life, I found out that the mentor relationship is often a two-way affair. My major dissertation supervisor was a psychologist named Bob Suczek. He was both confrontational and supportive during the two years of the most intensive phase of the writing. After the process was over, I wrote him a letter expressing my gratitude. He wrote a note back saying simply, "What you may not have known, Rick, is that I needed you as much as you needed me." Bob Dylan once spoke of his relationship to Woody Guthrie, his musical mentor, "To me he was like a link in a chain, like I am to many others and like we all are to someone. We're all just links in a chain."

Al Pacino won the Oscar for best actor in 1993. In his acceptance speech at the Academy Awards, he touched on the two-way nature of the mentor relationship:

I've been very lucky. I found desire for what I do early in my life. I'm lucky because I had people who encouraged that desire, from Lee Strassberg, to my great friend and mentor, Charlie Laughton... Now, recently, a young girl came up to me when I was at a function for the South Bronx—which is where I'm from. She said that I had encouraged her— not necessarily by my work but just by the fact that we came from the same place. I just can't forget that girl and I can't forget the kids out there who may be thinking tonight, 'If he can do it, I can do it...' I want to thank the Academy for giving us the gift of encouragement.

So it is—we are helped by others and then we turn around and pass it on. Who have been your mentors? What were their characteristics? Are they still alive? Do you need to tell them what influence they had on your success? I'm sure they would appreciate hearing from you. Thank you, Dad. Thank you, Bob.

On the other side, is there someone tugging at your sleeve, asking for your help? Remember, we're all just links in a chain. Twenty years from now as our daughter reflects on her mentors perhaps, just perhaps, she'll say, "Dad was a speaker."

“It Don’t Mean A Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing” Lessons Learned “On-Air”

The announcer said, “You can be an on-air DJ for two hours if you pledge now.” It took me one quick heartbeat to reach for the phone. I called the station and said, “Sign me up!” I gave them my Visa card number and it was a done deal. I had just donated to my favorite listener-supported jazz station and earned myself a chance to host my own show. What followed was a lot of excitement and a lot of work. Along the way, it dawned on me that radio is just another form of speech communication with some valuable lessons for speakers.

The station was KCSM, the Bay Area’s only full-time jazz station. It broadcasts from the College of San Mateo and has filled the void left when KJAZ folded a few years ago. Many listener supported, non-commercial stations have fund drives. They all offer premiums for donations: CDs, tee shirts, coffee mugs, etc. I never heard of one offering listeners their own show as a premium.

I hosted a radio show in high school, and have always been a serious jazz fan. On the wall in our office is a photo of me interviewing Dave Brubeck in 1957 for that high school radio program. Later in life, I earned a Ph.D. in psychology with a dissertation title of “Jazz, Rock and Roll, and the Revolution in Psychotherapy.” This was an opportunity I could not refuse.

So, on Friday, June 21, 1996, I hosted “AMorning Cup of Jazz” on KCSM between 8AM and 10AM I discovered there are a lot of parallels between radio and speaking. Here are a few of the lessons I learned that you may be able to apply to your next presentation:

Lesson #1: Passion—I love jazz. Always have. I got to select my own music for the two-hour show. I went to my music library and pulled out my favorites. This was all about doing something I really care about. My show was titled, “The Story of a Jazz Journey.” Through the music, I traced the story of my

life as a jazz enthusiast. As we say in *PowerSpeaking*®, the first step is your own passion. The technique comes later.

Lesson #2: Risk-taking—Speaking is a bit risky. Putting yourself out there is a challenge. What if you screw up? The KCSM listening audience is in the area of 175,000. That’s about 174,500 more listeners than I usually address. (But, hey, let’s put this risk in perspective. My father-in-law flew a P-38 in WW II and was shot down over Nazi Germany. He escaped with the help of the French Underground. That’s risk-taking.)

Lesson #3: Preparation—In speaking, the preparation is always the hardest part. The speech itself is a breeze by comparison. I put in about 40 hours of prep time before my show: selecting the music, consulting liner notes, researching the musicians, pulling together some stories, and preparing my comments about the music. So, too, a good presentation is rarely “off the cuff.” It will require careful preparation before it is delivered.

Lesson #4: Coaches—In learning any new skill, we need help and encouragement from mentors and coaches. In my speaking career, I’ve consulted at least a dozen different coaches over the years. The best speakers, like the best performers in any field, are always working on their craft and getting “continuing education.” For the radio show I consulted first with Jerry Johnson, one of our trainers, who had a prior career in broadcasting. (See “Facing On-Air Interviews With Confidence,” page 129.) He had many valuable tips about managing the fast-paced nature of live on-air radio.

My other source of inspiration for this adventure was Alisa Clancy, the host of “A Morning Cup of Jazz.” She assured me from the beginning that this would be easy and fun. “Don’t sweat it. You’ll do fine,” she said. I arrived in the KCSM studio at 7AM Friday morning. We discussed my play sheet, how she would introduce me, who would do the weather, and how to work in the station breaks. Then we hit the eight o’clock hour and the fun began. I started with “The Cow Cow Boogie” by Ella Fitzgerald and we were off and running. For two hours she shouted words of encouragement: “You’re smokin’ it, Rick.” “Nice choice, Rick.” “Hey, they’re lovin’ you out there, Rick.”

Made me feel great. (Except her Miles Davis imitation is much better than mine.)

In speaking too, when you look for someone to help you get better, be sure that they make you feel good. If they only point out what needs improvement, time for a new coach!

Lesson #5: Use Your Own Experience—“Hey, who the hell are you to host a jazz show? What do you really know about jazz?” Have you ever heard voices like that undermining your dreams? They come from inside our heads. We must simply say, “Thank you for sharing,” and move on. After I accepted this challenge, I started listening to the DJs on KCSM and realized my knowledge of jazz was pretty meager by comparison.

But still, I thought, I do have some good material from my dissertation research and my personal experience and stories I could draw on.

As in speaking, I found I didn’t need to be the world’s greatest authority on jazz to produce a good show. But I did have some relevant experience. When you are asked to do a presentation, keep in mind that your knowledge of the subject is only part of the equation. Just as important is your point of view and personal experience. In fact, sometimes the world’s greatest authorities are rarely the best presenters.

Lesson #6: Be Audience Focused—Yes, you have something you want to say. But as speakers, we also must be aware of what our audiences want and give it to them as much as possible. About two-thirds of the way through the program we received a call from a listener who loved the selections I played, but was disappointed that one of his all-time favorites, tenor player Zoot Sims, did not show up. As luck would have it, a Gerry Mulligan CD I had drawn from earlier in the show had a number featuring a duet with Mulligan and Sims. So I announced that we were indeed audience focused and then played the Zoot Sims track.

Lesson #7: Stories, Stories, Stories—As in speaking, stories are more captivating to our audiences than abstractions or statistics. Here are three I used to add background color to the jazz artists I featured on the show:

Ella Fitzgerald

When I decided to open with *The Cow Cow Boogie* several weeks ago, I couldn't have known that just last Saturday, we would lose "The First Lady of Jazz." Her passing reminds me of a favorite story from my own annals of jazz. A college roommate named Bob Doyle was the world's biggest Ella fan. He had all her records. In those days, none of us had any money. Bob saved for six months to get two tickets to see Ella at the Venetian Room in the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. He arrived early with his girlfriend and got a choice seat on the middle aisle. As Ella came in from the back of the room, Bob impetuously stood up and said to her, "Ella, I love you." She said, simply, "Thank you, honey!" Thank you, Ella.

Mose Allison

Years ago during one of his San Francisco appearances, I interviewed Mose Allison for my dissertation on music and psychology. I remember how seriously he took performance. He told me how he rehearses, watches his diet, gets plenty of rest, and does everything possible to make those few hours on stage the best they can be. "But guess what," he said. "You just can't tell. One night it's terrific. You do the same thing the next night, and it's mediocre." It's a mystery. The best you can do, is give it your best shot. As a speaker and seminar leader, I know just what he means. By the way, when I interviewed him, he was reading "Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance."

Miles Davis

Miles was known for being laconic, laid back. There's a great story about this told by Herbie Hancock. Years ago he had an opportunity to audition for Miles. He had never met Miles personally. After months of anticipation, the big day came. Miles introduced himself and showed Herbie to the studio in the basement. Herbie played a ballad. After a long heart-pounding silence, Miles leaned forward and said simply, "Nice touch." The rest is history.

Lesson #8: Record Your Work—Serious speakers record most everything they do. Not only does this give them a permanent record of what they've done, it's also a good way to get better. It has been fun to review my jazz program

on tape and listen not only to my pearls of wisdom, but also to the disastrous screw-ups. Perhaps the best part is to have almost two hours of my favorite music arranged chronologically as it defined the evolution of my jazz consciousness over a period of four decades. Here are the selections I chose for my show:

- ▶ **Cow Cow Boogie** – Ella Fitzgerald
- ▶ **Begin the Beguine** – Artie Shaw
- ▶ **Cherokee** – Clifford Brown
- ▶ **Freddie Freeloader** – Miles Davis
- ▶ **All Blues** – Miles Davis
- ▶ **My Funny Valentine** – Chet Baker and Gerry Mulligan
- ▶ **Take Five** – Paul Desmond and Dave Brubeck
- ▶ **Bunny** – Gerry Mulligan
- ▶ **Parchman Farm** – Mose Allison
- ▶ **The Train and the River** – Jimmy Guiffre
- ▶ **The Preacher** – Horace Silver
- ▶ **Come Rain or Come Shine** – Gerry Mulligan and Zoot Sims
- ▶ **Compared to What** – Les McCann and Eddie Harris
- ▶ **Volunteered Slavery** – Rahsaan Roland Kirk
- ▶ **Round Midnight** – Jessica Williams and Bud Spangler
- ▶ **Unforgettable** – Natalie Cole
- ▶ **I Shall Not Be Moved** – Pops Staples and Ry Cooder

Gratitude

Well, our time together this morning is rapidly drawing to a close. Before taking out the show with Pops Staples, I want to thank Alisa Clancy for sharing her space with me this morning and for guiding me along the path here at KCSM. What a superb statement this station has made about its connection with the community to let non-professionals like me come in and fulfill a dream of being a Jazz DJ for a Day. And to practice on a live audience—that's you. Thank you so much for riding along with me this morning, and letting me add a little cream and sugar to your "Morning Cup of Jazz."

Psychiatrist Carl Jung once observed that, "The most important challenge of mid-life is the question, 'What is my story?'"

Well, what I've shared with you this morning is a big part of my story. And I thank you again for listening.

I'm going to take out the show this morning with a tune that should make your day come alive. Here is "I Shall Not Be Moved," featuring Pops Staples, the patriarch and guiding light of one of the most popular gospel groups of all time, The Staple Singers. He is accompanied here by Ry Cooder, blues guitar master. This is from a Point Blank CD called "Peace in the Neighborhood."

This has been fun for me. Thanks, Alisa. And remember, help keep jazz alive. Support KCSM 91.1 FM. Good bye for now.

Jazz DJ for A Day

“Tonight, I’m going to play the sound track of my life.”

—Booker T. Jones
Booker T. and the MGs

Several months after my first show on KCSM, the station had another fund drive. I signed up again to do a show with Alisa Clancy. I learned more lessons “on-air” about speech communication.

Lesson #1: Push the limits—There is an old truism that says, “Stand up, state what you want, let go of the outcome.” My initial play list included Johnny Cash’s “I Walk the Line” and Ike and Tina Turner’s “River Deep, Mountain High.” Not OK for a jazz station, so I dropped these songs. However, I also wanted Hank Ballard’s “Work With Me Annie” and The Chambers Brothers’ “She’s So Fine.” No problem! Connie, the receptionist, came running into the studio yelling with joy, “Yeah...’Work With Me Annie!’ My mother wouldn’t let me listen to that! All right!” I got several calls from listeners who definitely approved.

Lesson #2: Find your audience (*don’t try to please everyone*)—In Alisa’s audience of 175,000 listeners, she gets calls occasionally from “the jazz police.” These are the purists who correct her if she steps out of bounds with some tune. Alisa was willing to risk throwing out a wide net to include music not usually heard on KCSM. No one called to complain. When Sandy Bull’s “Memphis” or Slim Harpo’s “Scratch My Back” came on, we may have lost a few listeners. I am not a DJ (or a speaker) for all audiences. I’ve found it’s better to just put your truth out there, and find the people who resonate with what you have to say. It may not be the way to get rich,

but it is a way to find yourself. My truth is “Work with me Annie.” The Pat Boone audiences will never hire me. That’s OK.

Lesson #3: Tell your story (value your experiences)—On my show (and in my speeches), I draw on my own experiences and hope they resonate with others. Usually they do. Like Booker T. did at a recent concert, I played the music that helped shape who I am.

Lesson #4: Don’t over-prepare (trust the process)—The first show I did took about 40 hours to prepare. This one was much easier. I trusted that I had the skill and the knowledge to make it work in the moment, and it did. I learned it’s important not to over-prepare. Better to be more in the moment. One friend who listened to the program commented afterward, “You didn’t sound so scripted this time.” Remember, it’s not about perfection, just let ‘er rip!

Song List

- ▶ **Smoke House Blues** – Jelly Roll Morton
- ▶ **Slow and Easy Blues** – Jimmy Yancey
- ▶ **Work With Me Annie** – Hank Ballard and the Midnighters
- ▶ **Sing Sing Sing** – Benny Goodman with Gene Krupa
- ▶ **Big Boss Man** – Jimmy Reed
- ▶ **Amazing Grace** – Hubert Laws
- ▶ **Just a Closer Walk With Thee** – Wilber de Paris
- ▶ **Gimme That Wine** – John Hendricks (Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross)
- ▶ **Sweet Georgia Brown** – Anita O’Day
- ▶ **You Are My Sunshine** – Ray Charles
- ▶ **Strangers in the Night** – Frank Sinatra
- ▶ **She’s So Fine** – The Chambers Brothers
- ▶ **Scratch My Back** – Slim Harpo
- ▶ **Memphis** – Sandy Bull
- ▶ **West End Blues** – Louis Armstrong
- ▶ **Dimenuendo and Crescendo in Blue** – Duke Ellington
- ▶ **Golden Striker** – Modern Jazz Quartet
- ▶ **Willow Weep For Me** – Oscar Pettiford
- ▶ **Since Jesus Changed This Heart of Mine** – The Bells of Joy

Using Video to Capture Family History

We live in a fast-paced world where family ties are not what they used to be. Television and telecommunication cause our attention to be focused in the immediate present. All this may cause us—and our children—to lose touch with our personal histories. If you have an aging parent, grandparent or any important family member and a video camera, you have a unique opportunity to preserve some of this family history.

When my father was 88, just two years before he died, I interviewed him on video. I wanted my daughter—then just three years old—to have a way to remember her paternal grandfather. In the interview, I asked my dad to comment on such things as: his family; his career history; how he met my mother; his religious and political beliefs; reflections on the big events during his lifetime, i.e., the Depression and World War II. I also asked him what had been most satisfying about his life; what were his regrets; and what would he have done differently. Finally, I asked him what advice about life he would have for his granddaughter.

If you want to make a similar tape of someone in your family, here are some tips that might help.

Camera—I used full-sized VHS because it is universal, but small-format cameras can also work well. The advantage of the smaller size is ease of transport.

Tripod—Essential. Use a tripod heavy enough to steady the camera.

Microphone—To get good sound quality, you will need an external clip-on mic and a long cord—about 25 feet. Clip the mic onto your subject's shirt or blouse about four inches below the chin. Connect the other end of the cord into the "external microphone" jack on your camera.

Be sure to do a sound check by recording some footage and playing it back on your camcorder or VCR. Some cheaper mic cords can produce a buzz or hum that will ruin the sound quality.

Lighting—This is critical. Put your subject near a window to get good natural light. Early morning or late afternoon light will give pleasant warmth to your video.

Camera Position—Place your camera about 15 to 20 feet from your subject. Use a variety of long, medium and close shots. Don't be afraid to use tight close ups—let his or her face fill the whole frame— especially for more emotional material.

Your Position—If someone is available to operate the camera for you, sit next to your subject, as on a talk show. Have him or her talk to both you and the camera. If you have no one to operate the camera, sit next to the person for a while, then behind the camera for a while. This will allow you to re-focus the camera for close-ups and will also cause your subject to “talk to the camera.”

Interview Content—What your family member talks about is, of course, the most important aspect of the filming. The who, what, when, where and why of the life being profiled is what you are leaving behind for the next generation.

Choose the content that is most appropriate for your family. However, for a meaningful video record, your purpose should be to get your subject to reflect on things they care about deeply. A 45-minute format seemed about right.

I wish I'd started this earlier and had a lot more such tapes—but this was a start.

My daughter may not understand the importance of this tape until she is well into her twenties. Then she may appreciate the challenges her grandfather faced growing up in a large family with little money, working through the Depression and rising to senior management positions in his company with no college degree. She may also feel a connection to him when he says succinctly at the end of the interview, “With what I had, I did all right.”

“When I was a kid starting out in Spokane in the insurance business, the big insurance offices were in San Francisco. I thought, ‘Boy, that would be some place to reach for!’ I did reach for it and I got it.”

— Fred Gilbert

The Truth is in the Attic

Childhood memorabilia can be enlightening. Preparing for a family reunion recently, I brought down from the attic some dusty shoeboxes filled with old photos, letters and even report cards. I was amused to discover early tendencies that would grow into a life's work. Not all my teachers applauded the junior keynote speaker and trainer that was developing before their eyes. Direct quotes from these report cards:

1st Grade: "His behavior, aside from constant talking, is satisfactory."

2nd Grade: "He could help the whole group by trying harder to control his talking."

3rd Grade: "Ricky is a happy, well-adjusted child. He makes friends easily and has many. He is interested in doing his work and doing it well, but he has so much to say to so many people that he causes a great deal of confusion before and during a lesson."

Sigmund Freud said, "The boy is father to the man." And so it was. Explore those old shoeboxes. You may find in your past keys to understanding your present. Carl Jung once noted that, "The most important challenge of mid-life is the question, 'What is my story?'"

Writing a Memorial Tribute

Contributed by Susan Almazol

In the midst of my grief last summer, I faced the daunting task of crafting a eulogy for an extraordinary advocate of justice, Trina Grillo, my best friend for 27 years. Just the year before, she was named the Outstanding Law Professor of the Year by her peers. As the only speaker, I felt an enormous obligation to her family to tell her story well.

Today's demographics almost guarantee that we will all someday need to write a memorial tribute of some sort. Fortunately, my years of professional writing experience served me well. As I wrote, I cried, and I laughed. I also learned some important lessons.

Here are five key strategies and some practical tips for writing a memorable tribute.

First, keep yourself out of it.

This may seem strange advice at first. What I discovered, though, is that I began writing about me — my grief and my reactions and experiences related to her illness. I decided instead to reach out, to comfort as well as to honor. So I reworked my “I” sentences, and the eulogy became concise and focused. For example, “I was amazed by the tremendous outpouring...” became “Trina was touched and amazed — we were all amazed — by the tremendous outpouring of love and support from scores of people claiming her in friendship, when she was finally and correctly diagnosed with Hodgkins Disease six years ago. All you friends arranged carpools back and forth from Oakland to Palo Alto, opened up your homes, raised money, and even offered your housekeeper.”

- ▶ *Locate “I” sentences, using the search function of your word processor. Delete or rewrite them.*

Second, speak honestly and pay attention to rhythm.

Early on, I decided to include both accomplishments and disappointments. I organized the flow so that our emotions

would get some relief. Funny anecdotes helped but, surprisingly, so did tough glimpses of my friend's six year battle with cancer.

Here's an example of the latter which elicited some chuckles: "Trina never held any grudges, but she couldn't quite forgive Paul for leaving this earth so abruptly, especially when she needed him so desperately these past few weeks. But I imagine she's already tracked him down, given him quite another earful, and he's comforting her now."

- ▶ *Include a balanced look at the person's life.*
- ▶ *Relieve tension with anecdotes.*

Third, reach out to *all* your listeners.

Since Trina made new friends even in the last few weeks, I wanted to make them feel part of us. But I didn't want to recite key events in her life that, of course, her family and longtime friends were familiar with. I ended up weaving background details into the stories I told.

Here's what I said about her law school selection: "Her decision to attend Minnesota for personal reasons, left Stanford and other top law schools aghast. She was brilliant, a jewel they had pursued and lost."

Here's another example with details about where she lived in her earlier years: "One day, we were idly praising the Hollywood movie of the month. Trina, newest member of the group, sat still as long as she could and then weighed in with her comments. Her growing up here in Oakland and two years at Radcliffe fueled her stinging, class-based analysis and denunciation of the movie."

To comfort and include her close friends, I quoted them: "Catharine, her friend, colleague, and confidant, recalled at another occasion that, in the 1960s, Trina stopped troop trains in Oakland by standing on the tracks." Additionally, I could have anticipated and prepared for the prominent presence of the ex-spouse.

- ▶ *Weave background information into the stories you tell so that the newest friends feel included.*
- ▶ *Make long-time friends and colleagues part of your tribute by quoting them.*
- ▶ *Write possible add-on sentences on Post-it Notes along the edge of notecards, in case you need them.*

Fourth, don't try to be eloquent.

When I began writing the eulogy, I found myself wanting to sound lofty. When I resisted this urge and wrote from my heart, the writing became faster and easier. Then I stumbled across a simple technique that added eloquence after all.

► *Replace “but” with “and.”*

When I substituted “and” for “but,” my sentences sounded more elegant; for example, “But she was never bitter,” became, “*And she was never bitter.*” In another place, I wrote: “*And she never said an unkind word to me in all the years of our friendship.*”

Fifth, get personal.

Finally, I finished my eulogy, and I put it away. I went to bed feeling drained but slept restlessly. Waking up very early the next morning, I went directly to my computer.

What poured quickly out of me was an entirely new section that addressed family members by name and shared something Trina had lovingly said about them. A writer later said she had never heard the “direct address” used before at a funeral service. I didn't know there was a name for what I did. I like to think instead that I simply wrote down what Trina whispered to me during the night. I closed by speaking to her directly:

“So, Trina, on behalf of your family and friends, I thank you, I salute you for your brilliant mind, for your enlightened scholarship, for your passion for and commitment to justice, for your nurturing of others, for your generosity, for your moral leadership, for your patience and understanding, for your spirituality, for your deep devotion to your family, for your truth, and for your uncritical acceptance and love.

“On behalf of your family and friends, dearest Trina, I say good-bye. On behalf of your family and friends, Sweetie, Honey, I say I love you, I love you, I love you.”

► *Address people directly.*

In the end, writing the eulogy was an important part of my own healing process. I feel deeply grateful that I was asked to pay tribute to Trina Grillo, brilliant scholar, dedicated fighter for justice, and my best friend.

“Would You Say a Few Words About Dan?”

Contributed by Bill Jacobsen

When the family asks you to deliver a eulogy or to participate in the sharing portion of a memorial service, the following guidelines may help you speak healing words.

- ▶ Share vivid, specific memories of Dan. His beloved idiosyncrasies and foibles will be recognized by everyone in the room. If you evoke laughter along with tears, you are helping the family to say its good-byes.
- ▶ Let Dan be Dan. Don't pretend Dan was a saint. Avoid the maudlin, saccharine, pious or sentimental. Honor the integrity of Dan's life story, its texture and tone. Dishonesty is the worst form of disrespect.
- ▶ Focus on the themes of Dan's personal life story—not on a detailed resume of where he went to school or the positions he held in the corporation or how he died. (It doesn't matter whether he lingered in the intensive care unit for several weeks or committed suicide. Let the medical records reflect how he dies; let *The New York Times* list his degrees, honors and accomplishments.) You want the quality of Dan's life-long personality to shine through you. Talk about the Dan you remember and love and admire.
- ▶ Don't flaunt your own religious opinions or think up reasons to justify Dan's death. The worst I've heard: “Dan was so good that God felt he had learned all there was to learn in life. That's why God took him at this time.” Accept the fact that family and friends may feel Dan's untimely death isn't fair. Never argue with feelings of rage or dismay.
- ▶ As you genuinely reveal the Dan you know and respect, he will come to life for a while so close friends and family can complete unfinished conversations with him. This enables the officiant to create an empowering service for the family.

A Living Memorial for Lauren

In January of 1991, a colleague and friend, Lauren Shrive, lost her battle with cancer. Many of us in the National Speakers Association felt her loss deeply. What we did just prior to her death helped to ease her pain—and ours.

In her final months, Lauren was too weak to have many visitors. Friends did the traditional things like call or send cards and flowers. But people felt frustrated at not being able to connect with her personally. We came up with a unique idea: making a videotape for Lauren. That process not only gave her love and support, it gave the rest of us a vehicle to share our feelings and caring with Lauren directly.

It has always seemed to me such a waste that we wait until a friend is gone before we eulogize them. Why not do it while they're still alive? The videotape for Lauren gave us that chance.

During one of our NSA meetings, it was announced that we had a video camera set up for anyone who wanted to say something directly to Lauren after the meeting. The response was overwhelming. People crowded into the room and even waited in the hall to get on the tape. One by one they shared their love with Lauren via the magic of video. Some laughed, some cried, some spoke of God.

Twenty-six people spoke on the tape, which lasted just under an hour. I sent the tape, unedited, to Lauren the next day, via Federal Express. Later she confided that over the next three days she watched it four times. She made visitors sit down and watch it. She showed it to the visiting-care nurse, to the hospice worker—and most importantly to her family.

She said her family never understood what she did for a living. They did not know exactly what it meant to be a speaker, a trainer, a consultant. And they did not know how many people cared about her. They watched the video and found out.

After she saw the videotape, Lauren suggested I write about the process. She felt others might someday want to use the idea of the videotape “living memorial.”

If there is someone in your life who is suffering from a terminal illness, you might consider bringing together friends, associates or even family members to make a video eulogy. All it takes is a video camera, a tripod and an external, clip-on microphone. What people say on camera can be of great comfort to the dying person as well as to those left behind to mourn their loss.

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