

Tips for Speaking Up[®]

**POWER
SPEAKING**
INFLUENCE. IMPACT. INSPIRE.

50 Tips



Thank you for downloading our 50 Tips for Speaking Up. During our 29 years in business we have discovered that no two presentations are the same, especially when you are presenting at the Executive Level. These 50 tips will help you navigate the churning waters of executive presentations, give you the framework you need to succeed, the executive presence to confidently speak at this level, and the facilitation skills to create a dialogue rather than a formal 30-minute presentation.

For more information about our Speaking Up programs please contact us directly:

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PREPARATION

1 Start with your audience in mind.

Think of each executive who will be in the room. How do they prefer to have information presented to them? How will your proposal affect their areas of responsibility? Starting with your audience in mind helps you strategize about what you'll say, and what you won't need to say (*unless asked*).

2 Consider executives' personality styles.

Most executive decision makers are time-pressured. You need to be brief. They may be able to multitask and switch topics quickly, make calculations in their heads at lightening speed, and they may be challenging when analyzing data. Be ready for this; don't be taken off guard.



3 Use a framework to structure the discussion.

You don't need an attention-getting opening, but you do need to set context as you start, and get agreement on timing. Then state your proposal (*your "bottom line"*), how it will add value to the business, and lay out a clear agenda for your explanation.

4 Confirm the time allotted for your topic.

Thirty minutes may have originally been planned, but the meeting timeline may have changed. Start by saying, "*I understand we have scheduled 30 minutes. Does that timing still work?*" Don't go over. Begin to summarize and close before the agreed upon end time.



5 Make your top line your bottom line.

State the outcome you want from your presentation early. What do you want the executives to say "yes" to? Be specific. "*I want your support*" is vague. "*I want you to approve a \$500,000 investment in new centrifuge equipment this quarter*" is specific.

6 Justify your proposal with a business reason.

Clearly state what value or ROI your proposal will bring in terms of revenue increase, cost reduction, protection from risk, competitive advantage, and other business drivers. It can't be just a "nice to have."

7 Start with essential data; do a deep dive if asked.

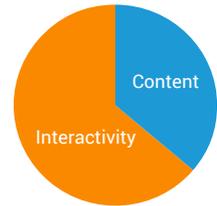
Instead of drowning listeners in data, lead with the top 3 metrics relevant to your message, and talk about the meaning of the data. Also be sure to have an appendix set of data slides ready to display when an executive wants deeper analysis.

8 Focus on analytical proof; go light on anecdotal evidence.

Senior decision makers don't need to be entertained. So while your logic may follow a "story line," hard data is what will be convincing, not stories.

9 Follow the 10/30 Rule.

If you have 30 minutes on the executives' meeting agenda, plan to present 10 minutes of material. The remainder of the time will be devoted to discussion and interaction, and not necessarily in sequence.

**10 Talk about the meaning of your data.**

Thorough and accurate research to back up your claims is necessary but not sufficient. Be ready also to discuss the results of the numbers on the decisions made.

11 Prepare for all possible questions or objections.

Make slides for questions requiring data backup. Consider including the answers to expected questions or concerns within your talk, rather than waiting for them to be brought up.

12 Do your homework.

Weeks ahead of your presentation to executives, you may need to meet with people in various functional areas, check in with your sponsor or manager, research executives' hot buttons, prepare slides to send ahead, etc. Plan time for this.

13 Rehearse out loud.

The time to begin rehearsing is when you are about 80% finished developing your content. A test run with a colleague listening may reveal gaps in explanation, and you'll get some feedback on how you are perceived. Refine your talk, and then rehearse again.

14 Leverage your sponsor.

Check the validity of your logic with your sponsor ahead of time, rehearse and get feedback, and agree on when you can look to your sponsor for help during the executive meeting. Debrief with your sponsor after the meeting, to glean lessons you can use in the future.

IMPROVISATION

15 Be ready for improvisation.

Expect questions and energetic discussions to occur before you have presented all of your material. Respond to questions when they come up. Use facilitation skills to refocus the discussion after a topic change.

16 Read the room.

Notice the process of the discussion as well as the content. When there is cross talk, interruptions, rapid fire questions, you can observe first, and then choose an appropriate intervention.

17 Use the PREP template to answer opinion questions.

P is your Position or your opinion. Try to state it in one sentence.

R is your Reason. Why do you have this opinion?

E is your Evidence or your Example. Evidence explains or justifies your reasoning, and can be analytical or anecdotal.

P is your Position, stated again, just as it was in the beginning.

P**R****E****P**



18 Paraphrase complex questions to gain clarity.

Listen for key words, and then use similar words to reflect back what you heard the questioner say. Check to see if your reflection was accurate. If it wasn't, try again. This process gets to agreement on what the questioner needs to know.

19 For skeptical or challenging questions, paraphrase with feeling.

Especially if someone is upset, a deeper level of listening is required. Reflect back both the content and the feeling tone (*skeptical, concerned, frustrated, etc.*) answer the question as best you can. Always check back to see if you got it right. Never say, "I know how you feel" because you don't, actually.

20 Rely on the "notice and ask" strategy to refocus the discussion.

You are not in a position to tell the executives what to do. But you can say, "I notice our discussion is now focused on x. May I get your guidance? Would you like to keep going in this direction or would you like to go back to our topic?"

21 Listen for the QBQ, the Question Behind the Question.

If you get resistance or objections to your ideas, often executives are concerned with key business drivers such as topline and bottom line impact, competitive positioning, and risk management. When you paraphrase their questions, check for these concerns and be ready to address them directly.

22 Paraphrase to get clarity, but don't parrot.

Instead of restating an executive's question verbatim, use synonyms when you paraphrase. Remember, you don't know what is on someone's mind. So always check for accuracy after paraphrasing. "Did I get that right?" or just "Right?" gives the questioner a chance to agree.

23 Consider the risk associated with any meeting intervention.

Just waiting for an off-topic discussion to play out is low risk. Saying something to stop or redirect it is higher risk.

24 Layout and agree upon a clear agenda for your explanation.

Name the key points you plan to make, and ask if additional points should be covered. If the discussion veers off track, tactfully make note of that and ask if executives want to get back to the stated agenda.

25 Summarize the entire discussion prior to your final ask.

"I explained x and y, you also brought up a and b. Do I have your go-ahead now to purchase the new equipment for \$500,000 this quarter?"

26 Use names, with finesse, to re-engage a disengaged executive.

You don't want to catch anyone off guard, so give a little context when you ask someone directly for their thoughts (*as a re-engagement strategy*). For example, *"Jaime, given that what we are trying to do here is to reduce response time, in your experience, will this new approach work in the field?"*

27 Be ready with an elevator pitch in case your time gets cut.

Adapt the **PREP** Model. **P** (*Position*) is your Bottom Line statement. **R** (*Reason*) is your business reason for the proposal. **E** (*Evidence*) provides an essential data point to support your proposal. **P** (*Position*) is a repeat of your Bottom Line to close out.

28 If there is an argument between two executives, wait it out.

You may look to your sponsor to help calm things down, but don't intervene.

**29 Notice and ask (*Don't tell*).**

To redirect a discussion that's gone off topic, make an observation about the process, (*with no judgement, just taking notice*) then ask how the executives would like to proceed.

30 Directly confirm any agreement or decision.

As you end, summarize and check to be certain you are clear on what decisions or agreements have been made and what your next steps will be.

31 Email slide prep.

Management often requires that our deck be sent prior to a weekly project update or a planned presentation. Many leaders will be prepared with questions on specific slides. To ensure that the slides aren't misinterpreted, introduce your deck in an email by simply mirroring the PREP model; Position (*bottom line*) Here is what I am asking for-(*Slide 6*), Reason (*value/benefit*) Here is the reason (*slide 7*), Evident (*Data*) The major points of evidence I cover to support that are: 1. Logistics (*slides 14-20*) 2. Costs (*slides 22-25*), Position (*bottom line*) In summary, here is what I am asking for...

32 Presenting bad news.

There are four steps to presenting bad news: get it right out at the beginning, Be candid about what happened, explain how you are going to fix it, offer options and recommendations.

CONFIDENT, CREDIBLE DELIVERY

33 Take a stand.

Balance your weight over your feet with your feet under your hips. Avoid a wider "macho" stance; even a slightly wide stance can be perceived as overly confident. Release any tension in your knees to get grounded.

34 Stand tall.

An easy way to adjust your posture is to: a) raise your shoulders straight up, and then b) press them straight back, and then c) drop them down. A tall posture makes you look and feel more alert, more confident.

35 Illustrate content with descriptive gestures.

You can use your body as a visual aid. Make lists, show time progression, illustrate scale (*large and small numbers, for example*) with your hands. Be sure to get your arms up and away from your body, so your descriptive gestures will be seen.



36 Get into Zone 2 with your body language.

You are in Zone 1 if your hands and arms are close to your body, perhaps below the belt. Zone 3 is the opposite: your arms are hyper extended, perhaps above your head. Stay out of Zones 1 and 3. Stay in Zone 2, where your arm is away from your body and moves from your shoulder, and your elbow is naturally flexed.

37 Open your mouth.

If you are holding stress in a clenched jaw, you may be inhibiting your ability to articulate. So loosen up before you speak. Stretch out your jaw as if you are yawning. Your vowels will sound rounder and richer as a result.

38 Look people in the eye.

Steady eye contact (*interaction*) with individuals is not only a credibility booster. It will also help you pick up cues you need to make good judgements about improvisation. Try to include each decision maker strategically. Maintain eye interaction if challenged.

**39 Sharpen your articulation.**

Speakers who pronounce consonants crisply may be rated as smarter. Listen to a recording of yourself speaking so you can identify sounds you are not pronouncing well. Then exaggerate those sounds when you are practicing on your own (*in the car?*). Soon your muscles will be trained, and you'll have crisper articulation without even thinking about it.

40 Avoid a cover up.

Holding your hands in front of you, clasping them in the “*fig leaf*” position, crossing your arms — all these “*coverup*” gestures make you look scared. Relax your arms when you are not gesturing to look confident and be free to make gestures.

41 Warm up your voice before you speak.

Don't let your opening words be your warm up. Vocalize low pitched sounds (*privately*) before it's your turn to speak. Your voice will immediately sound more resonant, and you'll find it easier to project without screeching.



42 Boost your confidence with the Power Pose.

Amy Cuddy's research at the Harvard Business School suggests that if you stand for 2 minutes in a "power pose," stretching out into all your personal space, you'll lower the stress hormone cortisol in your system and feel more courageous. Try it.

EFFECTIVE VISUAL AIDS

43 Make your case with 3 essential slides. Also have back up.

The short version of your proposal can be presented with few slides. Go to your backup slides to support answers to questions as they come up.

44 Set up your laptop as a Confidence Monitor.

Set your laptop up with the screen facing you, so you can stay oriented to the audience while you glance down to the screen to see your slides. Turn off the mirror function in PowerPoint so you can see the slide currently projected and the next one in the deck. No need to turn toward the projected image (*away from the audience*) to check.

**45 Remember: Your slides are not your notes.**

Notes to yourself go in the notes field in in your slide deck. Aim for few words and plenty of white space on your slides, so information is easily accessible.

46 Separate your display deck from a deck to be archived or distributed to be read.

Slides meant to be read when you are not present can be text heavy. But slides that complement your speaking should be image-laden, so people will not be reading as you speak. Prepare two different decks.

47 Limit animations in your slides.

Here's how you know if your animations are overdone: someone comments on them, but not on your message. Builds are good for step-by-step explanations. But keep transitions between slides simple and clean.

48 Use the remote to advance your slides.

Untether yourself from your laptop. Give yourself the freedom to move around the room. Own your own remote control. Get one with a very strong laser light and a button to blank the screen, as well as advance our slides.

**49 Label slides with a Sentence Headline Assertion rather than just a title.**

Research indicates people understand and remember more if you label each slide with a sentence rather than a title. Ask yourself: what is the point of this slide? That is your Sentence Assertion.

50 Face the audience, not the projection screen, when pointing to slides.

Walk back to the screen, point your feet toward the audience, get your back on the same plane as the screen, then point to the image.

Here's to a standing ovation!



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