

Speakers Bureau Digest

Donate Life Northwest

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Speech Structure: How to Organize Your Speech

Most good writing, we are told, must have structure. A good speech is no exception. By providing your speech with a beginning, a middle, and an end, you will lay the foundations for a successful speech that fulfills all of your aspirations.

Opening

The first thirty seconds of your speech are probably the most important. In that period of time you must grab the attention of the audience, and engage their interest in what you have to say in your speech. This can be achieved in several ways. For example you could raise a thought-provoking question, make an interesting or controversial statement, recite a relevant quotation or even recount a joke. Once you have won the attention of the audience, your speech should move seamlessly to the middle of your speech.

Body

The body of your speech will always be the largest part of your speech. At this point your audience will have been introduced to you and the subject of your speech (as set out in your opening) and will hopefully be ready to hear your arguments, your thoughts or even your ramblings on the subject of your speech.

The best way to set out the body of your speech is by formulating a series of points that you would like to raise. In the context of your

speech, a "point" could be a statement about a product, a joke about the bridegroom or a fond memory of the subject of a eulogy.

The points should be organized so that related points follow one another so that each point builds upon the previous one. This will also give your speech a more logical progression, and make the job of the listener a far easier one.

Don't try to overwhelm your audience with countless points. It is better to make a small number of points well than to have too many points, none of which are made satisfactorily.

10 Commandments of Communication

How to speak like a leader

By Michael Landrum, ATMB

1. Listen generously.
2. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
3. Use the fewest words with the fewest syllables.
4. Align with your audience.
5. Be specific.
6. Suit the action to the word, the word with the action.
7. Structure your speech.
8. Speak to be understood.
9. Speak for the benefit of others.
10. Speak from your highest self.

Closing

Like your Opening, the Closing of your speech must contain some of your strongest material. You should view the closing of your speech as an opportunity. It is an opportunity to:

- Summarize the main points of your speech
- Provide some further food for thought for your listeners
- Leave your audience with positive memories of your speech
- End with a final thought/emotion (e.g. With well wishes to the Bride and Groom, With fond memories of a departed friend, With admiration for winners and losers at an awards ceremony).

3 WAYS TO REGISTER:

- 1. At the DMV**
- 2. On-line at www.donatelife.org**
- 3. With a paper form**

Public Speaking Do's and Don'ts

by *Eszter Hargittai*

As Jerry Seinfeld once noted, at a funeral, most people would rather be in the casket than giving the eulogy, since public speaking stresses people out more than death. But giving talks doesn't have to be such a frightening affair.

Whether you're giving a talk at your local library, updating your colleagues on work progress, or presenting to a large group of

strangers, there are some simple steps that should help make public speaking a better experience - for both you and your audience.

Presentation format

Before you start planning your presentation, find out from the organizers how much time you have and what format they envision for your talk. Will you be part of a panel or will you be speaking alone? Will you be in a regular session or are you the dinner speaker? Do you have 15 minutes or an hour? Do they prefer to leave time for questions? If yes, does that come out of the allocated time you have been quoted? It is important to know what is expected of you so you can be well prepared and not have to scramble last minute to readjust your talk due to unanticipated logistics.

Audience

Get information about who will be attending your presentation. Will the head of the company be there or just co-workers? Are all participants experts at the topic or will there be novices present? Is there a mixed group of people representing different backgrounds or is everyone on the same page regarding technicalities? Depending on the audience, you will have to spend some time giving varying degrees of background on the material and explaining certain concepts.

Location

If you have the opportunity, take a look at the location before the time of the talk. It will help you visualize the context of the event and ensure that you are not caught off guard by peculiarities of the space.

The take-away message

If someone who missed your talk were to ask an audience member in the elevator to sum it up, what would you like that person to say? Focus on that message. Start out with this summary statement in mind and build your presentation around it.

Outline

Once you have an idea of your presentation's main message, spend some time thinking about the structure of the entire talk. All of the material you cover should contribute toward communicating your core message effectively. Start by writing an outline of the talk including main sections and subsections.

Strong start

The first couple of minutes of your talk should be the most prepared and polished. You want to get off to a good start. Those are likely to be the most nervous moments so it is best not to leave anything to chance. By being well prepared, you can convey your messages with confidence. It is important to establish early on that you are prepared and are worth people's attention.



Motivation

Spend a bit of time up front talking about the inspiration and importance of your message. Listeners should get a bit of background on what motivated your work or project in the first place. What may be a fascinating topic to you may not be to the next person so don't take for granted people's interest in the issues you are discussing. Explain why they should pay attention and why your comments matter.

Timing

People rarely want to listen to someone for longer than the allotted time. Few people are such amazing speakers that an audience can't get enough of them. Do not assume you are one of those few. Wrap up your talk on time. To achieve this goal, ask someone to give you time cues by indicating when you have five minutes left, two minutes and when you have run out of

time. Once you get the last notice, you should stop talking.

A common pitfall for presenters is to add unprepared introductory remarks to their talk. The temptation of addressing previous speakers is great, but beware. If your total allotted time is 15 minutes (a frequent limit with many speaking engagements), adding a 3 minute intro (not to mention longer!) will use up 20 percent of your time. However, this is something no one ever builds into their talk. Either prepare for this or let go of the temptation to add commentary at the last minute.

Flexibility

Organize your talk and know it well enough to have the flexibility to skip certain parts or expand on others depending on the circumstances. For example, if you do add a last-minute introduction (as per the previous point), be flexible to skip a part of the prepared content.

Confidence and enthusiasm

You have been chosen as a speaker because you know your topic. Make sure that you exert confidence during your presentation. Don't apologize for what you don't have with you to present or what you do not know. Rather, focus on what you can talk about and discuss the material with confidence. This does not mean that you should be arrogant or patronizing. It

means that you should look comfortable covering the material.

Be sure to enjoy your talk and show your enthusiasm about the content. Your interest in the topic will be contagious and will likely result in a more engaged audience.

Question-and-answer session

If there is a Q&A segment then be sure to keep a polite demeanor throughout. Thank people for their questions and feel free to praise them for good points. If you are not sure how to respond to a query then express your appreciation for the insightful comment and note that you will look into it.

Practice makes perfect

Practice the presentation a few times: more if you have less experience, less if you are a more seasoned public speaker. It can be especially helpful to give the talk to someone who is not in your field and is not intimately familiar with the material. This is helpful in seeing whether you have made the talk too narrowly focused or overly technical. Such a practice session does not have to involve the entire talk, it can consist of telling someone about your presentation outline.

Don't write out the material word-by-word and don't plan on reading text even if you do have it all written down. Having the text written out and parts of it memorized will constrain you.

Memorize the structure of the talk and the outline, but not every word.

Contact information

Finish by giving the audience some contact information, including an email address and Web site when applicable. Mention that you welcome people's feedback and they should feel free to ask you questions either after the session or by sending you email.

"You gave me the most memorable speech because the message you had was extremely powerful. That very day I went home and had the conversation with my mom. I will now be a donor." student at Lake Oswego High School

Tips for Presenting to Young Audiences

by Jim Endicott

It was my first year in business and I was 20-minutes into delivering a one-hour presentation skills seminar when it was becoming painfully clear that I was losing my audience fast. With this particular group, the early warning signs were all there...

It started with some subtle multi-tasking activity followed by a pronounced loss of eye contact by a few individuals at first and then half the group. If you've ever had that experience you know that you only have a couple of options at that point. You can try to pump up the energy level and occasionally re-energize an audience;

but, let's face it, the odds are pretty slim. Or you can always start summarizing, cut your losses and go for a well-scripted close. At least there's some hope that your audience will, at a minimum, hear a few crisp closing points and an interesting story to tie it all together. On that particular day, I didn't have a chance to do either. The bell rang at precisely 11:22 and Cheryl Bailey's PowerPoint class darted for the door and I was left standing there (unplugging my projector and laptop) wondering what the heck just happened. It was my first time presenting to a group of kids and since then I've had to revise my technique considerably for this unique audience.

Lest you think these opportunities are pretty rare, you'd be surprised. Recently a client of mine was asked to be a keynote speaker for an audience of 300 high-achiever type high school kids. He had a track history of turning around troubled companies and had spent the last three years creating a nationally recognized direct marketing powerhouse from a once struggling east coast printing company. As we scripted his one-hour address, we came across the writings of Dr. Kenneth McFarland, an International Speaker's Hall of Fame Award recipient and a strong advocate for the importance of sharing our very best thoughts with the youth of America. R.S Warn captured some of them in a paper called, 'When Asked to Speak'. If you ever think you may be speaking to a group of kids (or perhaps are just wondering how to get through to your own), you will find

these insights helpful as you attempt to communicate with today's toughest audience.

Have the Right Frame of Mind

Speakers should approach a young audience with one very important understanding – young people are genuine. Young audiences openly express feelings where adults often pretend. When young people don't like what's being said, they will never act like they do. They are not naturally rude: they just refuse to pretend. This instant and honest feedback is a sterling quality in young audiences, a quality that some speakers avoid like the plague.

Ignore Their Masks

Shallowness, insincerity and callousness are masks young people wear, but rarely indicate who they really are. Our youth will appear untouched on the surface while deeply stirred by stories with human and emotional elements. They will also rally around basic ideals faster than the average adult audience. They do want to build a better world and are grateful for any relevant insights you may provide.

Make It Come Alive

A common error made by business speakers is the attempt to breathe life into a dead script (theirs or someone else's). Unless your heartfelt feelings are involved, it is impossible to bring life to the words of another. Young people are not concerned with factual details of a letter-perfect manuscript, what they need to know is that the person standing before them is real. Hiding behind a script is a very fast way to lose them. The more of yourself you weave into the

fabric of your speech the more "alive" it will become for them. When looking for ways to drive home a point, look for what you thought, what you found, what you felt, what you did and how you now feel. Inexperienced speakers, breaking every known rule of speech, have touched young people deeply by speaking from their heart.

Know You're On Stage

This audience is sizing you up from the moment you arrive. When required to sit on stage or at a head table, know that everything you do either "adds to" or "detracts from" the value of the program. Pay full attention to the other speakers on the program as well. When this is not done, it tends to discredit the value of what's being said. Kids can spot disrespect quickly and it will only impact their perception of you.

The True Power is in Simplicity

True power from the platform lies in using simple language to express meaningful ideas. Words are mental brush strokes we use to paint pictures in the minds of others. Uncommon and difficult words tend to leave people, especially youth, confused and insulted. A speaker overly impressed with a large vocabulary and insistent on demonstrating six syllable words is not a speaker at all, only a person who fills a room with confusing noise. (Noise that young people will always add to in very short order.)

Audience Participation

Audience participation helps hold the attention of young people. The younger the audience, the more important this device becomes. It can be as simple as a show of hands and as involved as your time, talent and ability contributed before and after the event. A participation device needs to tie directly with a major point in your message, however. Where this is not done, your audience becomes sidetracked. When asking group questions from youth, you can expect questions that adults would never ask. (How much do you make? How many hours do you work? Have you ever fired anyone?) Whatever the question, they must be handled as an important question and treated with respect.

Never Talk Down

They may lack wisdom that comes with maturity, but the average high school audience of today is better informed than they've ever been before. Young people watch the evening news and are often more in tune with worldwide problems than some adults. Any speaker who stands before them with an attitude of being all wise will lose this audience in the first 60-seconds. Our young people encounter so much condescending speech in their daily lives that they naturally assume any adult who steps before them will deliver the same. You need to break that perception quickly.

Never Attempt to Be One of Them

The only way you can become like a child again is to become senile and these young

people know it. When you earn their respect, they will accept you as an adult, but they will never accept you as one of them. Any attempt to be one of them, just one of the gang, will backfire in your face. Everything you do, your dress, actions and words should aim to project an image of an adult, the type of adult they may want to become.

I've only hit the highlights from Dr.McFarland's insights and I've thrown in a few of my own. From these pearls of wisdom, one thing is clear, the need to be genuine is never as important as it is with youthful audiences. What kids are looking for is often very different than what we may think. As the father of some great kids, I found some basic wisdom here as well. We rarely understand at the time how our words impact young hearts and minds. And as indifferent as they may seem at times, they desperately want to find adults in their lives who they can look up to and model.

Young people may be one of today's toughest audiences, but there will never be any more important.

