

Preparing With Pizzazz

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Public speaking is most people's No. 1 fear beating out heights, insects, financial problems and deep water, and yet it does not have to be.

Jerry Seinfeld once said that most of us fear public speaking more than death, and that if we were at a funeral we would rather be in the coffin than delivering the eulogy.

When you conquer the fear of speaking your career options broaden, your financial pockets deepen and your job satisfaction soars because:

Great Leaders are Great Communicators

Audiences want you to succeed

What makes a persuasive speech? More often than not we speak to influence our listeners, and cause them to take action.

This article focuses on preparing the speech, on the assumption that you have already assessed the speechmaking situation.

During your preparation it is important to remember the "Why" and the two "How's."

- Why is my audience here? It may range from "Because I was sent an email to attend" to those who are passionate followers of the topic you are offering, and they have a thirst for greater knowledge.
- The first "How" occurs when you are 20-30 minutes into your presentation where audience members are starting to say "How can I leave?" because you have failed to grip them. What you want to occur is the second "How" -- "*How can I use this information?*" Remember, breaking the ice always involves the audience, and they will then relate to you early on. They are ready for your powerful introduction.

Decide On The Topic

Generally speaking the topic of your talk will already be apparent, as you are an expert in the field. Don't be afraid to decline an invitation if you are not the appropriate person, it will simply enhance your credibility.

You want to be perceived by your audience as an expert and even though you may be, make sure you do additional research ahead of every presentation. Audiences love something new and different on the subject, and the web can provide that hook by discovering new trends and developments from throughout the world. Never deliver the exact same content twice, unless you are delivering the same presentation in different cities.

Paint a picture of the future

Your goal is to create a word-picture of a future situation and bring your audience with you. It is about building a desire with your audience.

Winston Churchill's belief was that you should write a speech for the ear, not the eye. When you read you tend to fix on every word, but when you listen it is the overall impression or picture you receive.

Churchill stressed five principles:

1. Strong beginning
2. One dominant theme
3. Simple language
4. Use of analogy or illustration
5. Emotional, dramatic ending and 'call to action.'

Choosing powerful words for your presentation is yet another whole topic.

Decide on "Why" and "How"

Why are my audience here?

How will they use the information?

Background planning will include:

How long do I have?

Do I have logical stopping points if my time is cut back?

How will I handle Q&A?

Do I want written questions?

Will I take questions throughout or just before the end?

Which presentation methods should I use?

PowerPoint, flip charts, notes, or some combination?

[If you are using PowerPoint restrict the words to key points and have only one PowerPoint for no less than every 3 minutes.]

Am I appealing to the four learning styles?

Do I want audience participation?

Every presentation has a powerful opening, a middle and a Grande Finale. You will be the voice of authority on the subject and keep in mind what you want your listeners to do as a result of your presentation. A.I.D.A.

- A** – Attract attention.
- I** - Interest arousal
- D** – Desire builder
- A** - Action demanded

Lead your audience with logic – develop your material step-by-step, show a logical flow to your presentation and quote authorities to further verify that you have done your homework. When you speak you must be regarded as the authority.

What style of presentation shall I choose?

- Problem-solving or best alternative. 1. What is the problem and its impact? 2. What is the impact if not solved? Alternatives considered? Course of action, and why.
- Chronological approach – Events or circumstances in date time order, using the same approach to the point of your presentation and Action Demanded
- Painting a picture - used for best describing events.
- The news story. Who, What, Why, When and Where. **More importantly “Who cares?”** *Decide that it is truly newsworthy.*

1. Develop a strong beginning

If you want to sound like a leader, start strongly. Start with a bang!

- Think of a time.....
- Imagine.....
- Can you imagine feeling.....
- Remember that warm fuzzy feeling when.....

These are great attention-getters in transforming your audience from their day-to-day lives to the journey you are taking them on. Your goal may be to confirm, challenge, or change. And you are dealing with the audience's emotions, beliefs or behavior.

Above all else, you are a story-teller. Make your speech 'listenable.' In writing your presentation you want your audience to find it easy to listen to you. Clarity, coherence and rhythm can all make you easy to listen to. *After all, you are having a conversation with your audience.*

2. One dominant theme

A suggestion here is to focus on your Grande Finale first. In that way you will know where your speech is heading.

Develop your dominant theme, type it in bold and have it in front of you as you prepare your speech. Everything, including subsidiary points must all support that dominant theme and have a logical flow.

The theme may be to:

- Discuss relationships. How two or more items are similar to or different from each other, or how one includes another, or is part of another.
- Establish a sequence. Historical or chronological flow of information.
- Cause/effect. Most common.
- Consequences. The impact of a situation or event on the future.
- Judgement. Experts use their judgement all the time in setting up the 'call to action.'

Find the message first, and the words will follow.

Decide on the opening strategy which you will disclose to your audience in your Powerful Opening. It may be:

- o To summarize for the audience what follows.
- o To explain your motivation for the presentation.
- o To comment on why you are the presenter on the topic because of your relationship with the subject or because of your experience.
- o The purpose of your talk and hoped-for outcome.
- o To use the most powerful of openings, which is to talk about the audience itself -- their feelings, beliefs, attitudes, situation, accomplishments, challenges or solutions to problems.

Having established your central idea or thesis have no more than one key point and sub-point for every thirty minutes.

Do not underestimate the power of stories. The mind works in stories and has done since we were very young. Your audience will love an underdog story, particularly if it relates to you. Other story types include: a quest or journey; stranger in a strange land; revenge; rags to riches; boy meets girl, but the most powerful story of all is your signature story.

A "signature story" belongs to you – just like your signature does. It may be a personal story about one of your own experiences, or it may be someone else's experience. In the latter case do not use well known stories like the Kentucky Fried Chicken story or the Louis Gerstner IBM story. Remember your presentation must appear new and different.

Share your struggles more than your triumphs for greater authenticity. Stories must be short, punchy and motivational.

Lead your audience with logic – develop your material step-by-step, show a logical flow to your presentation and quote authorities to further verify that you have done your homework. When you speak you must be regarded as the authority.

Remember, when someone asks you to "paint a picture" for them then that is what they mean.

3. Simple language

Use simple uncomplicated language.

I used to believe that the bigger the words the more I would be perceived as an expert. Wrong! People will not slow down and think about the meaning of words or phrases and you will simply leave your audience behind while they think about you as having been stuffy, complicated or too self-important.

Let me draw your attention to the use of antonyms – those words and only two words which are direct opposites of each other. In reviewing famous speeches I found that the use of antonyms produced powerful speeches.

Example: *“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor how can it save the few who are rich.”*

Build antonyms into your presentation.

Quotations **“Those who never quote are in return, never quoted.”** -- Benjamin Disraeli.

In using quotes never use quotes you are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with. The source [name] should be recognizable to your audience, and the quote brief.

Once you have written out your script it is time to look at content and remove the ‘almost right’ words. “But” instead of “although” is a good example of an almost-right word.

4. Use of analogy or illustration

This is all about painting the picture I referred to earlier.

For example, in announcing a new CEO for a company the chairman reported “We have changed the guard.” Or to announce a call-to-action you may say, “Now the trumpet summons us.”

Well-chosen analogies will keep your audience in the zone.

5. Emotional, dramatic ending and ‘Call to Action.’

I call it the Grand Finale.

What is the one thing you want your audience to do?

Often they will forget the presentation and the speaker, but hopefully be left with one clear message. By far the best way to end the presentation is an appeal to the emotions. I call it touching the hearts and minds of your audience.

The final word comes after Q & A. Your quick summary of the presentation will result in the audience now knowing what you want them to do as a result of hearing you.

As you reiterate your key points you are helping the audience to remember what you presented.

End with a “Call to Action.” This is the time to sell the audience on what you now want them to do. But, more than that, your audience must be convinced that if they do act they will gain personally.

Final words.....

Although these are more about delivery, they are also about speech preparation.

Jokes

Not all of us are naturally funny. Even if we are, too often jokes are used as an ice-breaker but the jokes have no relevance to the presentation. Do not try to be someone else.

If you are not a joke-teller, then just let your natural sense of humor come out during your presentation, particularly when you are telling your signature story.

Powerful Pauses

“I stand in pause where I shall first begin.” William Shakespeare

There are two consistent messages I use with people I am coaching.

- Slow down
- Use the Power Pause

This applies from the moment you are introduced. A pause will get people in the zone with you. Pause while you absorb a question and put your thoughts to work, and p-a-u-s-e when you use humor. It gives a chance for the humor to sink in and for the audience to respond.

The less nervous you are the slower you will go, and the more pauses you will use.

Now, start thinking about your rehearsals.....