

Public Speaking – Part of Being a Great Leader

Leaders are expected to be great communicators. Public speaking, whether addressing a group of employees, shareholders, suppliers or a community meeting, is a big part of being a great leader.

Speaking publicly can be terrifying to many. For others, it comes naturally. Regardless, to succeed requires organization, preparation and practice.

Organization: Don't over complicate matters. Keep in mind that most people will take away only a few things; think hard in advance about which things you want that to be. One of them should be a strong perception that you are the expert and that you inspire confidence.

Your speech should have three sections: a beginning (introduction), middle (core content) and end (conclusion).

Simple enough, right? Well, what do you talk about? Think of it this way:

- **Beginning:** Introduce yourself as a person; think in advance of what you have in common with the audience and share it. Then, establish the purpose for the presentation. Basically, tell them what you're going to tell them.
- **Middle:** Use this section to support and validate your purpose. Provide evidence, facts and interesting anecdotes that bring to life your overall purpose.
- **End:** Personalize the presentation again, and recount the key points that

support the purpose of your talk. In short, tell them what you just told them.

Preparation: To prepare for your presentation, there are some basic issues to consider:

- **Know your audience:** Understanding in advance to whom you are speaking will help you identify what you have in common and clarify how to tailor your message. How old are they? Do they share a common profession or interest? Are they already informed about my topic? Do they know me or my company? On what level can you relate to them?



- **Know your venue and format:** Knowing your environment will help to ease anxiety and enable better focus on delivery and reacting to your audience. Will you be at a podium with a stationary microphone? Will you be presenting with a PowerPoint? Are you being taped for video? Is this a webinar? Will you take questions from the audience?

- **Know your content:** Obviously, you are the expert so you better know your stuff. You are expected to be organized and prepared, to be interesting and add value. Think hard about what few things you want them to take away and then prepare your speech accordingly.
- **Know the answer:** Responding to questions is preferable, especially since you're the expert. It enables you to reiterate key points, connect on a personal level and be yourself. Responding succinctly and respectfully will make the event more memorable for attendees. It can make it more fun for you.

Practice: Remember, practice makes perfect. Stand in front of a mirror and deliver the entire presentation. Then, go back and practice the key lines you want to make sure you deliver in a memorable fashion. Try out the speech on a group of employees, your spouse, even your dog. See how they react and ask for advice (you can ignore the dog's reaction).

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