



Resource: **Using Your Voice**

PUBLIC SPEAKING: HARNESSING THE POWER OF PASSION

“If all my possessions were taken from me with one exception, I would choose to keep the power for speech, for by it I would soon regain all the rest.” —*Daniel Webster*

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During this session, we will examine your presentation style and explore ways for you to become a stronger, more effective speaker. In analyzing the performances of speakers before large and small audiences, we know the five main areas where major problems appear:

When Speakers Are Tense:	WE BECOME UNEASY
When Speakers Aren't Energetic:	WE CAN'T HEAR THEM
When Speakers Aren't Expressive:	WE ARE BORED
When Speakers Aren't Organized:	WE DON'T GET THE POINT
When Speakers Aren't Focused:	WE LOSE INTEREST

In today's competitive business and NGO environments, you must be able to convey your ideas to others in a clear and polished way. You must be relaxed, dynamic, and expressive. You must organize your material and prepare thoroughly. And you must focus your attention on your listeners, paying special attention to the concerns they bring with them.

As a professional, you are continually being called upon to guide, influence, and persuade others. You are looked to for leadership. The power, ease, and clarity with which you present yourself will determine whether your audiences hear you, understand your message, and are moved to action by what you have to say.



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CREDIBILITY

The reception you get from an audience depends to a great extent on your personal credibility. To be credible is to be believable, and whether you are to be believed is decided in the minds of your listeners. Although credibility is bestowed upon you by others whose sentiments you cannot completely control, there are four areas where your behavior can influence their response.

1. Integrity: This is your dependability and trustworthiness—your honor. As a person of integrity, you can be counted on to do what you say you will do, when you say you will do it. Your word is always good.

2. Expertise: Your expertise is developed through your past history and experience, your knowledge and skill, and your ability to make critical judgments.

3. Dynamism: How dynamic you are is determined by your energy level and the enthusiasm you feel for your subject. Physical dynamism is directly connected to emotional commitment. The more committed you feel, the more dynamic you will be, and the more you will be believed.

4. Open-Mindedness: Your open-mindedness is an important component of your credibility because, in order to believe in you, your audience must feel you have considered their questions and concerns. Your confidence allows you to be open to their needs.

Possessing integrity, expertise, dynamism, and open-mindedness is a good beginning. But to be credible you must be able to convey these qualities to others; it is their perception of you that counts.



WHAT MAKES AN AUDIENCE LISTEN

In-studying the way audiences receive messages, it has been found that much more than content is involved. Not only do the words you say make an impact on your overall message, but the way you package those words plays a more important role than you might expect.

Only seven percent of your total message is contained in the words of that message. This is the content. Without this seven percent, you have nothing. You must research, organize, and orchestrate your content to the best of your ability. Preparation is key to any good presentation.

But there's more to speaking than just organizing material. Thirty-eight percent of your message is received and processed in the way that it sounds. That's your voice and how you use it. The way you use your voice and the vocal atmosphere you create must support your words and make them come alive, or you may completely negate what you're trying to say. That means your voice must be strong and firm, and your tone must give the appropriate meaning to your words. And most importantly, you must be heard.

To add to the complexity, the visual signals you send account for fifty-five percent of your message and can also over ride your words if you are not careful. The expression on your face, your body language, and the way you carry yourself make a difference. Where you stand, how you stand, and even what you wear can influence an audience or impress a listener.

Your challenge as a presenter is to make sure the seven percent of your message that is the content is matched in meaning and intensity by the ninety-three percent that is your voice and the visual impression you make.

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FOCUS

When you make a presentation of any kind, whether it is on the telephone, one-to-one, in a small group, or to a crowd, you have two areas of mental focus.

PRIMARY FOCUS: First and foremost your attention must be on the audience.

- ★ Why are they here?
- ★ What's in this for them?
- ★ How can I help them solve their problems?
- ★ Are they listening?
- ★ How can I reach them?

SECONDARY FOCUS: This is more introspective and part of human nature. It is a focus on self.

- ★ How am I doing?
- ★ Am I nervous?
- ★ Will I win or lose?
- ★ What will my superiors or colleagues think?
- ★ Do I look silly or ridiculous?

When you are speaking, your primary focus should always be on your audience, with your own well-being taking second place. Difficulties invariably arise when you turn these two areas of focus around. Thinking about yourself instead of the well-being of your audience is a major cause of tension and stage-fright.

If you succeed in concentrating on the needs of your audience, you will become more relaxed and less concerned with your own personal agenda. You'll be able to connect with them and create a sense of conversation, instead of just a one way stream of words. You'll know if you're reaching them and be able to adjust if you need to. You'll also find your own needs, including succeeding (or winning), are met naturally.

“To prepare a well structured, well rehearsed presentation is the work of a craftsman. To fashion that presentation into a work that reflects a deep and genuine concern for the audience is the work of a master.”

—Carolyn Dickson

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RELEASING TENSION

The athlete's goal is to relax and concentrate. The batter must stay loose at the plate, shut out the noise of the crowd, and watch the ball. The tennis player must keep her muscles relaxed, forget this is match point, and watch the ball. The American footballer cannot worry whether two hundred and fifty pounds of hurtling momentum is about to tackle him. He can only position himself and watch the football into his hands.

Substitute the term "activist" for "athlete," and you will find the concepts of relaxation and concentration still apply. A relaxed mind and body are signs of a true professional in any field. Studies by psychologists have shown that in groups, the person who is the most physically relaxed will be perceived as having higher status and is likely to be in command of the situation.

Tension is the great cultural malady—knees are locked, shoulders are tight, and teeth are firmly clenched. Muscular tension can be physically painful and can rob your brain of the energy it needs to think clearly and creatively. Tension is nothing more than locked-in energy. The adrenalin that is released into your body when you feel nervous or threatened gives you extra energy to meet the challenge, if you let it flow without constraint.

When faced with a major presentation, this extra energy can sometimes overwhelm you, leaving you rigid with fear or shaking with terror. These are the times when it is easy to become the victim of your emotions. As you learn to relax and channel the rush of adrenalin, you will be able to speak with confidence and skill regardless of the stress of the situation. You can begin by:

- ★ Breathing slowly and deeply. Allow yourself a moment to settle down. Then you will be able to take command of your presentation. Take three quick breaths followed by a long, slow exhale.
- ★ Checking for muscle tension and releasing it when you find it. Use your bony skeleton for support and keep your muscles loose and easy.
- ★ Allowing yourself to be creative. Open your mind to new possibilities. Blind resistance is a major cause of fear and tension.

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ENERGY, STRENGTH, AND POWER

Some of the synonyms for "energy" are strength, intensity, vigor, and vitality. Let's look at how each of these words translates into good speaking techniques.

STRENGTH.

Action is the name of the game, and a strong presentation is more likely to generate action than a weak one.

INTENSITY.

When your words burn with conviction, when your belief is so powerful it can be felt—then you become a leader. Intensity is NOT tension. Intensity empowers and strengthens.

VIGOR and VITALITY.

Vigor and vitality give life to a presentation. This life translates into a perceived commitment that the speaker has for his subject. This commitment is the medium that persuades and motivates an audience. Without it, the subject becomes dry and impersonal.

In short, good presenters need to possess an inner energy that permeates all aspects of their work. It is not put on from the outside and it cannot be faked. It is harnessed by tapping into sources found deep inside each individual.

Inner energy—passion—infuses one with a power that can be seen, heard, and felt by others. It reaches, touches, and moves an audience more than any other quality a speaker possesses.

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PASSION

Let's talk about passion—the true heart side of this work. Most of us get into activist and organizing work because it connects us directly to things we care about. In my workshops, I will ask you to include in your introductions one thing about which you are passionate—personal or professional. What gets you up in the morning and is in your thoughts as you go to sleep at night. In fact, understanding passion has become a part of the mission of my life. I am on a quest to understand why and how passion influences and moves us.

Take a moment and ask yourself, right now. What drives you to push yourself, to exceed expectations, to dream big dreams?

If you reflected on the question, I'll bet you're sitting there right now with a big, juicy smile on your face. If you were feeling tired, I'll bet you have more energy all of a sudden. You're probably feeling warm, maybe a little anxious, perhaps even restless. You want to get up and get moving! That's what passion does. It wakes us up. It demands the best from us. It changes us and it changes the world. That's why our work in the social-profit sector is about making the world a better place for the people who are hurting and suffering now, and those who will inhabit the world when we are gone. (I always use the term social-profit instead of nonprofit. This language captures the work we do and it often resonates with our supporters).

Passion fuels our work. It sparks our dreams. It gives us hope. It fires our imaginations. Passion gives us the courage to do, to give, and to share. Passion is contagious and it gets people's attention. When I'm teaching people how to build the capacity of their organizations, I tell them to talk about raising passion! The money will come. The volunteers and their time and their wisdom will come. The resources you need will come when you are in the business of raising the passions of the people connected to your work.

When you have a point to make, an idea to express, a request to make, tie it to your own passions.

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EXPRESSION AND CONTRAST

One of the major complaints about presenters is that they speak in a monotonous voice with little or no expression. In describing one speaker, someone said, "Her voice was so monotonous that if it were measured on an EKG she would be pronounced dead."

The words you say and the ideas you convey have different qualities and colors. They can be bright or dark, heavy or light, lively or sluggish. You can be serious or humorous, commanding, or complacent. The degree with which you incorporate these and other qualities into your speaking style determines whether or not your audience listens. Lack of vocal inflection and physical expression will cause an audience to tune you out, and if they aren't listening you will never stir them to action.

One of your responsibilities as a speaker is to make sure your meaning matches your words. Careful attention to the 93 percent of your message that is nonverbal will ensure that your audience correctly interprets the signals you are sending in order to accurately grasp your meaning.

Because presenters in more formal situations are notoriously non-expressive, they must work to incorporate expression and contrast into their deliveries. It doesn't come easily, but the payoff in satisfaction for both speaker and audience makes it well worth the effort.

Things to Practice:

- ★ Practice vocal exercises to extend the range of your voice.
- ★ Tell stories and act them out. Create visual pictures to reinforce your words, using your face, hands, and body.
- ★ Signal key points with vocal inflection, emphasis on words, and physical gesture.

Remember that misunderstandings occur when words, voice, and visual cues aren't in sync with each other. Words give information; attitudes surround that information with meaning. Strive in your presentations to send messages that go beyond the words—messages that are clear, easy to interpret, and say exactly what you want them to say.



STEPS FOR ORGANIZING MATERIALS FOR A PRESENTATION

01. Decide Upon Your Objective
02. Target Your Audience
03. Determine Your Throughline
04. Choose Your “Chunks”
05. Talk—Write
06. Organize
07. Outline
08. Practice, Practice, Practice
09. Deliver Your Presentation
10. Evaluate Objectively

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INTRO	CHUNK I	CHUNK II	CHUNK III	CLOSING
Tell People What You Are Going to Talk About	Stories, Examples, Data, & Personal Experiences	Statistics, Small Words, Testimonials, Research, Conclusions	Analogies, Short Sentences, Quotations, More Data	Remind People What You Told Them & Tell Them What To Do Next

AUDIENCE

- ★ Who Are These People?
- ★ What Do They Know?
- ★ What's In It For Them?



SPEECH ORGANIZATION SHEET

Title of Speech:

Date of Speech:

General Subject (What am I talking about?):

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Length of Presentation:

Audience Analysis:

Size:

Age Range:

Relevant Demographics:

Knowledge of Subject:

High _____ Average _____ Limited _____ None _____ Not Known _____

General Attitude:

Positive _____ Neutral _____ Negative _____

Hostile _____ Mixed _____ Not Known _____

Relationship to Speaker:

Objective (What do I want this audience to do as a result of my talk?):

Throughline (What is my thesis statement and what is the emotional tone?):



SPEECH ORGANIZATION SHEET (Continued)

Chunk 1

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Chunk 2

Chunk 3

Other facts that are pertinent to this presentation that I must consider:

Questions I may be asked during the "Question and Answer" Period:



PREPO

If you don't have the luxury of lengthy preparation time or if someone asks you a question and you need to give an immediate answer, use PREPO to organize your thoughts quickly and effectively.

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POINT: Make your point. This is your major statement and should convey only one idea.

REASON: Give your reason for that point. The reason answers the question, "Why do you say that?" Your reason is more specific than your point, but not so specific that it becomes evidence.

EVIDENCE: This is where you put your data, demographics, and examples that support your reason. Your evidence is specific, for example, numbers that substantiate your statements or examples that validate your reasoning.

POINT: Now make your point again. Good evidence will lead you directly back to your main point. You may use the same words, or better yet, rephrase your point, but it should not change in content or attitude.

OBJECTIVE: This is your wrap up. It gives an action for you or an action for your audience which balances and closes your statement.



PREPO EXAMPLE #1

Point: I recommend purchasing a fax machine for the office.

Reason: It will save the organization over a \$1,000 a month in person hours.

Evidence: Our three runners spend almost four hours a day picking up and dropping off items that could be run through a fax machine. At their current wages, this is a cost of \$84 a day or \$1680 a month.

Point: So you can see the benefits of a fax machine to our company.

Objective: Let's discuss our choices and make a decision this week.

PREPO EXAMPLE #2

Point: We need another outreach worker on our staff.

Reason: The two outreach workers we have now are swamped with work.

Evidence: Right now one worker just takes care of clients who already know us. The other worker handles incoming calls. Neither has the time to go out and find clients because they are both too busy with the people they already have.

Point: If we are going to help more people, we need to add another outreach worker.

Objective: So take a look at the want job description and want ad I've designed and give me your comments.

PREPO EXAMPLE #3

Point: We should get high-speed internet service for the office.

Reason: Increasingly, our staff do most of their research on-line

Evidence: Currently, it takes several minutes for employees to load a typical website using our dial-up service; and only two employees can be on-line at the same time.

Point: With high-speed internet service all of our employees can be on-line at the same time and we will more than double our productivity.

Objective: So let's find the lowest-priced high-speed service and make a decision today.

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SPEAKER'S CHECKLIST

This checklist can be used as a guide to help you become a more effective and dynamic speaker. Use it as a warm up tool before a presentation or to evaluate yourself after your performance.

EASE AND COMFORT

- _____ Feet shoulder width apart (8-12 inches) and parallel to each other with knees unlocked.
- _____ Shoulders loose and centered over hips.
- _____ Head straight.
- _____ Jaw relaxed.
- _____ Face relaxed.
- _____ Breath deep.
- _____ Body centered and grounded.

ENERGY

- _____ Voice supported by the breath.
- _____ Diaphragmatic support for power and projection.
- _____ Strong, committed gestures (no flapping).
- _____ Specific, meaningful movement.
- _____ Appropriate facial expression.
- _____ Emotional commitment to ideas.

CONTRAST

- _____ Emphasis on key words and ideas.
- _____ Effective Pauses.
- _____ Minimal vocal fillers; um, ah, okay, all right, you know.
- _____ Complete use of vocal range to avoid monotony.
- _____ Expression and inflection that paint pictures for the audience.

PREPARATION

- _____ Clear, action-oriented objective stated up front.
- _____ Complete and correct audience analysis.
- _____ Clear and constant throughline.
- _____ Main ideas (chunks) clear.
- _____ Key-word outline.
- _____ No manuscript.
- _____ Rehearsed enough so that I felt comfortable.
- _____ Conversational tone; not recited.
- _____ Questions handled quickly and effectively.
- _____ Visual aids that ZAP the audience.

FOCUS

- _____ I maintained a positive attitude.
- _____ I concentrated on the audience and not on "How am I doing?"
- _____ The audience was listening and I was aware of their feedback.
- _____ I acknowledged the emotional responses of the audience.
- _____ I was able to think on my feet.
- _____ My analysis of the audience's needs was correct.
- _____ I maintained a comfortable connection with the audience.

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