

"Succinct and well researched – Alex Joll shows how to communicate effectively in just 7 days" – Online Business Book Review

Your Best Man Speech
Master ~~Public Speaking~~
in
7 Days

The Phenomenal 7 Day Program Designed to Teach Anyone How to Speak with Confidence and Have Influence

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Master Public Speaking in 7 Days

***The Phenomenal 7 Day Program Designed to
Teach Anyone How to Speak with Confidence and to Influence***

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Published 2013

For more information on public speaking and influence visit <http://www.AlexJoll.biz>

**Alex can be seen at many events throughout the year both in Europe and the Middle East
Check the website for dates and locations**

Master Public Speaking in 7 Days

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Master Public Speaking in 7 Days

Foreword by Andrew Capon

If asked, few people would confidently declare that they are good at public speaking. Most would dismiss the question as irrelevant. On the rare occasions we think about speaking in public, our mind's eye conjures up a lectern and an expectant audience of dozens, or a room full of overly exuberant wedding guests.

Perhaps this is the one of the last unconscious legacies of classical education. We are taught about rhetoric, the art of discourse. The Greek philosopher Plato described the goal of rhetoric as, "the persuasion of the ignorant in courts and assemblies." This had a particular resonance for our Victorian forebears in the grand public schools who were destined for careers as administrators in Britain's far flung empire.

The schoolboys of a former age could define assonance and use rhetorical devices on speech days and in their debating societies. John F Kennedy's speech writer Theodore Sorenson would doubtless have known that, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country", was an example of antimetabole.

For most of us, however, it is a memorable phrase, recalled as much for its delivery as its eloquence and imbued with a particular poignancy in the light of subsequent events. This is a point persuasively made in this guide. Words do matter, but they matter less than you or polished rhetoricians might imagine.

Very few of us will stand in front of a crowd of tens of thousands at the US Capitol with many millions watching at home. But most of us in our jobs will be asked to present a point of view to clients, our bosses, or peers. The size of the audience is immaterial. Our goal is the same as Plato's Athenian Assemblymen: to persuade.

Any amount of fancy rhetoric will only get you so far. How you walk into that meeting, how you stand and confident and controlled speech are far more important. These are lessons you learn as a journalist early on. If you shuffle into a meeting room and sit five seats away from your interview subject, while he or she sits at the head of the table, you have already ceded control of that space.

You have also sent multiple messages, all unconscious: I don't feel comfortable; I am meek and overawed; I will listen attentively because you are more powerful. Then the interview starts. If your interlocutor has a command of his subject he will assert this control further. There are still times, now thankfully rare, that I will walk out of an interview thinking it went well. Only when the tape is played back does it become clear that the interviewee has said very little, but delivered it in a convincing and persuasive way.

Finance ministers, CEOs and successful hedge fund managers, like to be in control and will seize the opportunity to assume it. For some, this is innate. Their success has come because they are natural leaders. But for every "natural" there are just as many who have been expensively taught by personal coaches, PR men and "resting" actors. But us mere mortals need not despair. There is no magic fairy dust that is sprinkled over masters of the universe at birth.

This book offers a practical approach to unleashing your inner leader. Alex Joll is an expert guide. There are few people who can live up to Rudyard Kipling's exemplar of filling "the unforgiving minute/ With sixty seconds' worth of distance run". But whether in the kitchen, on the lecture circuit, behind a desk or (once in a while) down the pub, Alex does.

Andrew Capon, award winning financial journalist, investment strategist, writer, editor publisher and racing tipster.

Introduction

The aim of this book is to teach anyone to deliver a great speech after just 7 days of training and practice.

What is a great speech? First you need to decide what you want to achieve. If you are delivering to a prospect, trying to get a sale, or convert people to your Point of View (POV) then this is your objective.

If you are speaking to convert people to your way of thinking (POV) – support a charitable organisation for example – that is a similar goal.

You may be the Best Man at a wedding and want to give a good speech – that would most likely include stories and humour, which are tricky to get right. You need to engage the audience and have them go along with you – adopt your POV.

Whatever your reason for speaking in public you can have maximum impact and effect in just 7 days with this course. Master Public Speaking in 7 Days is designed to help you influence your audience. It will also build your confidence and enable you to turn any nervousness you have into positive energy to enhance your performance.

Public Speaking is not just speaking to large groups. I include any audience in public, from 1 to a multitude. The same rules apply if you want to be effective and get your POV across.

In this 7 day course we will look at all the subtle aspects of speaking. For example: 67% of your message is non verbal – that is nothing to do with what you say. It all has to do with your body language and performance. You need to be consistent across the 67% of non verbal communication as well as the other 33% of verbal – only about 5% to 10% of which is the actual content of the speech.

I remember a comedian from the 70s always saying “It’s the way I tell ‘em” – and delivery is most of the success of humour. A great current example is the British comedian Michael Macintyre. He moves swiftly across the stage, smiles and laughs as he tells stories and shakes his head in such a way that his hair moves in a distinct fashion (have a look at him on YouTube if you get the chance). What he says is not particularly funny most of the time. But he delivers it in such a way as to have audiences in stitches, and he sells millions of DVDs. In short; he is engaging.

Some people seem to be naturally adept at speaking to groups, they have charisma. People often look at them and say “I could never do that” – but you can, we all can and through this course you will learn how.

Take Bill Clinton, ex-president of the USA. He is a great communicator. He has style and lots of likeability. But this was not all natural; he had to learn a lot of these skills and practice, just look at some of his early speeches for real proof (his 1988 party conference speech is a rambling mess and he is cheered when he finally says he is coming to the end). When it comes to speaking in public, practice makes natural. In other words, the more you do this, the more you will relax and feel comfortable in presenting to audiences.

Then the more relaxed and confident you are, the more effect you will have. Most of the things you will learn come naturally and just need some attention paid to them. Some are a little harder and may take more practice.

Each day we will look at a few key aspects of public speaking. There are exercises to do, which can be fitted in at odd spare moments in your day. If you commute to work or drive for work, this is a great time to practise.

By day 5 it will all be coming together and you will see how easy it is to master these techniques. By day 6 we will look more at your audience, and ways to practise to help progress even quicker.

Then on day 7 we will look at modelling, which is a great way to gain confidence and help give a great performance.

By the end of the week you will have the confidence and power to speak and influence your audience. Then each time you have an important talk to give you can review all the days and give a great persuasive speech each and every time.

Speak with confidence, speak to influence, speak and win your audience with Master Public Speaking in 7 Days.

Note: This book is very hands on, so you will need to do the exercises and build your speech as you go along. You will need pen and paper, and most importantly, a large quantity of Post It notes.

Day 1 – Sunday

You may already have an idea of what you will talk about. If you do then make notes and as things occur to you during the first days of this course write them down. Stories are important, as we will discuss on Wednesday (Day 4) so make a note of any that come to mind.

Don't pay much attention to them now though as we have to look at other more important things before we turn our attention to content.

The first couple of days may seem a little abstract at first but as I mentioned, 67% of your communication is non verbal so we will look at getting that right first.

The Gate Keeper

Our evolution has been long and fraught. Species have come and gone and we are developed from many. Our brains have evolved as well, but we still have many instincts that we developed for survival in the wild.

One such example is the "Fight or Flight" reaction to a situation. Just like more primitive animals we evaluate situations and continually ask "is it safe?" this kind of evaluation is happening in what some people call the reptilian or "Old Brain" the evolutionary one that served us so well for thousands of years.

The problem is that when we put ourselves in front of an audience our old brain senses danger. All these eyes looking at us, we have exposed ourselves and are in the open – hence the judgement that we are in danger.

Our old brain wants us to fight or flee, or possibly stand very still and not get noticed. This is the complete opposite of what our new reasoning brain wants. It is a rational more developed brain the "New Brain". It's the one that got us up here in the first place and it knows that we are in no danger.

So we have to overcome our old brain with the rational thinking of the new brain. Sometimes this is easier said than done. But over the following days you will learn to turn this nervousness into positive energy and overcome the old brain.

The old brain is very important in our audience too. As each member of our audience looks at us their old brains are also asking “is it safe?” They are looking at us and judging our performance to decide if they should trust us. If their old brain decides it does not like the look of us, it will not let our message in. This is the gate keeper at work.

To get passed the gate keeper we need to appear confident and have a consistent message across all our forms of communication. This is particularly important for the 67% of non verbal communication mentioned earlier.

If the 67% is wrong or inconsistent our audience will not even hear our message. The gate keeper will decide not to trust what we say so our words will not be taken in by the new brain – which is our real target audience.

The importance of this cannot be overemphasised. We must be believed to be heard. If we do not, we can fail before we even open our mouths.

Be a New Communicator

New communicators are people like Steve Jobs, Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Oprah Winfrey: quite a mixed bunch. To be honest I am not sure if I am comfortable with Tony Blair because I always found him a little too smarmy and false. However, he was very successful at making a connection and influencing his audience. In looking at him we can see some of the techniques discussed here a little more obviously than with the others. I think this is because he seems to be trying so hard to implement them and be natural, that he comes across as a little false.

Looking at the others we can see a truer natural approach that seems genuine and lets the audience engage with the speaker. Think of Jobs at Mac World and the way he stood up on stage, with no notes, and spoke from the heart. The audience loved it, and consequentially loved what he was selling.

The worst communicators are those who read from a speech. If you want to do that just stand up and hand out a written copy to everyone. They can read it and get all the facts – they can even take it home and refer to it later.

That is not what speaking is about. Speak to influence; speak with passion, authority and confidence. If you know what you are talking about, and you should before you stand up, then you can influence people to your POV.

By all means, if the information you have is technical, give a handout at the END (never during or the audience will start reading that and not be listening to you).

New communicators are not really that new. It is just that so many people from the last century read speeches, that we became accustomed to the “old” style of speaking. It is so dry and passionless that audiences just tune out; especially in the modern age. You have to compete with short attention spans and multi media. If you lose your audience’s attention they will be on their smart phones Tweeting and catching up on emails before you get a chance to have any influence.

Later we will return to some examples of new communicators but for now let’s get started on your next performance and getting you past the gate keepers of your audience...

Dress and Appearance

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. After the last section I am sure you can see how that is true. In short you have 2 seconds: someone introduces you – you walk on stage or stand up, lift your head and prepare to speak...

The whole audience has already made up their mind about you. What do you want them to have decided?

This judging is done by the old or first brain. As we discussed it is continually assessing the situations we are in; it asks is it safe – can I trust this person? People look at you and subconsciously their old brain is deciding whether or not to listen to and believe what you say.

In his book “Blink”, Malcolm Gladwell looks in detail at rapid cognition. *“It’s a book about rapid cognition, about the kind of thinking that happens in a blink of an eye. When you meet someone for the first time, or walk into a house you are thinking of buying, or read the first few sentences of a book, your mind takes about two seconds to jump to a series of conclusions. Well, “Blink” is a book about those two seconds, because I think those instant conclusions that we reach are really powerful and really important and, occasionally, really good.”*

Gladwell cites a study done at Harvard University that showed how it takes about 2 seconds to make that judgement. Students were asked to evaluate a teacher’s performance. Different groups were shown video of teachers and asked to evaluate their performance: First from 10 seconds of silent video footage, then from 5 and finally 2 seconds of silent video. The students in the class were also asked to assess their teacher over the term.

The results were consistent across all the groups. That shows that not only do we make snap 2 second judgments about people, but that we are very good at it. This skill has evolved over thousands of years to be almost a completely subconscious process.

Dress and appearance is essential in that first 2 seconds. Look shabby and people will assume you are shabby, and your message equally so. Look professional and smart and people will assume that you are an authority.

There is a modern view in sales that you should dress to suit your prospect. In this case your audience. So if they wear jeans so should you – WRONG. You need to dress according to your message. If you are a professional, dress as one. If you are in sales, dress smart.

Personally I would recommend dressing better than or at least equally as smart as your audience. Remember that you need to be seen as an authority on your subject. If your hair is greasy and unkempt you will lose authority. If your shirt is unbuttoned or dirty you will have less influence. There are many small details that go to make up an appearance. Get them all right and have more power. Get a few wrong and you give an inconsistent message and undermine what you are actually saying. You will lack influence.

These are simple points that make a huge difference. Look as good as you possibly can. If you lose the first 2 seconds you will have to work for 4 minutes to get the audience to change their mind about you.

Posture and Movement

Stand up straight and tall. Do not slouch or lean. Keep your chin up and act confident. Acting is a good analogy – if you are not confident naturally, then just imagine that you are acting a role as a confident person. We will look more at this on Saturday (Day 7).

There is a subtle difference between someone who stands up straight and tall, and someone who allows themselves to slouch. Try standing up now – fill your lungs with air and breathe deeply from the diaphragm.

See how that makes you an inch taller? That inch means more power and authority. It means more believability.

Now try standing up, back up to a flat wall. Put your heels flush to it, and then press your shoulders back to the wall with your chin up. Now walk forwards and feel how just that slight adjustment, especially with your shoulders, has changed your posture.

A strong posture can add to your confidence level and enhance your performance. Practise this whenever you can this week.

Now you also need to practise movement. This is very much dependent on where you will stand for your speech. You may even be sitting if you are in a boardroom type situation. If you are a Best Man, the chances are that you will be behind a table and restricted in movement. In these cases you should practice this week's entire course in the situation you will be in on the day. It makes a big difference to be seated so practice for the next performance specifically.

If you do have a stage or open space to stand in, then take charge of it. This is your territory and you must own it. Do not hide behind a lectern. Step out and engage with your audience.

Take strides and move with confidence. You can practise this every day. Do not take one step and stop. This looks nervous and lacks confidence. Take one step and then follow it with another one or two.

Move about a stage and engage with the audience on one side. Then turn and move back to the other. Do not over do this movement but do use it to engage the different sections of your audience. Positive movement shows confidence. Moving about gets the audience involved in following you around the stage.

If you are to be seated then practice leaning back and taking up a lot of space. Don't lean far back or slouch. Instead sit confidently upright in the back of the chair. From here you can survey the whole room and engage people individually in the eye on their level or higher. Shoulders up and back and let your posture occupy plenty of space around you. This shows confidence. Give it a go now.

The tendency is often to lean in. You can do this occasionally to emphasise a point, but in the main avoid it as it will diminish your power. Think about how powerful people like Donald Trump sit at a meeting. They take up lots of space and command the room. Try doing this and get used to being the centre of power in a room.

Practice makes natural – exercises:

1. Posture – try walking away from a wall a few times and see if you can replicate the effect without the wall.
2. Breathe deeply from the diaphragm and make yourself bigger as you do the above.
3. If you are to move around a stage practise moving in an affirmative way; try striding and do so with confidence.
4. Think about your dress and appearance. What will you wear? Plan now and make sure it does not need to go to the cleaners – if so you still have time. Get a haircut or book an appointment for the day before or morning of the speech (A new hairdo can add loads of confidence).
5. As you watch TV this week see how people look. Do the news readers look smart and authoritative? Are they believable? What do they do that makes you inclined to believe them?

Day 2 – Monday

Gestures

What to do with your hands? One of the ways people undermine their message is through nervousness expressed through hand gestures. The worst offence is the fig leaf position as adopted by soccer players when facing a free kick. They have their arms in front and cover their private parts with their hands.

Slightly worse is when people adopt this pose and then open their hands, turning palms outwards – what is known as the fig leaf flasher. This is a very defensive body posture and gives the impression that you are nervous and do not trust the listener. It also looks really weird when people flash their crotch at you.

Similarly, folded arms are a defensive posture and negative body language. If you are sat, crossed legs can mean the same. It all depends if someone is inside or outside of your area of inclusion. Imagine being sat at the end of a sofa with your family to your left. Typically you would cross your right leg over your left. This way you block out people to the right and include your family to the left. If you are sat on a chair and cross your legs, the people on the outside are excluded. This is a really subtle message and mostly only noticed by the subconscious old brain, however it is something to be aware of as you can alienate part of your audience without them even realising it consciously.

It is best to relax and try to remind yourself that you are not in danger. Your audience is here to listen to you, and despite all the eyes looking at you, you are safe. A non defensive posture and gestures are always preferable.

Arms by your sides coming up to make gestures to accentuate points as needed. Do not wring your hands together. Do not interlock your fingers either. Again, very negative posture, bordering on offensive. Showing your audience your knuckles is not a way to win them over.

Avoid pointing. Bill Clinton used to point at his listener to emphasise his speech. His advisors trained him not to, and instead taught him the thumbs up gesture to underscore his points in a non threatening way.

After Clinton, George W. Bush adopted this thumbs up as well. Personally I like an open palm, sometimes two at a time. When we see films of Jesus preaching, the actor often takes this open palm gesture, I think that there are even famous paintings of him in this non threatening posture. If it's good enough for Jesus then I am fine with it.

Let these gestures come naturally when out on a stage. Use them in conjunction with moving around. Later in the week as you start to practise your speech you can see where they can be inserted to maximum effect. Underline your points with a gesture and add emphasis to your words.

We all tend to have a nervous gesture or habit. Find out what yours is and work to eliminate it. When you get into a nervous state look to see what it is, perhaps ask your colleagues or friends if they have noticed anything.

Facial Expression

Smile. Not a silly smile grinning from ear to ear – unless you just told a funny story. But engage the audience with a relaxed and open smile. It is possible to be serious and authoritative when smiling; but grinning is going too far.

Try a smile on now. It changes your mood and it will change the way you speak. This is something that comes from NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming). We will look at this more later in the week. For now just feel the difference in your mood as you change your expression from neutral to a smile.

Your mouth smiles, so do your eyes and all your facial features join in the fun. To find out how much this affects what you say, just try listening to someone on the phone. Can you tell if they are smiling? Sometimes you really can, and it affects the way that they sound.

Tomorrow we will look at this in more detail with vocal inflection. However, a smile is what you need at the beginning and end of a presentation, if not all the way through it.

I remember in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (one of my favourite books), Dale Carnegie describes how we all have basically one of 3 types of face: a naturally smiling one, a neutral one, or a naturally frowning one. If you are the latter you have to work twice as hard to look like you are smiling. Dale recounts the story of a man who thought that he was smiling but all those around him thought that he looked permanently miserable.

It may be an idea to look in the mirror – and get a second opinion. In most cases we can all benefit from broadening any smile we do use, and let our enthusiasm for our subject come out through it.

There are some facial exercises that you can do before presenting if you feel that your face is a little fixed in one expression. They help relax the muscles and expressions will come more naturally; as will your speech.

First there is the prune. Purse your lips and push them forwards, meanwhile scrunching up your face as much as possible. Then once you are totally prune faced, open your mouth wide, whilst opening your eyes wide too. Stretch it all out as if you are really surprised.

Next you can do some smiling; simple but effective. Try some really big exaggerated smiles. Really stretch your lips out.

Then try the “brush” exercise. Say brush, and whilst doing so push your lips forwards accentuating the r sound and rolling them out as you do so. You can do the motorboat too; just put your lips loosely together and push air through to make a motor sort of sound.

These can be great to do just before a presentation. They relax your face, and get you ready to speak easily and express your words and emotions.

Always go out, or stand up, smiling; remember you have 2 seconds to make that first impression. We learn from the earliest of ages to trust people with smiles. As babies we see a smiling face as a friendly face. This stays with us and we trust smiling faces and people.

Proverbs 18, vs24: “He who would have friends, let him show himself friendly” – smile and the world smiles with you. If they smile with you, they may listen to what you have to say. If they listen you can have influence.

Eye Communication

Look me in the eye when I am talking to you! People who look down, to the side, or up and away, are often lying. If you do this when speaking to people, you will appear to be lying.

Look people in the eye. If you are 1 to 1 this is easy to do. Look someone in the eye, hold it for a few seconds then look away at something else. Keep looking back at them and in this way you will engage them and seem sincere.

It is even easier with a few people to look at. Then you can give everyone a few seconds of eye contact at a time. Be sure to give everyone an even amount. Sometimes it is easy, when presenting to a meeting or board of directors, to get too focused on the leader. This can alienate others in the group.

Occasionally one of the people on the periphery may be an important part of the decision process and you may not even know it. If they feel left out they will not have such a positive impression of what you have said. Then when the leader asks their opinion they may vote against you. So be sure to involve everyone equally.

In a big room with an audience of 10 to 50 be sure to get to everyone at least once; time willing. This is a great reason to move around on a stage. You can move across and connect with a person on the right. Then come back to the centre and connect with someone at the back. Then move to the left and so on.

If you get over 50 you probably can't get eye contact with them all, so go for as many as you can and project your glance to all areas throughout the speech. Particularly try to involve the people at the back.

When practising your speech you can create an imaginary audience with post it notes. Put a pair of eyes on post it notes and then spread them around in front of you as an audience may be seated. Then practice moving your glance around to engage them all individually or by area. It may sound a bit daft, but when practising your delivery it can really help to imagine your audience.

One thing that people do not realise is that eye contact can give you power and dominance. The power comes from engaging people's eye contact and keeping it until they look away. You have won a little mental battle. This is a small point but once you have won you are the dominant one.

Now I am not suggesting getting into a staring match with a prospect or audience. But you can really boost your authority right from the start of a meeting; and this only works at the beginning of a meeting. The first time you engage a person in eye contact, keep it and let them look away first. If they do not look away after a time it may be one to let go; and it will tell you about that person.

Eye contact and power exercise; this is a great exercise to give you lots of power. It will really help when you stand up in front of a group if you have done this all week before hand. This is best done on the street or in a shopping mall. Somewhere there are lots of strangers passing by.

Simply look at people as they pass. The natural instinct is to look away when we see someone looking back at us. But if you hold your stare and get them to look away first you have established dominance.

Do not do this to tattooed men of great height and girth. They may stare back and ask what you are looking at in a threatening manner. However do try this as much as you can in your daily life. Every time you see someone looking at you, look straight back at them. Hold it and they will look away first 99% of the time or more.

I love to do this, especially in a crowd. People in crowds often look down and avoid eye contact. If you do the opposite you can really boost your confidence. I fly a lot and when waiting for the bathroom I stand before the rows of passengers. Some naturally look at me as I wait. The normal thing to do is look away and feel uncomfortable standing exposed before all these eyes. Instead I make them look away first. This turns an uncomfortable situation in my favour.

When you get in front of an audience having done this exercise you will feel a lot more comfortable with all the eyes looking at you.

One final point on eye communication is to mention the slow blink. This is where some people feel the need to close their eyes and keep them shut for a few seconds. They seem to do this to accentuate their point; as if they are thinking about it and concentrating.

This will alienate your audience. You lose the connection you have built up and you can even come across as smug. I think of a priest giving a sermon who may use this as he preaches. He closes his eyes as he speaks as if communication with higher powers. I think I have seen this in a film somewhere, as I am not a church goer.

This slow blink is something that most people who do it, don't even know that they are. So ask your friends and family if you sometimes blink in this fashion. If you do, be aware of it and try and stop – especially when trying to have power and influence. You want to establish a link through eye contact and keep it.

Eye dart is also a common nervous gesture. This is where your eyes move rapidly around the room, as if looking for an exit. It makes you look shifty and untrustworthy. Remember that the eye factor is one of the most important ones in communicating a consistent message that gets through to the new brain.

Practice makes natural – exercises:

1. Gestures – practise gesticulating in front of a mirror. See what looks right and feels comfortable. Try the presidential thumbs up to accentuate points. See what feels right for you.
2. Facial expressions – again in front of the mirror see what your smile looks like. I found that what I thought was a smile was hardly noticeable. So try pushing a few big smiles across your face and see how they feel and look. Try smiling at work more and especially at home more. As much as you can; see the difference it will make in the way people respond to you – especially loved ones!
3. Eye contact – be ready when someone catches your eye don't look away – keep eye contact until they look away (not to be tried with loved ones). Do the shopping mall exercise. See how much more power you can get. Do it with a smile and it will feel even better and be twice as effective.

Day 3 – Tuesday

Voice and Tone

One of the reasons that prepared speeches, whether read or memorised, can be so ineffectual is that they tend to lack any tone. They get recited in a monotone fashion. This turns the listener off. It gets them on the smart phone again or thinking about what's for lunch.

To illustrate the importance of tone, imagine calling a family member or close friend. They answer the phone with one word "Hello". How much can you tell about their mood from that one word? Are they smiling, are they happy? Is it a curt hello that says more "what do you want?" How much can one word convey with just tone alone?

Telesales people are taught to smile when they dial. This is because it affects their tone and enthusiasm. They are also taught to stand as this adds energy. So think, if one word can say so much just through tone, what about a whole speech?

Your sentences should have rhythm and pace. They should flow and move like a gentle breeze over rolling hills. Imagine your tone going up over the hill and falling down the other side into the valley. This is how it should roll over a sentence.

Practice as you read the following sentence now: start off slow and low, then let your voice rise up over the middle, and down towards the end.

Your tone adds interest and keeps the listener engaged. It can also accentuate points of importance. Keep it varied, keep the feeling in what you say and keep your audience involved.

Timing

Timing goes along with the tone. Pace is almost as important and is part of creating a consistent message that will get through past the gate keeper. The tendency is to speak too quickly. I do it, and I have to work hard to counter my tendency.

When you know what you are saying backwards, it is easy to rush along. If you do, you may lose your audience. If they get left behind they will disengage and reach for the smart phones again.

Keep – it – slow. Add a rhythm to the tone as it goes up and down. Pause. The next section goes into the pause in more detail. Use it to slow your pace. Don't go so slow that people get bored waiting for the end of each sentence. I have known presenters do this and again – the audience is off thinking about their next meal.

Timing is particularly important when telling a story or illustrating a point. Practice your delivery and leave a pause before the punch line of any joke. This lets the listener catch up and be ready to receive the payoff. If they are not ready, it will lose effect.

As with many of these points timing comes with practice. The rule of thumb is go slower to let the audience keep up.

Jargon, words and Non-words

Never use jargon in front of a public audience. There is no excuse for it and it is one of the quickest ways to get people to switch off to your message. The only time jargon can be used is when presenting to an audience well versed in your profession or area of expertise. Only when you are sure that ALL of your audience will know exactly what you mean can you include technical terms without explaining them.

That means most of the time avoid abbreviations, initials without explanation, and other terms that are not in the common parlance. When it comes to words you can choose them well and add colour to what you say.

There are two schools of thought on this subject. One says don't use long or unusual words; keep to common words that everyone will understand. Instead of employment you can use work; instead of insubstantial you might say flimsy or thin. These are just a couple of examples.

The other school of thought is the one that I try to adopt. Use any words that you think illustrate and make your point to the best possible effect. Long words are fine as long as you think people will understand them. If you know your audience then you will probably know their general level of English. Always speak to your audience and in a way that they can follow and understand.

I don't believe in dumbing down, I prefer to engage people on an intellectual level. A recent study looked at national newspapers in the UK to see how many words were in common usage. This was to test the supposition that language today is not as complex as it was some years ago.

It turns out that compared to 100 years ago it is about the same. Some words have changed but we are at the same level intellectually. The most common estimate is that the average educated person has about 2,000 words in their vocabulary. So I think it is safe to say, that if it's not jargon, and you know what the word means, it's probably safe to use it.

So that is jargon and words – but what of non-words? What are non words? Well they are anything that does not add to what you are saying or could be left out of the sentence. Such as the following..."So, hi, like, I am here today to...um..er...tell you... well ... you know ... like its... anyway"

The most common you may hear today is like. "So anyway; I was like trying to cross the road, when this like, bus came and stopped like, right in front of me. So I was like, totally stuck on the pavement."

That said the most common non word for people over 20 is um. Why is it that we all feel the need to insert these little non words into our speech? I sometimes do it, and if I see a video of me presenting and I *um*, I cringe.

I have worked hard to get them out of my speech. They detract from what we say and should always be replaced with the most powerful tool in your arsenal... the... pause.

If you are stuck as what to say next, or, as happens to me often, your mouth has got ahead of your brain (remember to go slowly), then instead of feeling that you have to say something, simply don't. Say nothing. It is a lot more powerful.

An *um* undermines your authority and if you do a few of them it will dilute your message. Your believability factor drops and all the hard work you have done so far is undermined: and all by a silly little non-word.

At Toastmasters, they used to keep score of the non words we used during each presentation. In my group it was the group leader who was the worst offender! Practice leaving a pause in your speech. You can do this all the time, every day, at work and at home. I get my daughter to tell me off if I use non words (I secretly hope that it will wear off on her too).

Content

You may have been wondering when we were going to get on to writing a speech. People think that this is the most important part but it really isn't. If you can master all the subtleties of presenting and give a consistent message that is old brain friendly, then what you say will matter less.

Don't misunderstand me; you need to be consistent here too. But how you say what you say is more important than what you actually say what you say...if you follow me. An example is to be found in sales. People buy from people as we are all told; and a sales person who knows all the technical detail of each and every product on offer from his company, but lacks charm and charisma, will always sell less than the charming fellow who doesn't know how they work, just that they do.

Having all the facts at your finger tips is great. But if you can't get past the gatekeeper then they are of no use whatsoever.

Of course, if the charming fellow had learnt his facts as well, then he would be unstoppable – national sales champion. So that is what I recommend. Learn all the ways to present AND have great content.

Tomorrow we will look at the way to build your content into a great speech. We will also look at way to enhance your speech with stories and illustrations. But for today I want you to think about the general purpose of what you are going to say.

1. What are you trying to achieve?
2. What effect do you want to have?
3. What do you want people to take away with them (learn)
4. What do you want them to do now?

General rule of thumb; you can make maximum 3 points and get action on one.

To aim for more will dilute your message and effect. What do you want to achieve?

For now consider these points and think about your message and aim. More about actual content will follow tomorrow.

Practice makes natural – exercises:

1. Practise using the tone of your voice to illustrate points, listen to others tone and hear how it alters their meaning.
2. Practise slowing down your speech. Think about the timing of your words.
3. Look out for non-words in your speech. Replace them with the pause.
4. Review the above 4 points of your content. Write down answers to the questions and decide what you want to be the outcome of your speech.

Day 4 – Wednesday

Building Your Speech

Now we come to the easy bit. That is to say the less abstract part of what needs to be done. This is the part everyone has some experience of. It is basically writing. However, I do not recommend writing a speech. Even written speeches that are learned by heart, and recited without notes, do not sound as natural as free speech.

So I recommend the following method of preparing your content. Firstly get some post it notes and have a brainstorming session. Write down on each one a theme or subject that can make up part of your talk. You don't need a lot of detail, just an outline of the point should be enough. Go mad, write every idea down. This should be easy if you are well versed with your subject matter.

A Best Man will have some idea of what he wants to say about his best friend. Anyone presenting for work should know their subject. The same applies for a hobby or charity.

Do this for 5 or 6 minutes and then stop. Look at what you have and start to arrange them in groups of similar subjects. Then arrange the groups in an order so that one will flow into the next. If there is a gap don't worry you can fill that later. Some groups may merge into one.

Now review what you wrote down in answer to yesterday's 4 questions. Have you made your point/s (up to 3)? Have you given evidence why the audience should adopt your POV? At the end you must ask for the action that you want people to take. What is that: a sale, a charitable donation, a toast to the bride and groom?

If you need to add some extra post it notes here do so. Make it so that the content flows from beginning to end. Now look at the opening. How will you start? What can you do to get the audience's attention and engage with them?

Some sales people like to start by telling the listener what they are going to say and what they expect at the end. In this way the listener is prepared for it and more likely to go along. This often is referred to in this way... say what you're going to say – say it – and then tell people what you said.

Others like to grab attention and then let people find out as they go along. I prefer this myself because you can pique people's interest and let them make their own conclusions, helped along the way by you. People who figure things out for themselves are much more likely to remember the point and adopt the POV as theirs.

If you can give the facts in such a way as to lead people to make their own minds up, you will have a greater effect. Of course if you are the Best Man your objective is probably to make the audience laugh, make the groom cringe, and make the bride look good.

So now you have the bones of the content. All laid out and in order. You have an opening and a close. You have made the points you wanted to in the middle and all in all it's looking good. Now you need...

Enhancements

Enhancements are stories, examples, illustrations, similes, images, descriptions and metaphors. The use of these makes your message sticky, and by sticky I mean that it will stick in people's minds. Stories are the best of these and if they are from your own personal experience all the better.

This is where a soon-to-be Best Man reading this leaps ahead. He will have an arsenal of stories and can always ask friends if he needs a little help or memory stimulation. For the rest of us we need to look at how we can illustrate our point in a way as to help the understanding of the audience.

I was speaking at a golf course recently and used an analogy involving my golf game. Not the best of swings to say the least, and my shots have an equal likelihood of being sliced, hooked or going straight down the fairway. The latter is actually the least likely if the truth were told. But my point was that the difference in my swing was minimal, but the result in direction was huge. This is the same as when we present. Subtle differences in our posture and body language affect our believability and the result we get from the very same words.

So think of stories that make your point and stick in people's minds. The Heath Brothers have written a book on the subject "Made to Stick" and I also recommend a great book by Peter Guber called "Tell to Win". Both these books show how it is stories, time and again, that stay with people and change perceptions.

Abraham Lincoln was famous for stories that he told to make his points. Jesus was a fantastic story teller. His stories have endured for nearly 2,000 years. Stories were how one generation passed knowledge on to the next before we had the written word. They are an essential part of getting your message across.

If you can't think of any to suit your speech then get on Google. Find some illustrations. Use language that lets people imagine the scene and let them relate to it. Colours and smells that people can relate to will help bring imagery to life.

Quotes are another great enhancer. This is one point where it is fine to read. You don't want to misquote someone, so take your time to get this right. Put on your glasses if you need them. Hold up the text and read it out. This adds to the authority of the quote and makes it all the more poignant.

Other enhancements can be objects, photographs, slides, and illustrations. Avoid PowerPoint Presentations (PPP) at all cost. People who use PPP really should just sit down and press the button. Talking is redundant. The audience will just read the slides and make their own mind up. The likelihood of them actually listening to you, let alone being influenced by you at this point is zero.

Steve Jobs liked to use black slides. These can work with just a phrase or few words to underscore your point or remind people of what it is that you are trying to convey. These might be the three points that you are trying to make. The phrase stays up as long as you are on that subject. If you use slides then show them, and then talk. If you are speaking to influence competing with lovely images is a battle lost.

Personally I like to illustrate with words; but sometimes you need a picture of a product or place. In which case use it, let it sink in and then move on, preferably with the image gone. You want the attention back on you and what you have to say.

When writing down these enhancements, again, use post it notes. You only have to write down a header to remind you of the story. This is where personal stories have a great advantage: you know them, so you don't have to learn this bit. Just the heading should be enough to remind you and set you off.

Structure

Now you have a beginning, middle and an end. You have your points to get across and your stories, quotes and other enhancements to make the story come alive and stick.

Hopefully you have them all on individual post it notes. Now it's time to edit. Look at what you have on your notes and see if any points are made twice. Choose one of each or amalgamate them. Then see if there are any gaps and add some more content if you need to.

The idea is to have each point or section with an enhancement. Then for each to flow into the next. Now try to think about how long each section will take to present and make a note on the lead note.

This will depend on how much time you are expected to talk for. Most speeches go from 10 minutes to 1 hour. Any more than that and you may need to take a break, and the audience probably will too.

So for now let's assume it is between 20 and 40 minutes. Add up your rough timings and see what you have. I have found over time that I normally over estimate the amount of time it will take to present each section, time a run-through once you have roughed it out.

At this point you should have just the heading of each point on a post it note and not a full written speech. Each time you go through the content what you say will vary slightly, and that is good. However the main structure will remain the same. The order and points you make will be unchanged.

Play around with it and see what you are comfortable with. This may take some time but it is worth getting right from the start. This part is crucial to how you present. You should know the content of each post it note and what you will say from just the few words on that note.

Practice makes natural – exercises:

Today there is so much to do with organising your content that we will concentrate solely on that. Get it in to great shape. Look at the points you want to make, the flow, beginning and end, and the enhancements.

Day 5 – Thursday

Trigger Words

Yesterday you built the content of your speech. As you have seen, you know the content and hopefully were able to use personal stories, or ones that you know and can relate to. You also have the order and it all should be laid out.

Now it is time to change each post it note for one word only. So go from a sentence and reminder, to just one “Trigger” word. One word, probably one from the content of the post it note, that reminds you of the full story or point.

An example might be using the name of the protagonist in a story. Such as “Clinton” if the story is about Bill – although you don’t want to get confused, I know stories about Bill and Hilary. So I would prefer to use something specific to the actual tale to be told.

Write these words down, one below the other, in order, on a blank sheet of paper. Now you have your whole speech from start to finish on one sheet of paper. Time to practise and see if each trigger word works in setting off the explosion of content that should already be in your mind.

If you get stuck don’t worry about it; just look up the content on the original post it note. Run through a few times until you remember what each word triggers. At this point you may need more help or have it pretty much memorised with the triggers. Either way you are doing great.

Bringing it all together

Now it is time to adopt the position, and preferably dress, that you will present in. If you are to stand, do so. Remember the walking away from the wall exercise from Sunday (Day 1)? Do that now. Remember posture, breathe deeply from the diaphragm. Think about your movements.

If you are to sit do so and relax. Lean back not forwards and take up plenty of space. Remember that you are in charge; the audience is here to listen to what you have to say. So use this power to your advantage and take charge of the situation.

At this point we do not need to worry about hands and gestures and it is fine to be holding the list of trigger words. Now run through the whole speech from beginning to end. Time it and be sure to go slowly and with pauses. Use the pause if you need to think about the next bit of content. Try not to refer to the post it notes but don’t worry if you have to at the beginning.

You can do this in front of a mirror, although I don't particularly like that; or to an empty room. If you can use the room you will present in; all the better. If you are confined to a small space just imagine the place that you will be in on the day.

You can add in your audience at this point if you want to. Post it notes with eyes on – little faces if you like. Put them around the room or on the wall in front of you. Then present to the room. Include all the audience and speak up, and out, clearly and with a strong voice.

If you want to relax your face, do the prune and brush exercises from Monday. Remember to smile as you speak.

Practice this again and again. Don't time them all, just first and last will suffice to give you an idea of your pace. Depending on the length of your speech you may want to do this 3 or 6 times. I definitely would not recommend more than 6 or 8 times as it can become confusing.

Practice makes natural – exercises:

Today there is a lot to do. At this point you should be able to give your speech from trigger words alone. Tomorrow we will start to bring in the non-verbal communication elements of your presentation. So now review them and give some thought how you can use them as you speak:

1. Posture – try walking away from a wall a few times and see if you can replicate the effect without the wall.
2. Breathe deeply from the diaphragm and make yourself bigger as you do the above.
3. If you are to move around a stage practice moving in an affirmative way; stride even, do so with confidence.
4. Think about your dress and appearance. What will you wear? Plan now and make sure it does not need to go to the cleaners – if so you still have time. Get a hair cut or book an appointment for the day before or morning of (A new do can add loads of confidence).
5. As you watch TV see how people look. Do the news readers look smart and authoritative? Are they believable? What do they do that makes you inclined to believe them?
6. Gestures – practice gesticulating in front of a mirror. See what looks right and feels comfortable. Try the presidential thumbs up to accentuate points. See what feels right for you.
7. Facial expressions – again in front of the mirror see what your smile looks like. I found that what I thought was a smile was hardly noticeable. So try pushing a few big smiles across your face and see how they feel and look. Try smiling at work more and especially at home more. As much as you can; see the difference it will make in the way that people respond to you – especially loved ones!

8. Eye contact – be ready when someone catches your eye don't look away – keep eye contact until they look away (not to be tried with loved ones). Do the shopping mall exercise. See how much more power you can get. Do it with a smile and it will feel even better and be twice as effective.
9. Practise using the tone of your voice to illustrate points, listen to others' tone and hear how it alters their meaning.
10. Practise slowing down your speech. Think about the timing of your words.
11. Look out for non-words in your speech. Replace them with the pause.
12. Review the above 4 points of your content. Write down answers to the questions and decide what you want to be the outcome of your speech.

Day 6 – Friday

Practice Makes Natural

All the way through the course the days end with a Practice Makes Natural section. The old adage of practice makes perfect is not what we are going for here. The idea is to know what you are going to say and perform so well that you can relax and be natural when presenting.

Video is a great way to learn and improve. Video yourself giving your presentation. Even before that, you can use video to practise and see what you are getting right and what needs working on. An amazing thing is that we are our own worst critics. We beat ourselves up about our performance in so many areas.

We are our own worst critics. We find fault where others have not seen it. When I was at college I remember submitting work and being told it was good. Then I would say what I had missed out or could have done to improve it. My tutor told me in no uncertain terms to “shut up and take the compliment”.

That has stayed with me. If people tell you that you have done well then thank them and leave it at that. Video is a great way to look at our performances and see what we did right. Often we may feel nervous as we perform, but show no outward signs of it when we watch back the video. If you missed out a section of your speech – so what – no one has a script, so no one will even know. Let it go and try to include it next time.

I did that recently and came to the end well ahead of time. So I opened up the floor to questions and there were some great ones. This went on for a while and in the end the audience got more of what they actually wanted to know.

When evaluating your performance always try to stick to the rule of 3s. Find 3 things that you did well and find 3 things that you need to work on. If you can see more than 3 don't worry. Just focus on the most important 3 and make sure you find 3 things to praise as well.

If you can get a friend or loved one to evaluate you this is even better. But make sure you tell them to use the rule of 3s. Otherwise they may get too picky looking for fault. That is not helpful. There are always things that we do right and it is important to recognise these and then build on our success.

People often say things like “I can't do that” or “I'm no good at xxxx, I just don't have the gift for it” These same people will look at someone doing a task well and say “He is really gifted” – a fantastic piano player of golfer perhaps.

Gifted is not what they are, talented is not the right word either. After years of practice and sacrifice I am sure that they would prefer the term skilled. Skill is something that you build up and talent implies that you are born with it – or gifted the ability. It takes practice, and quality dedicated practice is the best of all. There is a great book by Mathew Syed (ex-Olympic Ping-Pong player) called “Bounce”. Bounce explodes the idea of talent over practice.

He gives really great examples like Tiger Woods and the Williams sisters; who had fathers who taught them from an early age and gave them the tools needed to become the world’s number 1 players. All it takes is about 10,000 hours of quality practice to become a master at anything.

All is rather an understatement. 10,000 hours is about 10 years dedicated practice. That is nearly 3 hours a day, every day, of every year, for 10 years. That takes dedication and enthusiasm. Right now we are just trying to give a good speech and influence our audience.

The point I am making with all of this is a simple one: No one you see giving a great performance has not trained to do so. All the skills you need can be learnt. No matter where you start from you can get to a high level of achievement. Think Clinton 1988 vs Clinton 1992; very different presenters and in ’92 he won the presidency. All it takes is quality practise.

The quality part of that statement is very important. Because if you stand up and read a speech and practise again and again without knowing what to do in the first place, you will not get much better. In fact you could ingrain bad habits.

So the more you practice the techniques learned in this book, the better you will become at communicating with the spoken word. I would suggest that you do not want to become word perfect and give exactly the same speech each time. But rather know what you want to say, the points you want to make, your POV, and what you want people to take away with them, and do with it. Then each time you speak it will be slightly different. This will help keep you engaged as well as the listener to whom it will seem more natural.

As we have seen, a huge part of our communication is non-verbal. It is these elements that we now must start to bring in to our presentation.

Start today with a run through using the trigger words alone. As you do this, think of your vocal tone. How can it enhance what you say? Where should the emphasis be on each sentence or section? Remember the rolling hills of your sentences.

As you get to the end and you ask for action, emphasise this and make it a strong call to action. Check your pace and timing – add the pause as needed. People will hang on your words when the pause is correctly deployed.

Remember your posture from yesterday. That should be automatic as you stand and prepare to present. Remember, walk away from the wall, shoulders back, chin up and speak to the back of the room. Breathe deeply and speak with the confidence you have built up from all this practice.

Focus on these things for now and we will leave gestures for tomorrow – although if they start to come, let them. If it feels natural to gesticulate to underline a point then do so. Remember what the American Presidents have done. Avoid threatening, be natural and non aggressive.

So have a couple of run-throughs now. See if you can do the second one without any, or very little, use of the trigger words.

Your Audience

Who are your audience? If you know who you are speaking to you can tailor your language to suit. Just as we avoid jargon when addressing the public, we can use phraseology that other groups may be familiar with.

Perhaps if we have a young audience the stories we use should reflect this. It may be best not to reference Regan and Kennedy; but better to use Jobs and Obama. If older, the audience may respond to stories from last century.

Also know what may offend them, especially with humour. One person's joke is another person's offensive remark. So stay non political and avoid stereotyping groups of people. Also avoid religion if at all possible. Although most people are fairly tolerant it is best to keep as many people on side as possible.

At the same time as all of this it is fine to have an opinion. After all that is what you are standing up to offer people – your POV. Having an opinion is fine but being opinionated is not.

In most cases you will know the rough makeup of your audience. You may even know many of them. This can be both good and bad. I know that certain networking groups I speak to like to heckle. They think because I am familiar they can make comments and wry asides.

Well normally these are not so wry as try – they are looking for attention and to be seen as clever. I would suggest that you watch some stand up comedy – perhaps on YouTube – but live is better. See how the comics deal with hecklers. Some will laugh along and steer the audience back to themselves. Others will stomp on them so as to deter others from trying.

I don't want to humiliate anyone, even if I was clever enough to think of how at the time. Far better to thank them for their input and ask them to refrain until the end when you will have a Q&A. Or perhaps they would like to stand up and speak themselves. If you ask this most people will decline. But you may get some clever clogs stand up – in which case simply say that they can see the management to book a date, and in the meantime it's your turn.

Audience participation can be great if you ask for it. Especially in smaller groups but even in large ones. If you ask for a show of hands be prepared for a poor response. If you do ask make sure you raise your own hand to demonstrate and allow people to follow your lead.

There is a phenomena called "Crowd Behaviour" that means you will get a different response from a group as you would from an individual. Be prepared for this. If you have the audience's full attention then getting them to join in is a great way to keep it and strengthen the bond between you and them.

If you ask a question to start that everyone will answer yes to this is a great way to kick off. "Who wants to live to 70 or older?" – "Who wants to retire rich?" – most people will put their hand up, if not all. Then they will feel better about putting their hand up next time. Start off with a tricky question and the crowd attitude will affect the result.

The other thing to do is ask a question where you want almost no one to put their hand up. In this way all that did not are implicated in having the opposite opinion. "Who likes paying taxes?" – no hands implies that everyone doesn't like paying taxes. But maybe a few don't really mind.

If you start off with "Who doesn't like paying taxes?" the response will be quite different. Last time the whole audience kept their hand down to agree with you. This time a lot less will put it up to do the same.

So as you review your speech think about the people you will be influencing. What will they respond to best? Tailor your speech to the particular audience each time for the best possible results.

Practice makes natural – exercises:

Video your practices – review your performance using the rule of 3s. All phones have video now and this will suffice. If you can watch it back on a computer so that you can see your expressions better. Your computer may have a webcam so that is another option. Do one run through and then watch it. Look for 3 things to improve, then do another and review that to see if you have improved.

Day 7 – Saturday

Energy and Modelling

Public speaking is one of the best ways to boost confidence and personal belief. However if you are not confident now, then that does not help with this speech. It's all very well saying that afterwards you will have unstoppable confidence, but what about the first time?

Well a great way to get confidence is to use a technique called modelling. This is not anything to do with Vogue or catwalks. This is a powerful exercise that will enable you to go out in front of any audience with sure footed confidence.

Think for a minute about some of the greatest orators of all time, some of whom I have already mentioned, such as Lincoln, Jesus, Jobs, Socrates and Churchill. People believed them and followed their words with action.

You may have a few favourites of your own. Now bring a picture of them in to your mind and see how they look and imagine how they sound. They are confident and believable? In some cases their words led people to follow them to the death. That is a lot of power and influence.

Who of these would you like to emulate when you present? Which of their traits would you like to have in the way you present?

Modelling is just that – it is modelling the behaviour of someone else. One of my favourites is to model James Bond (Pierce Brosnan) in sales situations. Cool calm and collected and supremely confident. Also useful in bars of an evening, but that is for a different book.

However, for the purpose of this speech, modelling can be a very effective way of adding confidence. You become an actor playing the role of presenter. This takes some of the pressure away from an otherwise strange situation that you are not used to.

Imagine how your model would behave and present. Then go out and do your version of that. I would advise against adopting the vocal tones, especially in the case of Winston Churchill, but the rest can be very useful. You still want to be yourself but with the traits that you would like to emulate, and the confidence of the other person. I know some people that model Donald Trump on a regular basis; the furrowed brow and pursed lips. If you are negotiating when modelling Mr. Trump then there is a good chance of success.

After a little while of modelling you'll find that your own personality takes over and you have adopted the things that you wanted to. Confident and now experienced you can take on the challenges ahead.

When presenting, especially to groups, it is important to have high energy levels. I talk about this again later and give some exercises to do before speaking. For now think about the energy of the person you would model. Do they have power and force in what they say. Is there energy in their words?

Prepare to Succeed

Woody Allen is quoted as saying *80% of success is showing up*. It is true; a lot of people just don't bother to make an effort, so just turning up gets you to the front of the crowd. Jeffery Gittomer, a sales guru, takes Allen a bit further and adds that the last 20% is being prepared.

Prepare for success. Do all you can to practise and give yourself the best advantage that you can. One of the best books that advocates preparation as the key to success has to be Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. If you haven't read a modern translation I suggest you do. You may never be 100% sure that you will win, but you can be sure of the best chance with full preparation.

Practice makes natural. Preparation, turning up on time, looking good, feeling positive and confident will assure success. Woody Allen also said "If you're not failing now and then, it's a sign that you're not doing anything very innovative".

For many people, standing up in front of an audience is an uncomfortable experience that they would like to avoid. However if you push yourself to do it your confidence will grow and your life will be enriched.

Now one last mental exercise to do: Visualisation. This is a very powerful technique and a lot of top athletes and performers use this to get the best possible results. Sit down in a quiet place with no distractions and close your eyes. Imagine yourself in the situation that will be happening soon as you give your speech. The audience are smiling and are attentive to your words. They laugh at your humour and nod as you tell stories that make your points all the more vivid.

You end your speech and the audience applauds. You were great and people tell you so. How does that feel? Are you smiling, happy, relieved? Remember, you are visualising success so imagine the best possible outcome.

Use these feelings that will come with amazing success to help you visualise it. It is amazing how well this can work; especially if you can feel the emotions that go with success. Golfers use this to visualise each shot before they hit the ball. They imagine the ball going exactly where they want it to go and the feeling that will give them.

I have heard a golfer say “Visualise all you want, if you can’t hit the ball it makes no difference.” So remember, you need to practice. But practise works even better with the visualisation of success.

Prepare for success...

Practice makes natural – exercises:

Use YouTube to see how different people present. Tony Robins is one of the best and a guru of positive attitude. See how he engages his audience; stories and comedy feature highly and the audience is always fully engaged.

Now review the points from earlier in the book and visualise each of them and the effect it will have on you.

1. Posture
2. Breathe deeply
3. Looking smart
4. Gestures
5. Facial expression
6. Eye contact
7. Tone
8. Slow down – everything you do
9. Look out for non-words - replace them with the pause.
10. Review the 4 points of your content; what is your goal?
11. Visualise success

Run through your speech from start to finish at a steady pace. Video it. Try to do it without looking at the trigger words. If you still need them transfer them to small cards about A6 or A7 in size. Put a few triggers on each –perhaps in sections or points to be made. Then on the day you can have them with you to refer to if you need them.

Review the video – then try again – if you can get a real audience (wife, kids, friends at work) all the better – still video it. Review the video together afterwards. Give them the list above and see what you need to work on – 3 at a time!

The Main Event

On the day that you are to give your speech it helps to be relaxed and feel good about the day ahead. If you can spend a little time visualising success again then do this and feel great about the outcome.

Get to the venue a little early and, if you can, get up on stage or stand where you will perform and imagine being there in front of the audience and doing a really great job. Before your speech try the facial exercises to loosen up. Try a vocal exercise such as saying “ding dong, ding dong, ding dong” in a musical style, make the ding a higher note than the dong, and then make the next one lower again. So you go up-down, up-down, up-down – progressively lower.

Do some breathing exercises, take deep breaths from the diaphragm and exhale slowly. If you are going to model someone start to get into character now. How would they be preparing for this? They would be confident and well prepared, just like you are.

Something I like to do is bounce up and down a little and lift my arms with fists clenched, shouting (if the location allows). This is not designed to calm me down but instead fill me full of energy, and power me up ready to go on stage. I will come out projecting power and confidence from the first second. Remember you only have 2 seconds in which to make that first impression. So you want every one of them to count.

I have been known to do a seated version of this in the car on the way to an event. The looks I get when stuck in traffic seem to suggest people think I am mad; so I pretend to be talking to my hands free device.

I like to turn nervousness before starting, into energy. That is why I find jumping about in my version of a New Zealand rugby Haka useful. If you are nervous try this and visualise your success as you do it. Energy is great but don't get dishevelled and mess up the great appearance you spent your time getting just right. Definitely don't work up a sweat!

Remember to go out smiling and standing up straight. The simple act of standing tall adds energy to your posture. You are going out to meet your audience full of energy.

Now you are ready for success – just do it!

*Come to the edge.
We might fall.
Come to the edge.
It's too high!
COME TO THE EDGE!
And they came,
and we pushed,
And they flew.*

Christopher Logue



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Published 2013

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