

10 Steps to a Successful Speech

Speaking gives you visibility, but does it give you credibility?



By Jacki Rose

So you're not a professional speaker. That's no excuse for *NOT* giving a professional presentation.

You have a great product or service!

You've put together an awesome presentation with great content!

You really know your stuff!

If you do not present it like a professional, all this doesn't matter and you

won't make the sales you could have.

Let's face it. We live in a society that makes quick judgments. If we are not a good presenter, we are giving a false perception of our expertise. I recently saw a women talk about her profession. She was extremely nervous, used notes, lost her place, and had to start over. The perception was that she didn't know her subject, her business, or what the heck she was doing. But, in reality, she was an expert. She was just nervous speaking in front of others and didn't have the knowledge and skills on how to give a powerful presentation.

Don't make the same mistake. Read the following 10 steps, put them to use, and you will be perceived as an expert in your field.

Audience: Speak in front of the right audience. Your time is valuable and everyone wants you to speak for free. If you are going to speak for free, don't you want to speak to the people who can hire you? Go after the right audience, not just any audience.

Introduction: Bring a typed-up introduction, give it to the host, and ask him or her to read it verbatim. A proper introduction is necessary for the success of your presentation. It engages the audience before you even start speaking, it gives you credibility and a reason for the audience to listen to you, and it shows the audience who you are. They want to know. Don't you want to know who the speaker is and their background when you are in the audience?

Opening: Before jumping into your subject, have an attention grabber. This is critical. You have less than 30 seconds to get or keep their attention or you will lose them forever. Your opening should be relative to the audience and/or to your subject. For example, if you were presenting the morning of a snow storm you may say something like: "Did anyone have trouble getting out of their driveway today?" Then let the audience answer and briefly share their stories. This shows the audience you care and it helps them clear their mind and get ready to focus on what you have to say. If there is not bad weather or crisis, open with a question or short story that relates to your topic. Never tell a joke unless it relates to your topic.

Content: One of the most common mistakes we make when we speak is to give way too much information. For some reason we feel we can present all of our years of experience in just 45 minutes. Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! If you do, no one will remember anything you tell them. Give them three points and they will remember three points. Give them just enough info to be valuable and they will want more. Always leave them wanting more. Also, use stories when making your points. People remember stories, they're fun to tell, and they keep the audience engaged.

Authenticity: Be yourself. Think of the best presenters you have ever seen or heard. Most likely you liked them because they let their guard down. They showed you who they really are. If you want to be engaging, if you want to be believable, if you want to make more money, then be authentic, be yourself.

Humor: Have fun. Most people want to have fun. They remember more when they are having fun. Use humor. This doesn't mean you need to make your audience laugh their pants off, it just means you want them to smile and chuckle. If someone in the audience makes a joke, in regards to what you are saying, allow the audience to laugh and you laugh too.

Attention: You find your audience is beginning to get bored. Oh no, what do you do? Three things may help. First, pause, and I mean paaauuusssse. Say something that you want them to remember, and then shut up. Let there be silence. Give it time to
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sink in. If you have been talking non-stop, you will lose your audience.

Another good time to use the pause is when you have the urge to say “um, ah, and”. It’s OK to pause to think about or remember what you are going to say next.

Secondly, change your tone of voice. Add vocal variety. Make it match what you are saying. If you are talking about something that is exciting, let your voice portray enthusiasm. If you are talking about something sad, have your voice reflect that sadness. Finally, use body gestures. Have your body language match what you are saying. If you say, “she was squatting down.” Then squat while you are presenting this line. If you say, “I was so surprised.” Have your face look surprised. Be careful of nervous fidgeting like pacing back and forth, hands in pockets, and swaying. The more pauses, vocal variety, and relative body language you use, the more engaging you will be and you will never lose your audience’s attention.

Confidence: Feeling confident has nothing to do with appearing confident. It’s OK to feel nervous, it’s not OK to act nervous or to tell the audience you are nervous. When you are on the “platform” you are in control. You are the Queen, the King, the Master. Your audience wants you to succeed, they want to learn from you and they want a confident presenter. Practice acting confident even when you don’t feel it. Imagine how you would like to be perceived and act that way. No one has to know what you are really feeling. The more you act it, the more you will feel it and the more you will become it. Try this all day long during your every day interactions with people and watch your confidence sky rocket.

Preparation: If you really want your confidence to skyrocket, be totally and thoroughly prepared. The more prepared we are to give a talk, the more confident we will be automatically. Prepare by writing out your presentation, at the very least have an outline and rehearse it more than once. Practice your stories and be sure to have stories every time you present. Try to memorize your opening, your stories and your closing. It’s OK. to use notes, flipcharts, power point, etc. for the rest of the presentation.

Close: Have you ever seen a movie you really enjoyed, but were disappointed with the ending. Didn’t it ruin the whole movie for you? The same goes with a presentation. If you don’t have a powerful close, it will diminish the impact you could have had on your audience. Be sure to have your question and answer session before your close. Do not let anyone kick you off the stage before you end with a powerful close. It’s not about you, it’s about your audience. If you send them away without impact, without a close, you will be doing them a disservice. So, be sure to leave time for your close.

Two suggestions for a powerful close:

- Summarize your talk and let them know the outcomes and results they can get if they apply what you talked about.
- Tell a story that brings it home. It sums up your message. Oh and be sure you do have a message. Before writing your presentation, try writing the close first. What is it you want your audience to go away with?

As you can see there is a lot more to giving a presentation than just being an expert in your field. It’s how we communicate our message that will determine our success. Use these steps and create more success for your business, your family, yourself!

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