

HOW TO BE A STAR SPEAKER

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By Chris Palmer, School of Communication, American University

At one point or another, we all have to rise into the spotlight and speak, whether it's just to our boss, a group of executives, or a conference of 5,000 people. Here are thirty rules to help you excel in public speaking:

1. Start preparing at least a month in advance.
2. Make one of your goals to create good theater that has a motivating and magical effect on your audience. Your goal is to speak compellingly from your deepest convictions. Make a commitment not to be boring, mediocre or colorless.
3. List the desired outcomes from your presentation. Establish clear goals (e.g., advance an agenda, produce some action, or build a stronger relationship). Write these goals with emotional juice. For example, instead of writing "Give a good speech," write "Give an electrifying speech that moves the audience to feel passionate about joining our campaign."
4. Don't begin by drafting an outline. Instead act like a madman and free up the creative idea-generator within you by brainstorming. Only after that nonjudgmental brainstorming should you produce an outline.
5. Write out the whole speech word-for-word based on the outline. Never let anyone write it for you. Use simple, vivid and conversational language.
6. Revise it relentlessly. Then revise it again.
7. Don't drown your audience with excessive information. Select three main points. Decide what the real story is beneath these messages. What is the emotional journey on which you want to take the audience?
8. Based on your draft speech, generate a list of key points in brief sentences (sometimes called 'bits'). This is all you will have with you on stage. Don't read your speech because you will fail to develop a rapport with the audience.
9. Practice your presentation out loud as much as possible. Ask a colleague to give you feedback and criticism. Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.

10. Think hard about, and focus on, the deepest concerns of your audience. What's in it for them? Also appeal to something larger than self-interest.
11. Present opposing views as fairly as possible to give you credibility and to generate trust.
12. Use observational humor as much as possible. Avoid lame jokes that everybody has already heard.
13. If you are not sure how to construct your speech, try: "The five questions I'm most frequently asked about Topic X are...." Pose each question to the audience and answer it for them in a conversational manner, just as you would someone you meet at a party.
14. Find interesting stories by asking yourself, "When did something go wrong? Where did I suffer?"
15. Avoid PowerPoint slides because they dilute the impact of your message. They are impersonal, tired and often mindnumbing. They deflect you from your goal of painting a picture with passion and language.
16. Move closer to the audience. Traditional podium speaking is no longer adequate. Walk into the audience if possible.
17. Meet and greet audience members before your presentation. Not only will this encourage the audience to feel a closer connection with you, but it will also make you less nervous and self-conscious when you begin your talk.
18. Deal with your nervousness and 'butterflies' by thorough preparation, acting confidently, exercise, stretching, smiling, deep breathing, visualization, and having a positive mental attitude that focuses on the needs of the audience, not on yourself.
19. Before going on stage, warm up your mouth and face by saying out loud over and over again (in private) "enough of this animalistic anthropomorphizing theatricality." Or say the vowels of the alphabet over and over again.
20. Start your presentation by powerfully grabbing the audience's attention. For example, start with a compelling and relevant self-deprecatory anecdote. You have something of great value to say and the audience is waiting to feel your intensity and personal voltage.

21. Make eye contact with one person at a time for three to five seconds. Don't scan the audience. In a sense you are talking one-on-one and establishing a relationship with individual members of the audience. Your goal is to establish a sustained human connection with your listeners.
22. Be energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. Convey a high level of commitment and sincerity. Show you care and that you have convictions. Project vocal energy. Make a total commitment to the immediacy of the moment. Be physical and gesticulate.
23. Use props as much as possible. Hold things up (newspaper, articles, flyers, money—anything).
24. Encourage audience participation. Let them tell you their stories. Get the audience to offer solutions. Encourage questions.
25. Use the power of pauses. Don't be scared of silence. Eloquent pauses build interest and suspense.
26. Encourage the audience to write down the first step they will take before they leave the room. Your presentation will be successful to the point you motivate your audience to do something. It isn't what you say that matters but what the audience hears, feels and does.
27. Take questions before the end of your presentation. Ending on Q&As provides a weak wrap-up. After Q&As, end with a stirring call to action or a favorite story that makes a compelling point.
28. Listen carefully to what audience members ask. Use their names if you know them. Re-state to everybody your understanding of the question to check you have understood it (i.e., listen actively).
29. Don't go overtime. Ever.
30. Prepare a handout so the learning is reinforced.

*Chris Palmer
Distinguished Film Producer in Residence
Director, Center for Environmental Filmmaking
School of Communication, American University
4400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20016-8017
office: 202-885-3408
palmer@american.edu*