

# **REAL LEADERS DON'T DO POWERPOINT**

## **How to Sell Yourself and Your Ideas**

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**MAIN IDEA**

When leaders speak, they're generally not trying to dazzle their audience with their mastery of presentation technology. Rather, leaders speak to make a difference, to promote their vision and to change the way people think. In essence, leaders speak to influence and inspire, thereby changing the way people think and act in the future.

To learn to speak like a leader yourself, you have to move away from presenting information for its own sake. Instead, you have to learn how to shape your message in such a way that it will encourage your audience to think differently now and therefore act differently in the future.

A great leader's speech always has four essential elements:

- |  |   |   |                    |
|--|---|---|--------------------|
| The four elements of a great leader's speech or presentation | ▶ | 1 | A great person     |
|  | ▶ | 2 | A noteworthy event |
|  | ▶ | 3 | Compelling message |
|  | ▶ | 4 | Masterful delivery |

The average person may settle for having one or two of these elements in place but if you genuinely aspire to give speeches and presentations which are of an influential leader standard, you need to make certain your speeches have all four elements in place.

*"If you're working your way up, one of the best ways to position yourself as a leader in the eyes of others is to speak like a leader. Just because everyone else shies away from giving speeches or relies too much on PowerPoint is no reason for you to. As a matter of fact, it's a good reason not to. You need to set yourself apart from other people. So whether you are a leader, an aspiring leader, or simply someone who wants to be taken more seriously, you need to speak better and more intelligently than other people. You've got to make your thoughts, your convictions, your vision and your character manifest themselves in what you say."*

– Christopher Watt



**A great person**

Pages 2 - 3

To be a great person, you don't have to be the president of the United States or even the president of your company. Instead, a great person has experience, passion, character and a sense of humor. You simply have to be the best you can be.

- |   |                     |   |                    |
|---|---------------------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | You are the message | 4 | Ooze charisma      |
| 2 | Only 3 speeches     | 5 | Be different       |
| 3 | Take a stand        | 6 | Do like Oprah does |



**A noteworthy event**

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Be selective about the presentations you give. Turn down speaking opportunities that are not noteworthy or that would cheapen people's perceptions of you.

- |   |              |   |                    |
|---|--------------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Be selective | 3 | Know your audience |
| 2 | Do some good | 4 | Remember WIIFM?    |



**Compelling message**

Pages 5 - 6

Compelling messages are powerful enough to change the listener's lives, even if only in a small way. To do that, you have to prepare thoroughly and know what the audience needs to hear. You need to find the shortest distance between what you believe and the audience's ears.

- |   |                        |   |                       |    |                       |
|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Have great content     | 5 | Chunk your ideas      | 9  | Be spontaneous        |
| 2 | Give one big idea      | 6 | Tell engaging stories | 10 | Show-and-tell         |
| 3 | 20 minutes - no longer | 7 | Never confuse         | 11 | Finish strongly       |
| 4 | Start well             | 8 | Repeat key points     | 12 | Develop your material |



**Masterful delivery**

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In addition to having the basics down cold, you need to know how to project your authentic self in the most powerful way possible.

- |   |                     |   |                    |    |               |
|---|---------------------|---|--------------------|----|---------------|
| 1 | Be genuine          | 5 | Ooze charisma      | 9  | Ooze charisma |
| 2 | Only 3 speeches     | 6 | Be different       | 10 | Be different  |
| 3 | Take a stand        | 7 | Do like Oprah does |    |               |
| 4 | You are the message | 8 | Ooze charisma      |    |               |

The four elements of a great leader's speech



A great person

To be a great person, you don't have to be the president of the United States or even the president of your company. Instead, a great person has experience, passion, character and a sense of humor. You simply have to be the best you can be.

1

You are the message

Who you are is always inseparable from what you're trying to say. Your character always shapes the message listeners hear. To get your message across, you have to ensure what you're saying is in sync with who you are.

This is the reason why:

- Bill Gates could never give a speech on "Why software should be free."
- Donald Trump would struggle to give a speech on "The benefits of a low profile in business."

Audiences usually know about you in advance and they make snap judgments about what you really believe and what your message is. To match your message to your reputation:

1. *Find out what your reputation is at the moment* – ask your peers what they really think of you.
2. *Figure out what image you tend to project when you speak* – probably the best way to do this is to video yourself and watch it. Take particular note of what your face and eyes are saying. You may think you project yourself in one particular way but when you see yourself as others see you, you may be surprised to find you come across in an entirely different way.
3. *Stop doing those things which are unhelpful* – trying to imitate someone else (even though you admire them) or sounding like a corporate clone. Take a contrarian position, go against conventional wisdom and defend it with all you've got. By ceasing to sound and look like everyone else and instead be yourself, your reputation and image will just naturally align and take care of themselves.

2

Only 3 speeches

Other people might be satisfied with communicating information but as an aspiring leader, you have loftier goals. There are only three reasons why you speak:



To identify – what the audience can become in the future

To influence – and shape the way people think and act

To inspire – to motivate the audience to act differently

- *To identify* – Leaders tell their audiences or remind their audiences what common elements bind them together and make them unique. By stressing what sets the group apart from others, leaders can then challenge the group to do even better in the future.
- *To influence* – Leaders make their audiences see what they see. They actively shape the way people think and feel about critical issues. Once leaders make their vision concrete and specific, they can then influence their listeners to do what's needed to bring that dream to fruition.
- *To inspire* – Leaders fan the flames of their listener's desire to act. They breathe life and vitality into a combined effort to achieve greatness. Most times, people already know what to do and don't need detailed instructions. What they do need are solid reasons why they should act differently. It's the leader's role to supply this spark of inspiration.

As a leader or as an aspiring leader, it's up to you to remind your audience who they are, to show them a vision of the promised land and to stir them up to action. The more time you spend focusing on facts and figures, the less you will be perceived as a leader. Whenever you are called on to speak, decide which of the three leader's goals you're going after and make that the focus of your presentation. If you do this consistently well, people will naturally follow your lead.

3

Take a stand

Leaders have strong points of view. They rise above the clutter by setting out their definitive views in clear and concise fashion. Leaders capture the minds and hearts of others by plainly stating truths the audience needs and wants to hear.

In particular:

- *Leaders stand with groups who have similar values* – and thereby mold a clear identity. Who you align with says much about you as a leader. By identifying with other key groups in society, you're saying: "This is who we are as well. You and I are in this together."
- *Leaders stake out clear positions on issues* – it's clear and obvious what they stand for. Leaders speak in favor of worthy issues, causes and policies. They have a personal stake in the outcome and make their strongest possible arguments in favor. There is never any confusion about what they believe.
- *Leaders are also direct and take a strong stand against what they cannot tolerate* – they openly denounce policies and practices which are not aligned with their belief systems. By opposing groups, policies, rules or regulations, leaders shape their audience's identity and influence the way the members of their audience think in the future.

To be a popular speaker, avoid saying anything sharp, definitive or even remotely controversial. Be rather vague and completely noncommittal. If you aspire to establish yourself as a leader, take an unwavering stand on the most controversial issues you can identify. Be 100% unequivocal about what you believe. You'll attract less followers, but those who do come with you will know exactly what they have got themselves into.

*"When a brave person takes a stand, the spines of others are often stiffened."*

– Reverend Billy Graham

*"I come to you today on solid ground to shape a new life and establish peace. All love this land, the land of God: we all, Moslems, Christians and Jews, all worship God."*

– Egyptian president Anwar el-Sadat speaking to the Israeli Knesset

**4 Ooze charisma**

Charisma is easy to spot but hard to define and almost impossible to fake. It can't really be learned, but there are a few things you can do as an aspiring or established leader to project a more charismatic presence:

- *Be yourself* – don't try and imitate anyone else, even someone with bucket loads of charisma. Use your appearance, your beliefs, your experiences and your sense of humor in a way that feels genuine for you. People will respect that and respond.
- *Live in the present moment* – don't be distracted or preoccupied by other matters. A good way to do this is by laughing at yourself and letting the audience in on the joke. People love it when leaders come across as down-to-earth.
- *Be interested in what you're saying* – resolve to never talk about anything that you don't want to know more about yourself. The best way to be a boring speaker is to be bored yourself. Avoid that like the plague.
- *Be bold* – don't worry about making a fool of yourself. Let your natural enthusiasm be obvious to anyone you speak with. Enthusiasm like that is infectious.
- *Build rapport with your audience* – look them in the eye and connect. Make your speech more of a conversation with each member of your audience than anything else. Help people achieve something they care about and they will find your speech to be highly charismatic.
- *Be very well grounded* – stand your ground philosophically and physically. Let everyone know you can't be swayed or pushed around.

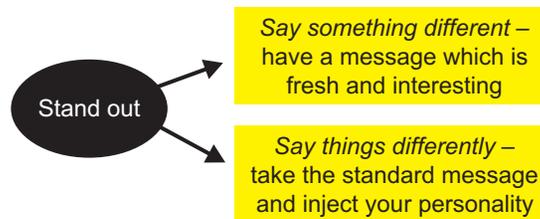
If you connect with what you personally are passionate about and then connect with your audience as well, you won't have to worry about whether you have charisma or not. Help people achieve what they passionately want to do and you will win their hearts and minds. That's the true mark of charisma.

*"Speak every word into the eyes and heart of one other person."*  
– Lee Glickstein, founder, Speaking Circles Int.

**5 Be different**

Leaders don't do what everyone else is doing. They stand out and are distinctive. They make what they say memorable because they break the mold and are entirely unpredictable.

In practice, there are only two ways you can stand out from everyone else:



- *Say something different* – perhaps you can stake out a position which is the complete opposite of what people expect and then try and defend your position with as much humor and wit as you can muster. There's always another side to every story. Leaders have the ability to look at the status quo and see what others cannot see. Try and come up with an unexpected twist.
- *Say things differently* – where you stop sounding like everyone else and be yourself. The idea here is to reframe your underlying message a fresh way. If everyone else uses PowerPoint slides and you do not, you'll stand out. Or if everyone else gives a lecture whereas you ask the audience to give their own suggestions, that's different. Your objective here is to go out on a limb and do some different things to keep everyone engaged.

*"'Safety first' has been the motto of the human race for half a million years, but it has never been the motto of leaders. Leaders must face danger. They must take the risk and the blame, and the brunt of the storm."*  
– Herbert Casson, journalist

*"I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy. It is wrong – deadly wrong – to deny any of our fellow Americans the right to vote in this country."*  
– President Lyndon Johnson, 1965

**6 Do like Oprah does**

Oprah Winfrey has built a large commercial broadcasting juggernaut on a very simple premise – the audience doesn't care what you know until they know that you care. Rather than speaking to her audience, Oprah shows concern for the people in the audience and clearly demonstrates she wants what's good for them. To increase your influence as a leader, you'll need to do something similar.

What exactly does Oprah do that works so well?

- She tells details from her life to show she has overcome serious problems.
- She stresses what she has in common with her audience.
- She listens to her studio audience and engages them in deep discussion.
- She always speaks in plain language using a very conversational tone.
- She promotes timeless values – self-acceptance, forgiveness, compassion, gratitude, etc.
- She works hard to try and find genuine fixes to her audience's problems.
- She gives an estimated 10 percent of her income to charity and becomes hands-on involved in philanthropic work.

Oprah Winfrey has become one of the most powerful people in broadcast television by applying these principles so clearly they work. You may have to adapt them to your specific situation in all kinds of different ways but the underlying premise is sound – your listeners will need to be convinced you genuinely care about them first before they will be responsive to what you're suggesting.

Never stop caring about your listeners. This doesn't mean you won't tell them bluntly what they need to hear. On the contrary, there will be times when some "tough love" is called for. But above all, forget trying to impress them or merely please them. Focus on what really matters. Do things and say things which are good for them and then work hard to build appreciation for that. If it works for Oprah, it might just work for you too.

The four elements of a great leader's speech



A noteworthy event

Be selective about the presentations you give. Turn down speaking opportunities that are not noteworthy or that would cheapen people's perceptions of you.

1

Be selective

Leaders manage the events they speak at and ensure everything else that happens aligns with and supports their message. They don't get involved in events which run counter to their philosophies.

Managing an event has two steps:

Manage the event

Learn as much as possible about the event so you can tailor your message

Take an active role in shaping the event so it supports what you are saying

- *Know the event* – make it a point to ask:
  - Who will be there?
  - What is the nature of the gathering?
  - When will it be and how long will it be?
  - Where will the gathering take place?
  - Why is this gathering taking place?
- *Shape the event* – try and tweak the event so it aligns with the objectives you're working towards. Sometimes this will be feasible, other times it will not but you definitely should try and use your influence in this way. And remember you always have the right to opt out. If the event is shaping up to be something you don't want to be associated with, decline the invitation. By all means be polite and graceful but bow out and wait for a better event to come along.

*"Leaders, like novelists, have at best only a few big things to say. Wisdom consists in not saying them ad-nauseam."*

– Christopher Witt

2

Do some good

As a leader, your creed should be to never accept an invitation to speak unless you can do some good. Leaders get invited to speak all the time. Say no to the invitation:

- If it's obvious you are the wrong person.
- If the audience has nothing to gain from listening.
- If the purpose of the event runs contrary to your values.
- If the venue is not conducive.
- If you're scheduled to speak at the wrong time.
- If you have nothing new and interesting to say.

Often, the less you speak, the greater the impact becomes when you do choose to speak. Use this to your advantage.

3

Know your audience

If you genuinely aspire to give a leader's talk, do some homework in advance about your probable audience. Before you agree to speak, find out:

- Who, exactly, will be in the audience and what do they have in common?
- How knowledgeable are the audience? How much do they already know about your topic?
- Will the audience likely support your position or are they likely to be somewhat hostile at first?
- What are the most pressing fears and concerns your audience shares?
- What is their preferred style of learning?
- What subjects are taboo and should not be mentioned?
- Is there a preferred terminology this group typically uses when they discuss things?

One of the defining hallmarks of great leaders is they make an effort to learn all they can about their listeners before they take to the stage. If you do this, you stand a better chance of doing well. A great speech isn't merely what you know or how you say it. Greatness is determined by what the audience hears, understands, feels and needs. By analyzing your audience in advance, you can tip the scales in your favor.

4

Remember WIIFM?

WIIFM? stands for: "What's in it for me?" This is what everyone in the audience will be thinking when you get up to start your presentation. And they will still be assessing what you've said by the same standard long after your speech is finished.

As you prepare your speech, zero in on a key question:

*"Why would anyone in the audience want what I want?"*

If you can't answer this question, you don't have any idea what kind of speech you need to prepare and put together. More likely than not, your audience will want you to:

- Propose a solution to a problem they all share.
- Show them some workable ways they can achieve a goal they have set or accomplish a task that's important to them.
- Explain how acting one way or another will be in alignment with their values, desires or dreams.

Admittedly an audience consists of a number of diverse individuals so it's likely there will be a mix of motivations involved. With this in mind, you might do better if you touch on a number of different reasons why your audience might want to listen to you.

Great leaders always answer their audience's WIIFM? question. They center their talks on solving problems, achieving goals and satisfying needs. More often than not, these are overlapping aspects of the same concept anyway, but if you can put this together well, you will prove two worthwhile things:

Answer the WIIFM?

You demonstrate you have the audience's best interests at heart

You show you understand and respect what makes your audience tick

The four elements of a great leader's speech

3

Compelling message

Compelling messages are powerful enough to change the listener's lives, even if only in a small way. To do that, you have to prepare thoroughly and know what the audience needs to hear. You need to find the shortest distance between what you believe and the audience's ears.

1

Have great content

When it comes to making a leader-style speech, the words you use and what they mean are far more important than how you say them. Put another way, the content of your message always trumps delivery.

A compelling leader's message will have three indispensable elements:

1. *A big idea* – something which is powerful enough to command the attention of the audience.
2. *A good and logical structure* – the speech's pieces will fit together nicely with one idea leading naturally to the next.
3. *Appropriate words and phrases* – the message will use words which illuminate and motivate rather than impressive-sounding words which are nothing but verbal fluffery.

2

Give one big idea

A great leader's speech is organized around one single big idea. The leader then provides three to five main points which support that idea, but the idea itself should be able to be summed up in one sentence:

- "Brick walls are there for a reason: they let us prove how badly we want things" – Randy Pausch
- "Global warming isn't just a political issue, it's the biggest moral challenge facing our world" – Al Gore
- "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself" – Franklin Roosevelt

Keep preparing your speech until you can state your single big idea so clearly and succinctly everyone will get it. Don't be subtle when it comes to this.

3

20 minutes - no longer

Brevity is the hallmark of great speeches. The proof:

- Lincoln's Gettysburg address took 2 minutes.
- Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" civil rights speech was 16 minutes long.
- Ronald Reagan's response to the space shuttle Challenger tragedy was less than 5 minutes.

Well-focused brevity is the hallmark of a good speech and this is definitely something you should aspire to. Set a 20 minute maximum on any speech you are called to give and this will enhance your leadership credentials. So how do you do it?

- Forget formalities, get right into explaining your single big idea.
- Eliminate nonessential information and present your best material.
- Revise your draft and get rid of any tangents.
- Finish before your assigned time is up so you leave the audience wishing for more.

4

Start well

The first minute of your speech is always a key time because it sets the tone for what follows. To give a great speech, start strongly. Bear in mind you need to:

- Grab your audience's attention and make them sit up.
- Introduce yourself and provide some context.
- Overview your one big idea.

The best and most effective ways to start a speech are:

1. Tell a personal story which aligns with your big idea.
2. Ask a provocative or rhetorical question.
3. State a very startling fact.
4. Make a bold assertion.
5. Give a highly thought provoking quote.
6. Refer to a current event.
7. Mix and match the other opening gambits.

Generally, you open with your second-best material so you can save the best for last. It's helpful to memorize your opening sentence or two so you can start strongly. That way people know they won't be wasting their time by listening to you.

5

Chunk your ideas

Since you only have 20 minutes at most to make your speech, it's important that you have a good organizational structure for your ideas. The best way to do this is to use "chunks" – cohesive units of speech. Chunks can consist of:

- The claims you make which sum up what you believe to be true and important about the subject at hand.
- Evidence you give to clarify, support or prove your claims.
- Illustrations which show your claims in action.
- Various elements of audience participation which keeps listeners engaged.

To construct a speech, you create a bunch of chunks and string them together. Typically, a speech will have an introduction, 3 - 5 main points and a conclusion, all of which are chunks. By using a framework like this, your speech will be easier to understand and comprehend.

6

Tell engaging stories

Above all else, you should strive to be a storyteller. Stories, when told well and integrated effectively, create a shared bond with the audience. Stories can engage, help people see with their imaginations and motivate people to act.

Stories come in a wide variety of shapes:

- There are fables which drive home a moral.
- You can use examples drawn from history or movies.
- You might share brief anecdotes which illustrate.
- Personal stories can sometimes be very potent.

The essential fact is listeners grasp what you're trying to say more readily when you encase what is being taught in an engaging story. Used effectively, stories create vivid detail and can stir emotions long after your speech has concluded. Regardless of whether you tell your own stories or those of other well-known people, if you want to become more effective as a speaker, learn how to tell great stories. This is one of the hallmarks of a great leader. Speeches without stories are flat and lifeless whereas a speech with a great story embedded within it can become noteworthy and memorable. Leaders are master story tellers.

7

### Never confuse

If people are confused about something, their natural inclination is to say no. Therefore, if you want people to do something specific, then you must be crystal clear about what you want them to do and what's in it for them.

To give a clear presentation:

- Set one goal and focus all you do on that.
- Start with an overview and tell people what you're going to say.
- Only give as much detail as you must. Save the rest for other formats.
- Explain the options but then highlight what your recommendation is and why.
- Use a conversational tone, and tell stories.
- Answer the three key questions: What? How? Why?
- Keep everything bite-sized by presenting your material in short and simple chunks.

8

### Repeat key points

Don't be afraid to give the same speech over and over. All great leaders do this. They develop a speech that works and then give that same speech time and again, adding in just a few additional comments to add local color.

There are three reasons why recycling good speeches works for leaders:

1. *You save time and money* – because you're reusing a compelling speech rather than reinventing the wheel over and over. Developing a great speech takes a lot of time and is an expensive exercise. You're better off spreading this cost over a number of events than just one occasion.
2. *You end up with a better speech* – because over time you've eliminated what doesn't work and grafted in some powerful elements which do work.
3. *Any good message is always worth repeating* – audiences never tire of hearing inspiring ideas. Even if the same person hears your speech a few times, they will pick up different nuances each time through. If you've got world-class material, use it over and over. This is smart.

9

### Be spontaneous

Sooner or later, you're going to be called on to make an extemporaneous speech. All leaders get placed in this position periodically – it comes with the job. Therefore, you should be prepared at all times.

To do well at speaking spontaneously:

- *Give some personal insights* – talk about who you are, what you do and why this is important. By doing this in a conversational way, you connect with your audience and make an impression.
- *Be highly opinionated* – offer a sharply focused insight which relates to the subject at hand. By all means be contrarian if that's what you believe and are prepared to defend. Make people think.
- *Be brief* – all impromptu speeches are. Remember, brevity is the hallmark of a great speech. Say what you need to say and then sit down. People love that.

10

### Show-and-tell

Kindergartens are famous for having show-and-tell - where kids bring stuff from home and talk about it. When you think about it, that's actually a good model for giving a speech as well. To be perceived as a leader, show-and-tell powerful images in your speeches.

There are four techniques you can use to create vivid mental pictures in the minds of listeners:

1. *Use concrete nouns and verbs* – rather than vague or wishy-washy words. Speak in an active voice about what you're doing rather than what you'd like to do in the future. Inject some dynamic action into what you're saying.
2. *Give examples and make direct comparisons* – things listeners can picture in their imaginations and then relate back to what you're talking about.
3. *Use physical objects as props* – bring them onstage and add some drama and color.
4. *Tell stories* – which are like movies which run in the minds of your listener's imaginations. Stories can be the most powerful element of a speech. Choose stories which will influence and inspire.

11

### Finish strongly

The conclusion of your speech is what lingers in the minds and imagination of the listener. This is why the conclusion is the most important part of any speech. Aim to always incorporate a brief yet powerful conclusion.

A good conclusion sums up your speech, ties it all together and adds an emotional kicker. Some of the things you can include to drive it all home:

- Bring it full circle back to your attention grabber.
- Sound the trumpet and issue a call to action.
- Give a brief, poignant story.
- End with a quotation.
- State your inspiring wish.
- Pose a lingering rhetorical question.

Whatever you decide to use, memorize your closing comments so you can deliver them with certainty and conviction. Then sit down and let your words do their work.

12

### Develop your material

In an ideal world, everyone would write their own speeches. If you can, you should do this because it will force you to do some research and analysis about what you want to speak about. There may be times, however, when you have to rely on other people to create your written and other materials.

If working with a speech writer does make sense for you, follow these rules:

1. *Find someone who is prepared to capture your thoughts and put them into the words you would use* – rather than trying to make you sound like someone else. You want someone who develops material that sounds like you.
2. *Invest time in working with your speech writer* – share your insights and thinking processes and let your speech writer gain an understanding of the way you think. Be prepared to work through three or four drafts of a speech before coming up with something suitable. It generally takes between one and four months for a speech writer to come up with something you will be proud of.

The four elements of a great leader's speech

4

Masterful delivery

In addition to having the basics down cold, you need to know how to project your authentic self in the most powerful way possible.

1

Be expressive

By and large, most people tend to be inhibited when speaking in front of a large audience. They tone down their natural enthusiasm and the size of their gestures as if this is a desirable thing. Wrong. Leaders are expressive and dynamic. They get animated because they are talking about ideas they believe in passionately. If you want to be perceived as a leader, you'll need to do something similar.

Put another way, the most powerful delivery of your message will occur when you project your authentic self – when you don't sound like you're giving a stage performance. Leaders learn to do this over the course of years because this takes practice to get right.

To enhance your expressiveness:

- *Stop trying to become a clone of other speakers you admire* – and be yourself. Talk about things you care about and use gestures you're comfortable with rather than a canned set of movements.
- *Be bigger and louder than normal* – get up on the stage and use the same gestures you would normally use but exaggerate them. Speak louder than normal conversational tone. Doing these things will inject liveliness and power into your speech which is good.
- *Be passionate* – always talk about things you care about and nothing else. Throw yourself emotionally into your speech. Don't analyze the situation coolly and rationally. Stake out a position and build a case for doing what you suggest. If you want to be seen as a leader, you need to be leading from the front.
- *Be dramatic* – use a prop, raise your voice (or at appropriate times whisper) and throw yourself into what you're presenting. Give it 100% of your energy and passion. Be theatrical and memorable.

2

Address stage fright

It's an interesting fact Lincoln, Churchill and many of history's most prolific orators never managed to eliminate stage fright. They succeeded in spite of their fear of speaking in public and you can too.

To take control of your fears:

- Feel good about the amount of preparation you have put in towards making a great speech and draw confidence from that.
- Take several slow, deep breathes to offset the normal fearful habit of panting or hyperventilating. Deep breathing will calm your nerves.
- Practice in front of a safe audience first so you can fine-tune with little at stake.
- Befriend the audience by working the room beforehand and getting to know everyone.
- Put on your game face and don't do anything which will draw attention to your nerves.

3

Connect

To give a truly great speech, you don't need a collection of nice sounding ideas or phrases. Rather, you need to connect with your audience at an emotional level. Something must happen between you and your audience.

Reaching your audience involves three elements:

1. *Mutual respect* – the audience must appreciate your background and you must be grateful for their time, values and interests.
2. *Attention* – you need to learn as much as you can about the audience and tailor your message to their needs and concerns so they will feel acknowledged.
3. *Affection* – you need to like the audience before they will reciprocate in kind.

On the basis of this combination of respect, attention and affection, you can then build a relationship with your audience. They will then give you their attention and cooperation which is what you need in order to move them. To be a leader, become very good at connecting with whoever you're presenting to.

4

Write your speeches

When you're preparing a speech, always write it out in full, word for word the way you'd like to deliver it. Doing this will:

- Help clarify your thinking.
- Force you to be specific.
- Sharpen your focus and use of time.
- Tighten the connection between various chunks.
- Provide you with security and a back-up plan.
- Serve as a good dress rehearsal.

Once you've written your speech, then prepare a 1-page outline that you can take to the podium with you. Then speak from your outline. What you will find happens is the speech you have written will come to your mind but you'll be able to deliver your remarks as if talking extemporaneously. Audiences love that style of delivery – it's far more convincing and powerful than having someone stand at the podium and read their speech word for word.

5

Incorporate Q&A

Timid speakers shy away from the idea of fielding questions from the audience because they don't want to look clueless. Leaders know Q&A is one of the best ways to drive your message home and therefore they include Q&A as an integral part of their speech.

To use Q&A to reinforce, clarify and expand on the central theme of your presentation:

- *Let the audience know what the rules are* – explain at the beginning you'll take questions so they should wait until then.
- *Be fair* – listen to what's being said and answer their true question even if they don't ask it correctly.
- *Be tactful* – keep your sense of humor and answer questions directly. Include a candid "I don't know" if that is in fact correct.
- *Stay in control* – give a brief answer and explain there's also a long answer if the audience is interested. If necessary, turn questions back to the audience. State you're perfectly happy to talk with people after the presentation if they need more detail. Decide when to cut questions and move on.

6

Expect calamities

Despite all your preparations, sooner or later things will go wrong. Your equipment won't work, someone in the audience will collapse or the fire alarm will go off. To get back on track after a major distraction like that:

- *Ask your audience for help* – admit candidly you've lost your place and ask "Where was I?" Some people will laugh (and you can laugh with them) but someone somewhere in the audience will yell out what your next point was going to be because you stated it in your introduction.
- *Always have a back-up plan* – perhaps written copies of your presentation to distribute as a handout.
- *Focus on your audience* – and not the cause of the problem itself. Use some good natured humor and go on. If nothing else, the audience will like you for being a good sport.

7

Forget the jokes

Once upon a time, the standard suggestion was to open your presentation with a joke. People have learned from sad experience that does not work. The audience needs time to warm to you first in just the same way as top comedians are always preceded by warm-up acts who get the audience into a laughing mood.

Rather than starting your presentation with a joke, find ways you can poke some fun at yourself later in your presentation. Well developed humor can put the audience at ease and generate empathy. This is good. Share some personal experiences of your own foul ups, foibles and botch ups and you give the audience permission to laugh quietly with you. Doing this also shows respect and appreciation for your audience.

The real challenge is to use humor that illustrates a point in your speech. This is most likely a situation where less is more. Keep your humor short and amusing. Don't use long, complicated jokes which do nothing except show you are a professional comedian in waiting. Limit how you use humor and it will be a spice rather than the main course of your speech.

8

Be bold, not brash

People respond to strong leaders. They won't flock to the flag of those who seem weak and insipid. Therefore, to get the maximum value from a speaking engagement, work to project boldness.

How do you do that?

- Stand with your shoulders back, your head held high and your hands by your side.
- Move about and gesture appropriately. This will show you are comfortable rather than intimidated. Be yourself by all means but move purposefully when on the stage.
- Make sure the way you dress is helpful. As a rule-of-thumb, aim to dress a little more formally than your audience. People like that and respect it.

9

Use PowerPoint well

There will be times when you cannot avoid using PowerPoint in a presentation. Whenever that kind of situation arises, you can still reinforce your leadership image if you follow these rules:

1. *Make your visual aids large and visible* – rather than so small the audience cannot read them.
2. *Make everything highly visual* – incorporate graphs, charts, photographs and illustrations rather than slides of words.
3. *Use as few slides as possible* – only those which clarify, illustrate or substantiate your main points.
4. *Blank out the screen wherever and whenever possible* – so people listen to you.
5. *Remember to keep talking to the audience* – rather than talking to your slide.
6. *Forget the clip art or fancy laser pointers* – these are distracting and amateurish.
7. *Explain what you're showing when you first show it* – because as soon as you show something people will look at it. Don't show something new until you are prepared to talk about it.

10

Break the rules

Leaders don't just present facts and raw data. They provide a frame of reference for listeners which helps them understand what those facts mean from a big picture perspective. This is why leaders never use presentation technologies like PowerPoint. PowerPoint is ideal for conveying information. Leaders build understanding and stir people to action.

The only criteria by which a speech today is judged as being "good" or "bad" is by measuring the results which were generated. All of the old rules about what to do and what not to do in speeches have gone out the window. Today, if you get results, you're effective as a speaker. If you don't, you're not.

The general rules-of-thumb for leaders today are:

- Speak for 20 minutes or less.
- Focus tightly on just one idea.
- Deliver your speech sounding like you're talking extemporaneously rather than reading it.
- Incorporate memorable stories.
- Take a stand on key issues.
- Use technology sparingly and only when appropriate.

In a nutshell, those are the rules, but if you're happy with the results you're getting by not following the rules, and if by the end of your speech people know and feel and do what you want them to do, keep doing what you're doing. Some other dynamic is obviously working in your favor and there's no point losing your mojo.

If, on the other hand, you're not happy with the results you're getting, go back to the basics. Figure out what you might be doing wrong and try some experiments. Perhaps this is a case where you should adopt before you try and adapt.

*"If you have any desire to speak in a way that grabs people's attention, affects how they think and feel, and stirs them to action, you can learn from the way great leaders speak. Provide the frame for understanding, not just the facts."*

– Christopher Witt