

Creating A More Powerful Speech

By John Kinde

If you want to improve a speech, you need to record it so you can analyze it. This means making an audio recording, or better yet a video recording and also making a manuscript of what you actually delivered to a live audience. Then you're able to do an in-depth review of your speech content, structure and delivery.

Thanks to technology, recording your talk is getting easier. Good-quality digital recorders are fairly inexpensive. I use an Olympus Digital Recorder. It's small. It records for many hours.

One button starts and stops it. It easily loads the recorded data into your computer's hard drive. For best results, also get a lapel microphone.

Should you decide to video record your program, you'll have the additional benefit of being able to watch your physical delivery.

When I review a speech, I like to use the process in which I call Focused-Replay. I choose a specific area of delivery and attempt to focus exclusively on that area while listening. Then I replay the recording and focus on another area. For example I might focus on:

- Rate of speech
- Pitch of voice
- Volume variety
- Effective pauses
- Use of force and energy
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If I were evaluating my performance on a short 5 minute speech, I'd replay the whole speech for each area of focus. If it were a one-hour speech, I might just play a five-to-ten-minute segment of the speech. If I discovered that that segment was totally lacking in the element I was looking for, I'd listen to more.

I'd also examine the audience response to the humor. Did they laugh where I expected? Did they laugh in places I didn't expect? What were the funniest lines? Which lines bombed? What was the laughter response ratio (amount of laughter as a percentage of total speech time)?

Now that you have a recording of your talk, it's time to create a word-for-word manuscript of exactly what you said. This includes the flaws. You'll need to type out your talk as you listen to it, or hire someone to create a transcript.

Nearly every speech coach I've met highly recommends making a written manuscript of your talk. It gives you the ability to take an in-depth look at what you

REALLY said. This isn't often what you planned on saying. Keep in mind that although there may be more than one good way to say something...there is usually only one BEST way of saying something. This process is designed to help you find the most effective way to word your talk.

Read the manuscript and examine:

- Your opening
- Your closing
- Your transitions
- Your stories
- Your humor
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On paper, it's easier to analyze the structure of your humor. Look for the placement of your punchlines. Remember that the punchword almost always goes at the end of a humor sequence. Patricia Fripp also points out that even non-joke lines have a punch word. If you're making a serious point, identify the most critical word or phrase and see if it has more impact when placed last. It probably does. For example if you said, "We can save \$100,000 by moving our warehouse closer to the airport;" it would probably be more effective to say, "Moving our warehouse closer to the airport would save us \$100,000." The key point, the punchline, would be the savings. It's easier to examine the punchline structure in writing that it is to listen to the talk.

Next, with multi-colored highlighters, read through the entire talk and highlight the humor in yellow. Mark the stories in red. Highlight the learning points in green. Identify the opening and closing segments in blue. This will give you a colorful map of your talk to see, at a glance, the balance of stories, humor and learning points. You'll also visually see how much time you devote to your opening and close.

Avoid the temptation to just "wing it" when you're giving a talk. Doing the deep analytical work will produce a better and more memorable speech. The top pros find that they never outgrow the need to analyze their talks. And that's why they find themselves at the top.