

Ten Speech Tips for Writing Powerful and Persuasive Presentation

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Have you ever had to give a speech?

Do you remember that feeling? A knot in the stomach, sweaty palms and a panic attack! Not a very pleasant experience. And yet, I'm sure your speech was a success because 90 per cent of a typical audience wants the speaker to succeed.

Yet according to The Book of Lists, speaking in public is one of our greatest fears. Much of this anxiety is due to a lack of confidence in writing and preparing a speech rather than in the delivery. Giving a presentation can be a great way to build your business, influence public opinion or kick-start your career. It is an excellent way to stand out from the crowd and make a real difference in people's lives.

What are the secrets of writing a powerful and persuasive speech for any occasion?

Here are 10 tips for turning a good speech into a great one!

1. Have a plan and set some objectives & outcomes.

There is nothing worse than not knowing what you want to achieve. Do you want to educate the audience, inform, inspire, motivate or touch their emotions? Always work out what you want to achieve before beginning the speech process.

2. Have a formal structure - beginning, middle and end.

Audiences love structure and the best speeches stick to this tried and true rule. As they say: "tell them what you're going to say, tell them and then tell them again".

3. Avoid having too much content.

Hands up those that are guilty of this sin. I know I am. I have lost count the number of technical presentations given by CEO's, managers, scientists, engineers, geologists and other professionals who have just put too much content into their presentations. Far too much for an audience to absorb - remember even the best audiences face information overload after 20 minutes. How do you overcome the content crisis? See Tip # 8.

4. Define who your audience is and use the most appropriate communication channels to reach them.

Analyze how your audience likes to take in information - do they like to be visually stimulated or do they enjoy just sitting back and listening. Or do they like to get involved, to touch and feel in a kinesthetic way. Work out the best mix of visual, audio and kinesthetic and use this in your speechwriting.

5. Research your speech using a range of sources.

Be a keen observer of the trends your audience is likely to be interested in and keep a file of interesting articles and information. If you are time poor- a few quick questions when meeting an audience just prior to a speech, such as "what are the issues facing your business/industry/association at the moment?" can really help target your presentation and build rapport.

6. Use personal stories, examples and metaphors to make intangible concepts tangible.

In many cases you are trying to sell ideas and concepts in a speech. These are intangible and often difficult for the audience to grasp. Personal stories, examples and metaphors make the invisible visible.

7. Have a strong opening and closing.

People remember the opening - first impressions count! The closing is important as it should reinforce the key message you want the audience to go away with in their head after they have heard the presentation. Ending with a 'call to action' can be a powerful way to get your audience to act on your message.

8. Add value and extra detail through a handout.

Here's a tip: if you want to provide detail - put it in a handout! You can get far more content across in the written form than in a speech. Always refer to this in your presentation but hand it out after your speech so the audience is not distracted reading through it while you talk. There is nothing more soul destroying for a presenter to see the audience leafing through written notes rather than looking at you!

9. Use short words and plain English.

The short words are always the best words. Avoid jargon. Use active words instead of passive. This has far more impact in the minds of your listeners.

10. Evaluate and review on a regular basis.

There's nothing more powerful than to hear back a speech you've written. If you are writing a speech for someone else always try and hear the speech or at least get some feedback. Recording and listening back to a presentation is the fastest way to improve your skills.