

## Improving Speeches

*“Living at risk is jumping off a cliff and building your wings on the way down”*

**Ray Bradbury**  
American Author

DON'T LIVE AT RISK. Standing in front of a group and delivering a speech is one of the rare times we are given in which anything is possible. You can align beliefs, clarify direction, and motivate action, change minds, emotions and shape outcomes. Giving a speech is also an important investment; of your time, your brand, your reputation, and your credibility. Clarify your speaking points, and sway your audience, don't live at risk and think you can build your wings on the way down from the cliff.

### **DETERMINE YOUR PURPOSE:**

The purpose is not the reason you are speaking, it's much more. The purpose is the beginning, the middle, the conclusions and calls to action at the end. The purpose is the first step in determining what your messages and conclusions are. Having no purpose or a misdirected purpose leads to an unsuccessful speech. Are you speaking to give the overall state of the company, or are you speaking to motivate employees to action, and give them information and tools to make the coming fiscal year brighter?

First identify these three key factors:

- Why are you speaking? (“they asked me to”, or “I always speak at this meeting”, aren't acceptable)
- What do you want from the audience? (They do count, and they should be an involved party)
- What does the audience want or expect from you? (usually an answer or relief to a problem)

Get clear answers –

- WHO – your audience and other stakeholders
- WHAT – Your primary messages, themes and content
- HOW – The creative approach, the structure of content, and the media. For that matter, determine if media is needed at all, it may not be. Don't overlook talking to your audience plainly and concisely as a good approach.
- WHERE – Does the room present any challenges or technical requirements, any opportunities you can take advantage of?

*“If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood. Don't assign them various tasks and works to do. Rather; teach them to love the sea, and long for its endless immensity.”*

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry  
French Aristocrat,  
Author (*The Little Prince*) and  
Pioneering Aviator

## PREPARATION:

The simple definition of rhetoric is using the power of speech to build consensus and create change. Keep the following in mind as you begin your speech creation.

- The audience is your partner in your presentation, let them in.
- Speeches are experiences for both speaker and audience. It's not just about transference of information. Good rhetoric is the transference of emotion, vision and ideas.
- Speeches should be dramatic. In its simplest form, the dramatic means a flow from beginning to middle to end . . . tell your story.
  - As human beings we enjoy the emotional journey from conflict to resolution.
  - Clearly layout the conflict, the roadblocks and then provide real and meaningful resolutions that benefit the audience.
- Write your speech or a detailed outline in word or some other written text format. Do not write it in PowerPoint.
- Start with the end when you write your speech, this better clarifies your conclusions and basic messages; then work backward. Fill in the middle and the beginning, this method will help you stay on track
- Clarify your ideas and messages, several times during your writing process.
- Write from the perspective of your audience, what you want them to experience.
- Create dramatic structure and tension (your story)
- Only at the end, think about how to support all this, should you need graphics or other media.
- **Be Clear - Be Concise - Be Bold**

## MEDIA:

Media can be the downfall of a presentation. Too often people use media (sometimes totally unrelated to their conclusions and messages) thinking it will “save” the speech; IT WON'T. . . IT CAN'T ! You are the only one who can save your speech. If you have time to fill in with meaningless media, then cut the speech short and give the time back to the audience. Don't misunderstand the role of media. Media is not your speech. Media when used; like content should be:

**Clear - Concise - Bold.**

## REHEARSE:

Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse!

- Don't use rehearsal time to tweak your media.
- Good execution comes from confidence, and confidence comes from control, knowing your speech by rehearsals gives you the control you need.
- Be present physically, mentally, and emotionally while you're with your audience. They are there to partner with you, and achieve the same goals . . . They just don't know it yet!