


DR. MICHAEL LAWRENCE FAULKNER



**A NOVICE'S
GUIDE TO
SPEAKING IN
PUBLIC**

**10 STEPS TO HELP YOU SUCCEED IN
YOUR NEXT PRESENTATION...
WITHOUT YEARS OF TRAINING!**

Praise for *A Novice's Guide to Speaking in Public*

“This is a remarkably insightful guide to giving successful presentations or speeches—something we all need help with, no matter our level of familiarity. Given Dr. Faulkner’s 40+ years of presentation experience to C-level executives, I only wish that he had written this book first in his prolific career because I needed this advice ten years ago! So, don’t hesitate to perfect your whole presentation—read it today!”

—**Kevin Noonan**, Sr. Consultant, NBCUniversal

“At some time in our lives, nearly all of us will be called upon to give a speech of some sort. Whether it be a wedding toast or a business presentation, a seminar or a eulogy, we all want to do a good job and not embarrass ourselves in the process. In *A Novice's Guide to Speaking in Public*, Michael Faulkner provides sensible, easy-to-follow guidelines on how to make sure that whatever presentation you might give will be interesting and effectively delivered. If you are an infrequent public speaker, this book is definitely for you. And, if you are an experienced presenter, you will find valuable tips to help you be even better. Bravo, Dr. Faulkner—finally a book on public speaking for the rest of us.

—**Steven Isaac**, Former CEO, Forbes Education, and Founding CEO,
Education Dynamics

“Read this book. Dr. Faulkner is a dear friend of mine. He speaks. People listen.”

—**Richard Vincent Kelly**, NCW

“‘You need the right tools to do the right job’ is a phrase we hear all too often. And as a master craftsman in his field, Michael Faulkner empties his toolbox of wisdom out for all to see. The ten things you will learn here will demand and command the attention of your audience. This book is a must-have for presenters and speech givers; period!”

—**Dan Barr**, M.A., B.S.

“Like he has in his other books, Dr. Faulkner is able to draw on his vast education, life experiences, and work history to create easy-to-understand and concise information on complex topics. Dr. Faulkner’s books and teachings have helped me to better myself and strive for maximum potential out of a small start-up business.”

—**Eliot Spindel**

“Bon voyage to the plague of public speaking! Dr. Faulkner is a prolific writer, meticulous researcher, and ardent pragmatist with a can-opener aptitude for dissecting and conquering problems. His academic, military, and corporate experience are here married to common sense. This book will transform the quality of your talks with strategies proven under fire.”

—**Ken Boyer**, English Professor (Retired), St. Louis Community College/FV

“We often hear the quote ‘begin with the end in mind,’ and this couldn’t be more relevant when it comes to public speaking. Dr. Faulkner does a great job of breaking down a presentation into ten easy steps in order to overcome and harness the fear that comes with public speaking. In the end, you’ll walk away with tips to tactfully and successfully engage any audience!”

—**Kristine Lester**, Marketing Manager in Higher Education field

A Novice's Guide to Speaking in Public

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10 Steps to Help You Succeed in
Your Next Presentation...
Without Years of Training!

Michael Lawrence Faulkner

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Project Editor: Elaine Wiley
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Manufacturing Buyer: Dan Uhrig

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Old Tappan, New Jersey 07675

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Printed in the United States of America

First Printing October 2015

ISBN-10: 0-13-419386-5

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-419386-1

Pearson Education LTD.
Pearson Education Australia PTY, Limited
Pearson Education Singapore, Pte. Ltd.
Pearson Education Asia, Ltd.
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Pearson Education—Japan
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Library of Congress Control Number: 2015946547

For Jo-Ann.

*Throughout most of my adult life I have coached, taught, counseled,
and advised thousands of people on how to communicate better.
Yet, without a word she can leave me speechless.*

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Foreword

When Dr. Mike told me that he was going to write a book on presentation and public speaking skills, I was elated. He is the master of the podium!

“Get them on their feet and cheering” is what I thought after reading his latest book, which you are holding in your hand or electronic device right now.

You are in for a real treat. Dr. Michael Faulkner has condensed all the fundamentals of becoming a great speaker into what is almost the modern day’s Cliff’s Notes, as only he can do. After reading this easy-to-read and chock-full-of-substance book, you will walk away with practical skills to implement immediately, enjoy the whole process, and be richer for the experience.

Having known Dr. Mike for more years than each of us will admit to, I have had the great privilege of co-authoring three books with him and have read many of his other brilliant and thought provoking works. By the way, he has written so many wonderful books that I have often thought he should have his own library to house them all in.

Whether you are preparing for your next presentation and just want to “get through it” or if you are a seasoned professional and looking for a fantastic refresher on the do’s, don’ts, and basics of a great presentation, you’ve come to the right place.

I guarantee you will be ear-marking page after page of this substantial and enlightening book. To any of us reading it, this book is impressive because of all the knowledge that Dr. Faulkner puts on every page. I was in awe of how he carefully traces every step in a concise yet analytical and methodical way.

Enjoy it and learn.

Andrea R. Nierenberg
Nierenberg Consulting Group

About the Author

Dr. Michael Lawrence Faulkner is the author or coauthor of 17 books. He is a professor at the Keller Graduate School of Management at DeVry University and a former U.S. Marine. Michael spent 30 years in a variety of leadership and executive management positions with Fortune 500 firms and major nonprofit trade associations. He also helped run the family business before beginning his second career in academics more than ten years ago. Michael is a Rotary International Fellow and a member of MENSA. He holds a Silver Certification by the Toastmasters International and has won the Keller Master Teacher Award and the Silver Apple Award by the NYC Direct Marketing Association. In addition to his Ph.D., Michael has earned two master's degrees, one from NYU, and an MBA from NYIT.

Preface

Why You Should Read This Book

Where am I going with this idea? Why the emphasis in the short run time frame—the thinking and approaches that will get you through your next speech or presentation?

First, I know from nearly 40 years of experience as a speaker, professor, and speaking coach that most people don't want to become great orators or memorable speakers; however, they do want to get through their next public speaking experience and feel like they did okay—even marginally better than they thought they could.

Second, I am confident that I can help you make this happen if you are willing to take just a couple hours to do three simple things:

1. Accept some basic fundamental truths about human nature and how this knowledge will help your presentation or speech.
2. Learn a few nonverbal communication signals—what they mean and how you can use them to enhance your presentation or speech.
3. Be willing to practice some simple steps that will support your next presentation or speech and make it better than average.

This book will help you realize that you can, without years of training, learn the techniques to help you become a good public speaker.

This book is not written to make you a great speaker or an eloquent rhetorical presenter. That requires a long process of learning, skill development, practice, and dedication that must take place over an extended period of time. But if you put in the effort to learn the easy rules identified in this book and commit to follow the simple guidelines, you will not only give a better presentation, but have the confidence to do it again and again. As a good speaker you can manage almost any speaking assignment required of you, and you will still be better than the vast majority of the presenters and speakers who have the gumption and desire to speak but not the training.

What This Book Is Not

This book is *not* intended to replace public speaking classes, presentation or communication courses, or any type of training and learning (formal or informal) regarding presenting, speaking, communicating, performing, debating, imparting, expounding, elocution, delivery, articulation, or vocalization.

This book is *not* intended to guide you through the various types of public speaking, (that is, informative, invitational, persuasive, invocative, debate, or small group speeches). Nor is it the traditional guide on how to give a speech. Hundreds of books, texts, videos, seminars, workshops, private coaches, teachers, Internet sites, and blogs do these things, and the intent of most of them is to turn you into a trained presenter, orator, or a gifted speaker. Unfortunately, as well-intended and professionally run as some of these are, I still believe this type of training has set up too many people for failure. This type of training typically uses the world's great speakers (for example, Lincoln, JFK, Reagan, Teddy Roosevelt, Churchill, Gandhi, FDR, Demosthenes, and Martin Luther King, Jr.) and great speeches as models to follow and emulate. The problem with this approach is most people won't be giving speeches of this nature at this level; they just want to get through their assigned or required presentation or speech and feel like they did a good job.

This book is written to help you get you through your next speaking gig with confidence, feeling good knowing you gave a solid presentation or speech. Timothy Koegel (2007), who wrote the *NY Times* best seller *The Exceptional Presenter*, said, "experience tells me that 80% of presenters are below average, 10% are average, 5% are good to very good, and 5% are exceptional."

He goes on to say that the percentage of presenters that can and should be able to give a good speech should be significantly higher, but most people never tap their full potential for several reasons, one being they don't have a system to develop the most basic skills.¹

I wrote this book to help you learn the most basic skills of public speaking. This book arms you with the necessary skills to prepare you for your next presentation and for every presentation after that, so your audience is engaged and satisfied with your efforts.

Endnote

1. Koegel, Timothy. 2007. *The Exceptional Presenter*. Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group Press.

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Introduction

In ancient mythology the gods condemned Sisyphus to ceaselessly rolling a rock to the top of a mountain only to have the rock roll back down due to its weight. This penalty was one in which effort and purpose are exerted toward accomplishing nothing. Sisyphus was doomed, but I saw the light. I spent nearly four decades pushing the rock uphill only to have it roll back down and having to repeat the process all over again. I am speaking of the attempt as a professor, consultant, and coach to turn unwilling students, clients, and workshop participants into excellent, top-notch public speakers. Then one day I had an epiphany and finally had to face reality.

It is simple. Most people hate the idea of standing up in front of other people and speaking. The data doesn't lie. Survey data shows people fear public speaking more than death. As unreasonable as it sounds, a significant number of people would actually prefer to be the person in the coffin rather than the person delivering the eulogy.

Most of us know intuitively or empirically the importance of communication skills. There is overwhelming evidence that it is one of the most important—if not *the* most important—life, job, and career skills we need. Still, schools, businesses, and individuals pay scant attention to improving this important skill. In most school curriculums, business training, and individual self-improvement programs, public speaking courses are still given relatively low priority. It isn't surprising when one stops to think about it. It's the same reason people often hesitate to take

the necessary steps to improve their physical health—it requires hard work and continual effort.

Why do people hesitate to take the necessary steps to improve their communications skills? Why don't we work as hard to improve the one skill that would ensure greater career and personal success? The answer may be as simple as fear. The fear of public speaking, which we discuss in Chapter 2, "Step 2: The Fear of Public Speaking Is Real—Embrace It and Use It," is widespread, but manageable if understood. That is just one thing we attempt to do in this book: Help readers understand this fear and how to manage it.

There are no champions, no presidential czars, and no teacher unions pushing for a uniform syllabus or national test to measure improvement of individual presentation skills from year to year. There are no highly visible credible champions for the benefits of public speaking. So the individuals who understand the benefits and value how critical the skill is find the courses, locate the coaches, join the clubs such as Toastmasters International and Dale Carnegie, and otherwise discover ways to improve their verbal communication skills.

These people learn the skills and then reap the rewards. Other people who need more training and skill development live with the fear of speaking in front of others and avoid it until they are forced by circumstances to present. These situations can be traumatic and disabling. Many have the fear; it is what you do with the fear that counts.

Fifty thousand years ago, as hunter gatherers, we faced down furious beasts 50 times our size. We fought fearlessly against foes who threatened our families. We ate raw meat, slept under the stars, and struggled daily to survive. And survive we did. For hundreds of thousands of years *Homo sapiens* survived and evolved without language, without words.

Only after we discovered the technology of language did our species move out of our founding place in Africa and dominate the other human species in other parts of the world who were without language skills. We

shared our experiences, our technology, and our culture, and for thousands of years before writing was discovered we shared this knowledge by telling simple stories to others.

Public speaking is telling stories to others.

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1

Step 1: Think about Your Language and Keep It Simple

Language is archives of history.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Many people speak without clear intention; they simply blurt out whatever comes to mind. If you use the right words, speak with intention, and allow your mind and your actions to take on new purpose, you can speak with power and then act with power and influence. You can influence the lives of many people who listen to you. When you stand up before an audience of any size you have a unique opportunity and a significant leadership responsibility.

Communication is perhaps the most important human function in which we engage. Scientific evidence suggests that we don't trust our instincts driven by our *amygdala* (which some refer to as our animal brain). As much as we are capable, we have trouble absorbing nonverbal human communications adequately. We communicate verbally and nonverbally; however, if you think about it, we don't do it well. That might be because we aren't trained well or didn't listen to our teachers.

For the moment, forget about verbal communications and focus only on nonverbal communications or what we call body language. We know from empirical research that an overwhelming amount of human communications (as much as 97%) is conveyed by nonverbal cues.

Much of this body language is found in various facial expressions. Dr. Paul Ekman (1989) spent years studying facial cues and discovered 190 muscles in the nose and eye region of humans. Many of these muscles respond involuntarily and are keys to whether a person is telling the truth or lying. Ekman, professor emeritus in psychology at the University of California—San Francisco, is best known for furthering our understanding of nonverbal behavior, encompassing facial expressions and gestures. The American Psychological Association named Ekman one of the most influential psychologists of the twentieth century, and TIME Magazine (2009) hailed him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world (Paul Ekman Group, <http://www.paulekman.com/paul-ekman>).

Think about how our acculturation teaches us to deny our amygdala-driven instincts (such as, “We’ll cross that bridge when we come to it”; “Don’t judge a book by its cover”; “Don’t jump to conclusions”; “Look before you leap”; “Act in haste, repent at your leisure”; “We should have a committee meeting to talk it over first”; and so on).

In spite of the knowledge of how much communication is transferred by nonverbal cues, our schools offer little education or training to improve human nonverbal perceptions. Instead, we are trained and encouraged by our upbringing and formal education to ignore or deny the existence of our intuition. We are told we must be practical, analytical, and thoughtful. All this has simply led us to ignore how the vast amount of communication actually takes place—through nonverbal communications.

Research by Dr. Ekman, his associate Wallace V. Friesen, and others has shown that in spite of wide cultural differences in language and cultural norms, 11 facial nonverbal expressions are recognized around the world. In the 1990s, Dr. Ekman proposed a list of these basic emotions, including a range of positive and negative emotions that are not all encoded in facial muscles.

The emotions are amusement, contempt, contentment, embarrassment, excitement, guilt, pride in achievement, relief, satisfaction, sensory pleasure, and shame (Ekman, 1989, 143-164).

Some of the muscle movements described by Dr. Ekman are so subtle that only a trained expert can detect movement. However, most of these facial muscle movements and especially the subtle ones can actually be observed and felt by the amygdala of people even if these people did not consciously perceive the movement. The amygdala is the almond shaped organ of the brain or what some refer to as the animal or reptile brain. Long before humans developed our thinking brain—the cerebral cortex—our amygdala functioned as our emotional radar and provided the fight-or-flight emotion.

Fortunately for our species, we chose flight early on in a hostile environment where we were outgunned by bigger, faster, and fiercer predators. We were low on the food chain, but we had the advantage of having the amygdala, which allowed our species the time to survive and evolve.

MOST HUMAN COMMUNICATION IS NONVERBAL

We know from research that the vast majority of communication from one human to another, from a speaker to the audience, and from the audience to the speaker is nonverbal. One of the most frequently quoted statistics on nonverbal communication is that 93% of all daily communication is nonverbal. Various media channels, outlets, professors, and popular books frequently quote this specific number, which is attributed to Professor Albert Mehrabian (1981) of UCLA, who conducted several studies in the 1970s of nonverbal communications and came up with the formula that only 7% of human communication is actually conducted through verbal language. Thus the resulting calculation that 93% of all human communication is nonverbal. Other research in this area has shown different results from Dr. Mehrabian's. Whether the

actual percentage of nonverbal communication is 97% or 90% or 80% or 60% isn't the most important thing. What really matters is nonverbal communications are significant and the most crucial aspect of human communications, and we simply cannot ignore them.

With this knowledge we can begin to grasp the strategy of how the speech or presentation will go. Experience tells us that if a speaker makes communication simple, the audience will appreciate this and respond more favorably than if they have to work and struggle to look for hidden meanings and undertones.

We know that man communicated with other men for thousands of years prior to the invention of human language. Long before human verbal language, people found mates, raised families, hunted together, joined in early tribal communities, and selected leaders, and yet there was virtually no innovation, hardly any art or crafts, no real trade or commerce, and a relatively short life span. Then along came language, and everything changed.

Your speech or presentation begins with your audience making what we refer to as a micro snap judgment of you even before you utter a sound. This is called by many the first impression.

The first impression starts the moment you appear by standing up or walking to the speaking spot (podium, position from which you will make your speech or presentation). This initial or first impression is critical for two reasons. First, it is critical because so much of the audience's opinion of you and what you are about to say is going to take place in micro seconds. Each audience member's amygdala is registering an instant opinion of you (and you have not yet said a word). The second reason it is important is you have almost total control over this initial impression. We cover this in greater detail in later chapters, but the way you are dressed and groomed, the way you carry yourself, and the manner in which you show your poise and grace as you walk to the

spot to where you deliver your speech or presentation, gives you great influence over this first impression.

Think Simple

The first step to getting through your next speech or presentation is to STOP! Take a breath and begin to think this through as a simple plan. Simple doesn't necessarily mean easy. It means it does not have to consume you. All important activities and endeavors should begin with planning, and written plans are the best. I am not suggesting a speaker or presenter should begin with a formal Microsoft Office Business Plan template. Many successful enterprises and innovations began life on the back of an envelope or, like the ubiquitous ATM machine, on the corner of an envelope. The first step, however, should be to plan out the strategy and the next steps and write them down or type them out.

Committing a plan to paper provides one with the opportunity to create simple, clear action steps. The simpler the thinking the easier it is to adjust when changes need to be made.

Your plan, like most plans, will probably not face a smooth path, but forming it and writing it down makes it a commitment you can carry through with regardless of the obstacles. Most people, and this includes business owners, don't write down even the simplest of business plans. The two most frequently given reasons:

1. No time to do it.
2. Don't know how to write one.

Committing to the simplest of plans eliminates the excuse of no time. A simple plan should take no more than 20 minutes.

Another benefit of keeping the thinking simple is most answers to the problems we encounter and most solutions to the problems we face are the simplest answers and solutions rather than the complex ones we so often think will be best. In academics we often make reference

to Ockham's Razor. In a great over simplification it means the simplest explanation is usually the right one.

The next excuse, not knowing how, is eliminated by the following simple template.

The Simple Plan Components

All plans differ in their content but to provide a general format, here are some suggested contents:

1. Goal—What is it you want to accomplish?
2. Objectives/tactics—What actual steps do *you* have to take to make this goal happen? What actual steps do others have to take to make this goal happen? Who are these people and what will you have to do to inform them of their roles and responsibilities?
3. What is the time line for this goal? What is the time line for the objectives and tactics? By when will these things be accomplished?
4. What obstacles stand in the way? How can these obstacles be overcome? What help do you need in doing this?

Start with Things You Can Control— Dress Simply

My advice to speakers and presenters is to dress simply. This does not mean you should dress in a casual or sloppy manner. It means you should dress in business attire or appropriate attire for the occasion (casual for resort setting, formal for ceremony, and so on). You can be elegant and fashionable but *do not overdress*. Flashy attire or an extraordinary appearance creates an image of someone trying to impress or going overboard, which can lead to a less than favorable initial impression. The best rule is dress similarly to the majority of your audience.



For men, a necktie is critical. A man can wear an off-the-rack inexpensive suit and make it work with a crisp clean white or light blue shirt and a tie. Wearing a tie with absolute confidence will translate at the first moment's glance, respect will be established. The tie is the first thing people notice, and if it is sharp, expensive looking, stylish, and tied correctly, a man will make a strong first impression. People seeing a man wearing a great tie make the assumption he must be a professional regardless of his age. Something many men don't realize is the properly selected and worn tie can serve to help correct some physical characteristics. A very tall man might want to wear ties with horizontal patterns, whereas a more stout man might want to wear ties that have vertical patterns. Narrow ties help accentuate a man's stature. A man's vertical dimensions are equally important.

Taller men receive benefits from a slightly longer tie that accentuates a positive height. Shorter men can generate the appearance of additional height by having a slightly blunted tie style. In the end, a man should seek to have precise personal clothing measurements. However, undetected adjustments can be made and these can provide subtle aids that enhance a man's confidence.

Don't forget your shoes. Since your speech or presentation will be done from a standing position it is wise to wear comfortable shoes. While you may be inclined to buy an appropriate new outfit for your speech or presentation, I would advise wearing footwear that you have broken in.

It is always a good idea to get information about your audience in advance, and part of this information is how they will be dressed. As a speaker you should match your audience's attire as well as language.

Women can often have a more difficult time than men when it comes to determining how to follow the "dress simple" advice for public speaking. Without getting into the reasons or the fairness, society just imposes far more rules and restraints on women's attire than men's. Rather than using the speaking engagement to make a political or social statement,

women speakers have to recognize that they have a more difficult task in their clothing choices. In most cases, pant suits; slacks and blouses; dresses and skirts; and dressier tops are appropriate. The same clothing that would be worn to a business office or business event is appropriate. And, the same rule applies—don't over or under dress for your audience.

I would advise keeping jewelry and accessories to a minimum. You will be in front of people and you want their attention on you and what you are saying, not on flashy watches, necklaces, scarves, pins, or chains. Another thing you should remember is to remove your attendee or speaker's badge before you stand up to speak. It is just another distraction you don't need.

One last word on cultural attire: If you are speaking to a group that is closely tied to their native culture, your topic is about this culture, and you are genetically part of this culture, it is appropriate to wear attire from this culture for your speech or presentation. Otherwise, avoid dressing, speaking, or acting as if you are a part of the culture, making a faux attempt to pretend you are something you are not. It is phony, unprofessional, and potentially offensive to your audience.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF LANGUAGE

Kevin Kelly's (2010) *What Technology Wants* is a provocative book that introduces a brand new view of technology in which he suggests that technology is not just hardwired metal and chips, but a living, natural system whose origin goes back to the Big Bang. My intention is not to review the book; however, I do recommend every manager, supervisor, boss, mentor, coach, influencer, instigator, team leader, team member, entrepreneur, capitalist, investor, futurist, provocateur, teacher, professor, minister, government employee, politician, or new parent read it. One point of Kelly's book that I refer to often is the technology of language.

We know humans developed language about 50,000 years ago. Kelly traces the development of human language to the behavior of humans. By tracing the behavior of the human species we can follow Kelly's argument that language followed certain human behavior patterns. At some point about 2.5 million years ago, the human brain grew larger and we began to use more refined tools than our ape line. Archaeological evidence shows the growth of human brains and simple stone tools. At this point, the first migration began out of Africa for two human species: the *Neanderthal* to Europe and the *Homo Erectus* to Asia. *Homo Sapiens* remained in Africa.

It is important to note that all three species had the same brain size and same rough tools. Over the next 50 million years, all three species developed at about the same pace (none with language skills). All three species hunted with simple tools, developed crude art, had children, lived relatively short lives, did not bury their dead, and the population of these groups remained unchanged. The period for these species is known as the Mesolithic Period. Around 50,000 years ago, something radical happened.

The *Homo Sapiens* in Africa suddenly underwent significant genetic changes. They became full of ideas and innovations and developed the desire to innovate, move, and explore new worlds. They spread out of Africa in what is known as the second migration, and in 40,000 years settled in every corner of the earth. In a fraction of one percent of the time it took for the first migration to take place and for the first wave to settle in one spot, the *Homo Sapiens* covered the world.

Not only did they have the desire to move, but they were also full of innovation. They developed fish hooks, fish nets, various sized spears, bows, and arrows; they started to sew; they used hearth stoves; they buried their dead; and they created sophisticated art and jewelry. *Homo Sapiens* developed trade, pottery, animal traps, and built garbage pits. In the process of mastering these innovative things, they overwhelmed

their *Neanderthal* and *Homo Erectus* brothers, making *Homo Sapiens* the only human species on the planet.

The question we have to ask is what caused this radical change in *Homo Sapiens*? How did it occur? Some argue that a point mutation or a rewiring of the brain caused it. We are not proposing a cause; we simply state the fact that there was an outcome from what radically changed and that something different occurred 50,000 years ago. That radical change was that language occurred, changing mankind forever.

The special significance of language as a great idea lies in the fact that it is related to all other great ideas, insofar as ideas and thoughts are expressed to other persons, for the most part, in words, in speech, and in language.

Today, we seem to view language as an enemy, a barrier to communication, and a tyranny of words. There is even a debate about whether communication and speech are the same thing.

The Power of Words

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.

—Rudyard Kipling

Dr. Frank Luntz (2007) said, “You can have the best message in the world, but the person on the receiving end will always understand it through the prism of his or her own emotions, preconceptions, prejudices, and preexisting beliefs. It’s not enough to be correct or reasonable or even brilliant. The key to successful communication is to take an imaginative leap of stuffing yourself right into your listener’s shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling in the deepest recesses of their mind and heart.”

Once you have spoken words, they are no longer yours. Other people filter them, translate them, evaluate them, and measure them through their biases, life experiences, prejudices, and world views. Words create impressions, images, and expectations. They build psychological connections between the speaker and listener.

They influence how we think. Words impose in the speaker an extra special responsibility. The speaker/writer must choose words carefully to make them appropriate for the situation.

Words have the power to affect both the physical and emotional health of people to whom we speak, for better and worse. Words used to influence are inspiring, uplifting, challenging, encouraging, motivating, and persuading. They can be visionary, they can change people's lives for the better. Words coupled with the use of power, coercion, force, and deception, don't just have a brief or short-term impact.

Their influence, good or bad, can last a lifetime. Verbal communication is a powerful human instrument, and we must learn to use it properly. We need to not only learn to think about speaking in new ways, but we need to learn to think about language, words, and human nature, psychology, and sociology. They are interconnected.

At the end of World War II, the Allied Powers sent a message to the Japanese demanding surrender. The Japanese responded with the word "mokusatsu," which translates as either "to ignore" or "to withhold comment." The Japanese meant that they wished to withhold comment, to discuss, and then decide. The Allies translated mokusatsu as the Japanese deciding to ignore the demand for surrender. The Allies ended the war by dropping the bomb and transforming the world we live in forever. The effect that words can have is incredible: to inform, persuade, inflict hurt, ease pain, end war or start one, and kill thousands or even millions of people. They can get your point across or destroy any hope of your idea ever being understood.

Poorly chosen words or speech used for personal hubris or evil can impact self-esteem, destroy morale, kill enthusiasm, inflame bias, incite hatred, lower expectations, and hold people back. They can even make people physically or mentally ill. Inappropriate words can make work and home toxic and abusive environments.

Many empirical studies show that people who live and/or work in toxic environments suffer more colds, more cases of flu, more heart attacks, more depression, more of almost all chronic disorders, physical and emotional, than people who report living or working in happy, enjoyable, caring environments. The old adage, “Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can never hurt you” is simply bad advice.

Verbal insults and verbal abuse can affect your emotions and behavior. This is well documented in science. For example, scientists have found that just hearing sentences about senior citizens led sample subjects to walk more slowly. In other studies, researchers have observed that when students are given standardized tests and told the tests are “intelligence exams,” the average scores are from 10% to 20% lower than results from the same exam given to similar students who are told it is “just an exam.” In still other research, individuals who read words of “loving kindness” showed increases in self-compassion, improved mood, and reduced anxiety. There is information about the medicinal benefits of power verbs as well as a warning about the power of words, which, if used inappropriately, can actually make individuals physically ill.

In the study, published in *Pain*, researchers used functional magnetic resonance tomography (fMRI) to examine how 16 healthy people processed words associated with experiencing pain. The brain scans revealed which parts of the brain activate in response to hearing words. In the first experiment, researchers asked the participants to imagine situations that correspond with words associated with pain, such as “excruciating,” “paralyzing,” and “grueling.” Researchers also asked participants to imagine situations that correspond with negative words that aren’t painful, such as “dirty” and “disgusting.”

Finally, researchers also had participants respond to neutral and positive words. In the second experiment, the participants read the same words, but they were distracted by a brainteaser. The results showed that in both cases there is a clear response in the brain's pain-processing centers with the words associated with pain, but there is no such activity pattern in response to the other words.

The authors of the study say preserving painful experiences as memories in the brain might be an evolutionary response to allow humans to avoid painful situations that might be dangerous (Warner 2015).

On the other hand, well-chosen words or speech, for the benefit of good or hope, can motivate or inspire others to greater feats and deeds. They can offer hope, create vision, and impact thinking, beliefs, and the behaviors of others. Positive words can alter the results of strategies, plans, objectives, and even people's lives. Positive words can uplift and encourage people and set them on a goal or path they otherwise might never have thought possible.

Power verbs express an action that is to be taken or that has been taken. A powerful verb, when used correctly, has the power to impact your life whether you are going into battle, running for president, or simply interviewing for a job.

We know that words create impressions, ideas, images, concepts, and facsimiles. Therefore, the words that we hear and read influence how we think and consequently how we behave. This means there is a correlation between the words we select and use and the results that occur. Using powerful verbal imagery helps people imagine vivid images and helps them figuratively and literally see the concepts mentioned. This was first discovered in the early twentieth century and was initially known as the *Perky Effect*; it was later called *visual simulation*. Individuals can project abstract thoughts. Almost everyone does this from time to time, but we refer to it as day dreaming.

When you day dream, you are completely awake and the eyes are wide open, yet you imagine being somewhere else, doing something else. Visual simulation impacts what people hear and how fast they respond. Cognitive psychologist Rolf Zwann has done a lot of research on the topic of how people describe objects and shapes to which they are exposed. His experiment includes showing people visuals and asking for responses and then providing audio prompts before the visual stimulation.

People are asked to describe the objects. Particularly if the subjects are prompted with words or sentences with the object beforehand, the results indicate that people respond faster because what they see and hear is mentally simulated beforehand (Bergen, 95). Many studies have confirmed that people construct visual simulations of objects they hear or read about.

People construct shape and orientation simulation. Studies show that when people listen they more often look at the set of objects that fit with the meaning of the verb, even before they hear the name of the relevant object. People make predictions about what the rest of the sentence contains as soon as words that they have already heard start to constrain what could reasonably follow. People start to cobble their understanding of the sentence incrementally (Bergen, 125).

Grammar helps get the visual simulation going by pulling together all the pieces contributed by the words in the correct configuration. People more easily and clearly comprehend your meaning if you have structured your sentence correctly. One particular form is the transitive sentence. It has a transfer of possession meaning. Transitive sentences start with a noun or noun phrase, are followed by a verb, and then have one or two noun phrases. The following is an example:

The outgoing CEO kicked the problem down the road to the new CEO.

If we use the intended transfer definition, the transitive sentence describes an intended transfer of an object to a recipient, and naturally the recipient must be capable of receiving something (Bergen, 106). Words we use can even be impacted by our background and other influences.

Consider the words buy and invest. If you are selling life insurance, you want the customer to buy, but in your mind the purchase is a long-term investment. The premiums get invested, the face value of the policy grows, there is eventually a loan value, and the investment appreciates beyond the purchase price. However the customer thinks in terms of buying and how much it costs. The issue comes full circle again if the customer does buy and if he wants the insurance company to make good investments.

Nan Russell, President of Mountain Works Communications, an employee training firm, introduces this word choice: problem or challenge. Would you rather your boss see your mistake as a problem or a challenge? Is it just semantics? Problems are things that need to be fixed; challenges are met. Different words evoke a different set of emotions and feelings. People usually have a much more positive feeling about “meeting a challenge” than “fixing a problem.”

ON WORDS

Words affect who we are. Without words, we would be isolated. Language and its nuances are uniquely human. Language is something we learn completely by audio cues—in other words, by listening. We do this because human brains are hardwired—genetically wired—to learn language by listening as an infant. It is interesting that we are not even consciously aware we are cognitively learning.

Before we had the ability to speak words, others could understand us. Our species survived and advanced, making other members understand with nonverbal cues. For millions of years, children communicated to

their mothers that they were hungry. Men communicated to women and women to men that they were interested in them as partners. Hunters collaborated on big animal kills long before a word was spoken; man even showed others how to start and keep a fire going long before there were words for such things. Anthropologists believe the spoken word appeared on the scene around 50,000 B.C. Humans used grunts, pointing, and body language for a long time.

Using Words in Special Ways

We know that more than 97% of human communication involves non-verbal cues (body language). To have a successful presentation, speech, or presidential debate performance, we must compose a sophisticated but seamless message, uniting our words in the proper rhythm, and use the corresponding nonverbal cues. If the words chosen do not match the nonverbal cues or vice versa the audience might get confused and the message might be diminished, or worse, ignored.

In the world of movies, theater, art, and entertainment, words have a dramatic impact. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* edition, a special report titled “What’s In a Name?” discussed a number of box office successes that might have a different result if their original titles had not been changed.

For example, The Bogart classic *Casablanca* had an original title *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*. The Julia Roberts/Richard Gere blockbuster *Pretty Woman* had the original title *\$3,000*. The successful *G.I. Jane* was supposed to be released as *In Defense of Honor*. The world might not have ever remembered Diane Keaton and Woody Allen in *Anhedonia*, which was fortunately changed to *Annie Hall* (*Wall Street Journal*, Arena, October 19, 2012, p. D1).

Throughout history, many memorable quotes have demonstrated how what is said is just as important as how it is said. For example, there is an old story that went around Washington, D.C., about Lyndon B. Johnson when he was stumping for state political office, he was surpassingly debating an opponent and was asked the difference between himself and the opposing candidate. He allegedly replied, “He matriculated and I never matriculated.”

Some of the most famous speeches made by Abraham Lincoln are memorable not just for the message, but for the fact that he condensed an enormous amount of information into them. It was not only the power of his words, but also his cadence that made the impact of the speeches more powerful. His second inaugural speech was only 700 words, and the *Gettysburg Address* was just under 3 minutes long. But Lincoln understood that he could make his simple words more powerful by altering the rate at which he delivered those words, the volume changes during the speech, the differences in pitch and tone (whether he spoke in a low deeper voice of wisdom or a higher trailing off voice of authority and the occasional injection of silence or what we call an intentional pause).

It really comes down to a simple rule—*Keep it simple*. The fact is most audiences have short attention spans—for many reasons—and you need to cater to this.

Paint pictures with your words. The audience needs to be able to hear what you are thinking.

The human brain thinks in a sequence of images that complete a thought and that can be shared as a story, example, case, formula, or in other descriptive ways. If your presentation goal is to describe how to create a beautifully decorated birthday cake, the approach should be a step-by-step linear link to the finished cake. For example, you could begin by discussing the eggs used, how much flour is needed, and how they are blended together. You could then discuss how the butter and baking

powder are blended in with the mixture, the batter is poured into a pan, and then the pan placed in the oven. Once the cake is finished baking it is cooled and then decorated with icing.

If you mention a birthday cake most humans simply see the end result of a decorated birthday cake, so trying to tell an audience just the end result of anything without sharing the building blocks or sequence of steps in a story leaves them cold.

This approach works for any topic or idea. Speakers need to tell their audience a story about the topic by dividing the topic into pieces or segments culminating in the finished or completed topic.

WHAT IS THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE?

Language accelerates learning; it speeds up innovation by permitting communication and coordination. A new idea can spread quickly if someone can explain it and communicate it to others before they have to discover it themselves. We use language, verbal and nonverbal, to make sense of our world. We use it to interact and to confirm, beg, act, command, inquire, network, court, teach, coach, and entertain. A few verbal and nonverbal messages can influence us, change our minds, cause us do something different, and change our position or vote.

Limit the Number of Key Points

Studies show that around 25% of audiences of all types can only remember between two to three key points of a 50-minute talk within an hour of the event. Recall erodes even worse and more quickly over the next 24 hours.

Attention span and recall issues lead us to the point that speakers and presenters who are the most memorable are those who zero in on

fewer—not more—key points. Memorable speakers also tell simple stories, case studies, and examples and offer proof points highlighting fewer key points. Audiences for speeches and presentations do not want to be challenged. They want to hear something interesting and preferably something that has to do with the speaker.

How to Speak Extemporaneously and Make a Toast

My emphasis on simplicity now provides you with the ability to be called on to speak extemporaneously (even if for just a minute or two) and be asked to give a toast either on the spur of the moment or with advance notice. If you can focus on the idea that simplicity in thought and follow-through will help you manage either or both of these situations, you can meet either with more confidence than you ever thought. Let's look at the situations.

Speaking Extemporaneously

First, the extemporaneous event. It could happen when you least expect it, which means people fear it most because they have no time to think or prepare or organize their thoughts. Of course everyone in the room is in the exact same position. However, I have a simple solution that if you learn and practice once or twice you could be the one person in the audience, who if called upon, will look like a polished professional speaker, and the rest of the crowd will sit there in awe.

Here is the simple solution. In any extemporaneous situation the person asking you to comment or to make a remark is using a technique of “audience involvement.” There are several reasons why a speaker would include the audience:

- The speaker is looking for people to confirm and endorse his ideas. In terms of audience participation this is sometimes called “spectating.” In other words you are supposed to just agree with the speaker.

It is completely up to you whether you go along and agree with the speaker’s point of view or choose your own position. Either choice has consequences, so you need to be prepared for each. The speaker is in control and depending on her style can make you look small or like a significant part of the event.

- The speaker is looking for people to provide “enhanced engagement” to enrich his program that has just been delivered. The format involves the speaker moving to the audience and keeping control of the microphone. The speaker is looking for a quick creative idea or thought and generally only allows seconds for an audience member to get involved. These speakers are looking for approval and confirmation of their ideas.
- The speaker is using the audience to “crowdsource” or troll for enhanced content to improve the program. This is a good opportunity to be as open and expressive as you wish.
- The speaker is showing off and is trying to demonstrate her excellent skills with an amateur, trying to draw the audience member into the presentation, which of course, the speaker still controls.
- The speaker has finished early and needs to use up time.

Whatever the reason, it doesn’t matter to you if you have a microphone stuck in your face and have been asked to comment, give your opinion, or ask a question. At this moment the rest of the entire audience is breathing a sigh of relief that they were not asked. This makes them a friendly audience, and they are all rooting for you.

If you have been following the program contents, you should have some idea of your own opinion, feelings, world view, or beliefs on the topic.

If called upon to make impromptu remarks, be ready to express these. This will help you know you have something worthwhile to say.

There is a rule of improvisational art, and it is never reject the premise. Accept what has been handed to you and work with it. Rejecting, resisting, overtly attempting to change the topic or subject only makes the situation more confusing and unsettling. Your resistance can make you look small, accepting makes you look professional and in control.

Here are the simple steps for the next one to two minutes (which may sound like a long time but in reality is a short time span).

1. Stand and accept the microphone smiling all the time (don't resist, shake your head, or hold up your hands). The speaker standing over you has a commanding position, and you can only look bad sitting and trying to hold off a request.
2. Thank the speaker for the opportunity to say a few words to the wonderful people in attendance today, move slightly away from the speaker. (You are choosing your own speaking space; it shows strength.) Keep smiling.
3. Look out into the audience (not at the speaker). Keep smiling.
4. There are a number of models you can use on which to build a one- to two- minute response to any question or comment concerning politics, economics, social issues, education, business, family, religion, philosophy, physics, money, immigration, taxation, sports, music, social media, or any other topic.

Pick something, anything that you can use as a *sequential memory device* to help you organize your thoughts. And don't just think of the object, visualize it as well. Here are some examples:

- **Colors**—Red, yellow, green (red=stop, yellow=slow, green = go). For example, visualize a stop light traffic signal and select the colors.

- **Geometric designs**—Box, circle, triangle (box=even sides but no easy exits; circle=smooth sides, easy access; triangle=strong base, difficult ascent; see Figure 1.1).

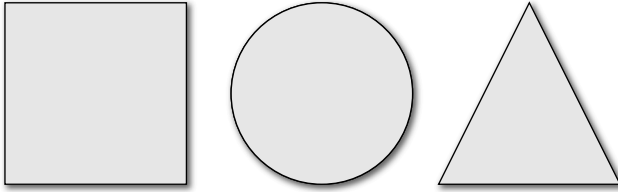


Figure 1.1 Memory aid: Divide your subject or thoughts into threes or triads

- **Seasons**—Summer, winter, fall.
- **Distance**—Far off, middle, nearby.
- **Numbers**—Fractions, single digits, multiple numbers.
- **Heights**—Low, medium, high.
- **The room you're in**—Back, middle, front, or the floor, tables, ceiling.

The options are nearly endless. You can select anything that comes to your mind from your past experience or whatever you feel most comfortable with. The point is to have in your repertoire one or two models that use the sequence formula that you have practiced several times. Then when the time comes that you're called upon to make extemporaneous comments or remarks you perform like a pro.

A quick scenario will help. Let's say you are in an audience where the speaker has been discussing his views on the negative impact of the loss of traffic ticket revenue earmarked for local public schools from digital traffic cameras that have been recently removed as a result of significant consumer complaints.

The speaker makes a claim that the community position has harmed the future of the children and puts the microphone in front of you asking for your opinion.

Following the “be simple” model, you stand smiling, take the microphone, and step away from the speaker looking into the audience.

Assume for this scenario that you disagree with the speaker’s position. You thank the speaker for the opportunity to comment:

“Thank you Ms. _____ for the opportunity to comment on this important issue. We all feel it is important, which is why we are here today. [15 seconds have already elapsed.]

Like many issues we must face, this one has different perspectives and shapes and those are like geometric shapes.

Some points are like a box, many sided; some arguments appear to be strong but when examined closely they are quite contained and difficult to escape into the full light to be examined. We need to spend more time turning these around and around looking at the edges and sides, top and bottom. It is like solving Rubik’s cube—very difficult. It can be done, but it’s not easy. It requires more time.

Other points are like circles; they seem smooth and well thought out, easy to access. All the arguments for and against seem to have equal opportunity for all to see so the proper decision can be made.

Other points are like triangles; there appears to be a firm base, solid and established evidence for one point of view. However, as time goes on evidence and information seems to cause less and less support until eventually there is very little support at the point where the decision has to be made.

It appears to me as though the community has seen this decision as a triangle, and this is where we are—at the point.”

[Depending on how many pauses you put in, nearly 1:30 seconds have elapsed.]

Here is a scenario using color:

“The question we are dealing with has many subtle variations like a color palette. On one hand, the darker shades of red (metaphor/simile) are those that need more light shed on them to help us see the answers. On the other hand, the lighter more colorful shades of the issue such as yellow seem clear and direct. Unfortunately, like a painter’s palette the issues we must deal with have many shades and many subtleties that require our concerted thought leadership. Real leaders, however, see green and just go toward solutions and answers.

Of course, any short quote or saying is a great way to begin or end.

Oh yes, the final step: Hand the microphone back to the speaker (whose mouth will be hanging open in amazement) and sit down with a coy smile. If you want to add a slight flair drop the microphone on the table and sit.

Making a Toast Extemporaneously

If you’re invited to give a toast extemporaneously, consider it an honor. The host believes you, over all the other guests, are the most talented, gifted, or gracious and should have the honor. So, rather than feel put upon or resentful, you should feel proud to have been selected.

Unlike a member of an audience in which a speaker has asked for a comment, a request for you to give a toast provides you a little more time to gather a few thoughts and think of your theme.

These are the steps to make a successful and memorable toast:

- Accept the invitation graciously.
- Smile.
- Keep it simple.
- Use the same sequential memory technique as described previously to help you organize your thoughts.
- Example: “I’ve known [the honoree] for a long time and as time passes like seasons, memories of [the honoree] have different impacts. I remember meeting the [the honoree] in the spring of our careers. Our careers and jobs were in bloom and [honoree’s] life was in full blossom. I had the pleasure to watch [honoree’s] life and career move into full summer where he/she had great success and grew as a person and professional. Now in the winter of his/her life he/she is not planning on hibernating but looking forward to the next spring and making new goals. Here is to those endeavors.”
- Keep it short. The best toast is less than 3 minutes; 1 minute is the best.
- Make sure to mention the honoree’s name, but do not look at him or her until the toast is complete.
- Do not offer embarrassing, private, or secret information about the honoree.
- *Do not clink glasses with the honoree* (unless the toast is in a beer garden or bar).

Making a Toast with Advance Notice

If you are asked to give a toast and are given advance notice, all the same advice mentioned previously applies. However, you have the advantage of preparing the remarks in advance, and you have the opportunity to rehearse, so you do not have to use notes. There is nothing worse than

someone standing up to toast his “lifelong, very best friend in the world” with feeling and passion and pulling out note cards or sheets of paper to tell the audience how important this person is to him!

A toast is an honor; it is moment to salute an honoree not embarrasses or humiliate him. It certainly is not the time to drag out the moment and make the entire assemblage feel awkward. Whoever started the long-winded dragged out story after story form of toasting did no one any favors. This form of toasting is humiliating, debasing, and counter to what a toast is supposed to do.

So perform a toast as it was originally designed to be: an honor to someone—brief, succinct, and dignified. The person making the toast should at all costs avoid these things, which are serious gaffes:

1. Talking about yourself other than in reference to how you know the honoree.
2. Talking too long; a toast should last no longer than 2 minutes.
3. Using cliché passé phrases (the guests have heard them all many times before)

Setting Up the Toast

The toaster should make sure the wine glasses are full and that his glass is sparkling clean. The toast is most likely to be given under bright lights, and the toaster does not want his glass to be dirty or cloudy.

The toaster needs to make sure the honoree is present.

The toaster needs to get the attention of the guests. This could take a minute or so.

The Body Language of the Toaster

1. Stand up straight. (Shoulders level to floor)
2. Smile.

3. Act confidently.
4. Don't raise or lower your head. (This affects your vocal cords.)
5. Make eye contact as you look around the room.
6. Maintain eye contact with attendees.
7. Hold your glass at waist height.
8. Do not gesture with your glass.
9. Raise your glass to eye level at the end of your toast in the direction of the honoree.
10. The toaster may be the first person to drink.
11. When you are toasting in a formal setting, don't clink glasses.

Key Takeaways

- Dress simply and look like your audience. You want to feel as physically comfortable as possible.
- Keep your talk simple. Use shorter more impactful words familiar to the audience. Speak their language.
- Make fewer points for the audience to remember (two or three are optimal). Most people do not have the capacity to remember more than three points so why present more than they are capable of remembering?
- When you are going to make a key point to the audience, tell them what you are going to do. It is perfectly fine to say "This is a key point."
- Paint pictures with your simple language. Successful radio announcers are capable of getting audiences to listen to someone they can't see by the announcer's ability to use words to paint a picture the audience can imagine. Paint pictures with your thoughts and ideas and words.

- Use stories, case studies, and examples to make your points (preferably contemporary ones and things that are familiar to your audience).
- Most audiences prefer to hear some stories about you, the speaker.
- Use power verbs instead of dull verbs. Make your sentences come alive. Power verbs are full of action and force. They make your words more dynamic and help you speak with passion.
- Smile when you speak.
- Speak slowly unless you intend to speed up for emphasis. Changing your pace is okay. Pausing is a powerful speaking tool; it generates tension, interest, and anticipation in your audience.
- Raising or lowering your head stretches or constricts your vocal cords and makes your voice pitch different (changes the pitch from a higher to a lower pitch). Knowing this allows you to control your pitch.
- If you are going give a toast, make it dignified and brief.

Chapter 1 Notes

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