



Middle East Region
Staff College

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Effective Speaking

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Effective Speaking

Objectives:

- X Determine what real fear is
- X Present areas you need to command in order to be a good speaker/communicator
- X Emphasize the need for practice and rehearsal
- X Demonstrate the need for good visual aids

The Long and Short of It

Do you feel self-conscious if you have to stand up and speak to a group, even when you know them quite well? Do you find it difficult to find the right words to express yourself clearly? Do you get unpleasant symptoms like a pounding heart, a dry mouth, sweaty palms, churning stomach or, worst of all, a blank mind? Are you worried that you might forget what you are going to say and make a fool of yourself? If any of your answers are 'yes', then you are not alone. You are the rule rather than the exception. Most people have a problem with speaking in public.

EXERCISE

“Our Greatest Fears”

Purpose: Establish a foundation for a brief discussion on comfort zone and self-esteem.

Procedure: Use your imagination and list what you would consider to be the ten worst human fears identified by you and the general public. We will compare your input with a random survey taken from the general public. Take about three minutes to make your list. Do this now.

Now that we have established public speaking is right up there at the top of fears, you can feel comfortable that if this is the case with you, you have plenty of company. Now let me deflate your bubble of comfort. You do public speaking every day and don't think twice about it. You do this without any of the symptoms we have mentioned. So why do we say we have this problem? It is the formal setting that frightens us, the idea that we will have to stand up in front of a seated group and all the group's attention will be focused on us.

There are a number of topics we will be talking about during this session that will help everyone, regardless of their experience or the lack thereof, but the most important things you can have to help you overcome any of your fears or discomfort are having a passion about your subject and self-confidence.

EXERCISE

I will pass out a sheet of paper, face down. This sheet of paper contains twenty simple math problems requiring addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve. When I instruct you to do so, turn the paper over, read the instructions, solve the problems as quickly as possible, and return the paper face down. When every one has completed their test, I will provide the correct answers to the problems.

Now turn your papers over and start.

The purpose of this exercise is to show that most people do not listen closely to all information and instructions being given. I have used this exercise before and remember one occasion where one lady in the class was the last to put down her pencil while the rest of the class looked at her as if she was incapable of doing simple math. When the answers were read everyone else understood why. She had listened and read the instructions first. The various topics we will be talking about today are:

- X Listening
- X Preparation and planning
- X Delivery methods
- X Body language
- X Practicing (visualization)
- X Making and using visual aids
- X Humor and wit

There are other areas we could address, but time will not permit and the subjects we will be going over will be cursory. Much is to be gained by the student having a desire to be an effective speaker. These notes alone will provide the serious-minded student with considerable body of knowledge.

Listening

From our math exercise, we can quickly see its purpose. The first part of the instructions were to “read the instructions.” There is, however, much more about listening that we want to discuss.

“I do not object to people looking at their watches when I am speaking, but I strongly object when they start shaking them to make sure they are still going.” . . . Lord Birkett

To be an effective speaker you need to understand how people listen. If you don’t, you could be broadcasting on the wrong frequency and you wouldn’t realize it – your message may be clear and powerful, but is it being received?

The human mind processes words at a rate of approximately 500 per minute, but we speak at about 150 words per minute, so the difference is about 350 words per minute. Most listeners are continually assessing, digesting, rejecting or accepting what they hear. They are measuring it against their own bank of experience and prejudice and evaluating its worth. Is this going to work? Is that logical? What happens if I agree? And on and on the process goes.

Why people fail to listen:

- X They anticipate what is going to be said and switch it off.
- X They are planning what to say when it’s their turn.
- X They may be tired or worried, i.e., they may have too much on their mind to concentrate.
- X They can’t hear or they find the speaker’s voice dull and monotonous.
- X The topic is too complex and difficult to follow.
- X The topic is too simple and basic.
- X The speaker lacks credibility and confidence.
- X The chairs are hard, it’s either too hot or too cold, and the sound of the traffic is very distracting.

As a speaker you can see the listener and make judgement calls as to whether or not they are awake, focused, with the topic or daydreaming. This is a great advantage of oral communication over written forms of communication. Any and all knowledge about the audience can be used to modify the presentation to recapture the group. Here the speaker has provided a real service to the group, themselves and the subject. To aid listening is a responsibility of the speaker. This may be accomplished by using visual aid whenever possible, allowing the group to participate, being animated, being not only a person who relied on words, but who had vocal and visual impact.

If you feel the voice of a speaker is not important, just think about the last time you listened to the TV, the radio, a phone call, or were casually talking in a group, and the speaker's tonality, volume, pitch, or rate really annoyed you. I have a personal problem with the typical car salesman on television. Here they have only one minute to convey two minutes of information; they talk in a high-pitched voice, are overly excited, are very fast, and they are shouting as if the microphone is located half way across the lot.

Listening is difficult:

- X Internal and external distractions;
- X Messages are received through filters of experience and prejudices;
- X Listeners selectively listen to what they think is important or what interests them.
(Two people in a meeting will often have different recollections of what took place.
People working in an open-plan office are able to not hear background noise.)
- X Poor speakers, i.e., dull voice, irritating mannerism, etc;
- X Poor speeches, i.e., jumbled thinking, no structure, unsuitable vocabulary,
inappropriate level for audience (too simple/complex).

Overcome the difficulties of poor listening by using some of the following:

- X Facial expressions, eye contact, gestures; avoid nervous mannerisms;
- X Involve, react to and interact with the listener;
- X Illustrate with visual aids, handouts and listeners' experiences;
- X Use enthusiasm, sincerity and vitality.

Preparing and Planning

First, set an objective about the purpose of the talk. Do you want to inform, teach, train, stimulate, sell, debate, or entertain? Define your subject, i.e., exactly what you will be talking about. Define exactly what you want to convey to the audience. What your subject is and the purpose of the talk will determine the tone of your talk. If the nature is to inform, you will want to provide handouts, cover facts, and allow the audience to use the information you are providing. If, however, you are trying to sell, you will want to define elements the audience can identify with and establish a need for the product or service. Selling will be upbeat, positive, and create a need in the potential buyer's mind. The 'inform' presentation will be more factual and to-the-point, and it is up to the listener to decide how and if they can use the information. Start with the end in mind.

Mark Twain claimed that it took him two weeks to prepare an impromptu speech.

In preparing your talk, give your audience an outline and objectives, a roadmap of where you are going. This will aid them to have a mental map and be prepared for the flow of information. Such a map will

also aid in the ability to be a better listener and will therefore help the listener retain much more of the input. During the talk, point out where you are, where you came from and where you are going. To regain those that fell off the train during the trip (talk), give small summaries as needed, and then an overall summary. Make sure your illustrations are relevant to the audience. On occasion when presenting a **fact**, follow through with the **effect** of the fact and then the **benefit** to the listener. Use terms the listener can visualize. This can be accomplished by comparing two items the audience will be familiar with. Stay away from worn out cliches!

How to write your talk:

- X Announce the objectives
- X Summarize and recap frequently
- X Identify each point clearly
- X Use rhetorical questions to regain the audience's attention
- X Use examples and personal stories which are relevant to the audience, to illustrate your ideas
- X Summarize the main points

“Speeches are like babies – easy to conceive, hard to deliver” . . . Pat O’Malley

Delivery Methods

Reading is considered the worst method you can choose to deliver your talk and should try to be avoided. Reading an important statement or excerpt is fine, if such reading is short and your concern is accuracy. Memorizing is another method that should be avoided. When trying to give your speech from memory, all your energy is consumed in recalling the speech word-for-word, and you have very little time left to give to the subject at hand. If you get tense and start forgetting your lines, you will be totally lost and all the fears you imagined could come true, will come true.

The most effective delivery style is the ‘speaking extemporaneously’ (or planned improvisation). Your talk is prepared carefully with a punchy beginning, a logical structure and a conclusive ending; it’s well-rehearsed and you can use brief outline notes to give you the confidence to sound enthusiastic, behave with vitality and look at the audience with sincerity. This may be accomplished by using 3 x 5 cards where you have written out your outline using key words that will help you visualize what you want to say about each point. Use single words only. Stay away from phrases that will require you to read, as opposed to taking a quick glance. The only exception to this is you may write out a full opening and closing sentence.

Don’t concern yourself if you leave something out – so what! Your job is to provide information to the audience and you are the only one aware that something was left out. Get over it and go on with life!

Use visual aids as a safety net. Flip charts, overhead transparencies, or computer slides can be your 3 x 5 index card outline. The more talks you give, the better and more comfortable you become. Practicing a talk is essential to a successful talk.

Summary

- X Speak extemporaneously
- X Choose a suitable safety net

X

Practice several times aloud, preferably with a tape recorder or on video

Body Language

Smile, relax your body, move (not excessively), use eye contact and read the audience (the single most important aspect of speaking with belief). The group is not interested in sharing the speakers distressed feelings and emotions. Help the group enjoy the conversation by first enjoying the moment yourself. You will be setting the tone, the atmosphere, the climate. You are in charge. If you believe you are having a good time, they will have a good time. Do not fiddle with rings, watches, cuff-links, buttons, pens, rubber bands, paper clips, or other objects that are a distraction to the audience. Don't clutch the back of a chair, notes, side of the lectern, or rest on a table. Don't hide from your audience; you need to connect with them, so get out in front of them. Believe in yourself and invest the time it will take to do the job right.

“Confidence doesn't come out of nowhere. It's a result of something... hours and days and weeks and years of constant work and dedication.” . . . Roger Staubach

Practicing and Rehearsing

This may be the single most important aspect of giving a talk and will define your delivery and self-confidence. The better prepared you are, the better your interaction with your audience. There is no shortcut to this phase of the talk. You can plan on many hours of practice for each hour of talk for which you must prepare. The only exception is when you are very familiar with your topic and have already given your talk a number of times. The general rule is no one allows enough time to practice. Rehearsing helps you to:

- X Become familiar with your material
- X Conquer the blank-mind syndrome
- X Feel more confident
- X Control nerves
- X Develop an effective speaking voice
- X Use positive and appropriate body language

There are three stages – practice, rehearsal and dress rehearsal. Practicing is done by yourself, rehearsing in front of one or several people and a dress rehearsal is on-site with props. All your practicing and rehearsing should be spoken aloud. Another method when practicing is to visualize your audience in front of you as you practice. See in your mind's eye their reaction to your message, stories, quotes, and facts.

“The degree to which you believe in yourself, plus the amount of practice you afford a subject, will determine the effectiveness you will achieve in public speaking.” . . . YMG

Summary on how to rehearse

- X Make time to practice aloud and standing up
- X Use gestures and vary your voice
- X Use a tape recorder and or video camera
- X Practice in front of friends and colleagues and ask for feedback

Making and Using Visual Aids

Information which is received by listening is retained for less time than that which is received by seeing. Therefore, visual aids help to make your talk memorable. Visuals can reinforce an idea which you have

already discussed in words. For instance, you could outline a cost-saving theory and then show visually what the actual savings would be in practice.

Effective visuals should be used to:

- X Help the audience retain information
- X Save you time in explaining concepts, ideas, etc.
- X Avoid misunderstandings
- X Reinforce ideas
- X Add spice and humor

Don't add visuals because the other speakers are doing so. Your talk may not need them. Don't use visuals to brighten up an uninteresting talk – improve your talk and only use a visual to illustrate it more vividly. You should use aids to show an idea visually. On occasions you may be required to explain a complicated chart. Doing so with only words could quickly lose your audience, whereas using a graphic on a laptop and projector, overhead projector, or a flip chart could facilitate the explanation in short order and make it digestible for all present. The following is a list of why and when to use visuals:

- X Present facts, concepts, figures, in a comparative or structured form
- X Aid comprehension and prevent misunderstanding
- X Reinforce your message
- X Focus your listeners' attention
- X Maintain interest and help retention
- X Motivate the audience to make a decision
- X Add humor

A couple of important points to keep in mind:

- X Don't hang onto the easel for support
- X Never write and speak at the same time
- X Don't hold a marker pen in your hand when you're not writing
- X Look at the audience and not at the flip chart

Try to avoid using words as visual aids but if you need to, limit their use to identification, recapping and summarizing. The following are considerations for designing effective visuals:

- X Keep them simple – Many visuals are ineffective because they are complicated and contain too much information.
- X Keep them uniform – Don't use too many types of visuals and don't attempt to make them too diverse. A jumble of typefaces and styles and a mixture of colors gives the impression that the speaker and his company are disorganized and confused. Choose a clear simple typeface and use it throughout your slides with a bold background color to create a smart effect.
- X Keep them colorful – Judicial use of color can significantly enhance your visual, as you can use it as a background or to highlight important data. Use color to underline and for bullet points and arrows.
- X Keep them humorous – If you can introduce an element of humor into a serious presentation, you will be revealing the fun side of your character, which will warm your audience to you. Beware of being flippant. Cartoons can add a light touch to dry material, which will help maintain your listeners' interest.

Visual styles include:

- X Pie charts
- X Bar Charts
- X Line charts and graphs
- X Flow and organization charts
- X Tables of figures

These notes have covered traditional methods of adding a visual element to your talk, but don't limit yourself. Be original. Step out of your comfort zone. Try to find new and simple methods of explaining complex material. The three bottom line rules for visuals are 1) Visibility, 2) Clarity, and 3) Simplicity.

Humor and Wit

Humor at the beginning of the presentation relaxes the audience and also eases the tension for you. Smiling and laughing together unites an audience and creates an atmosphere in which they will listen together. Humor is useful to lighten a heavy and possible dull passage in your talk and will make it more digestible, and therefore more memorable. The safest target for your humor is yourself.

Your humor must be relevant to the audience and should help to show them you are one of them, or that you understand their situation and are in sympathy with their point. You can tell a sales joke to engineers or engineer joke to sales people and the joke will be well-received. In the following joke, which group (doctors or nurses) do you feel would find the joke humorous and which group would find it offensive?

Story

A man arrives in heaven and is being shown around by St. Peter. He sees wonderful accommodations – beautiful gardens, sunny weather, and so on. Everyone is very peaceful, polite and friendly until, waiting in a line for lunch, the new arrival is suddenly pushed aside by a man in a white coat, who rushes to the head of the line, grabs his food and stomps over to a table by himself. “Who is that?” The new arrival asked St. Peter. “Oh, that’s God,” came the reply, “but sometimes he thinks he’s a doctor!”

If you are part of the group you are addressing, you will be in a position to know the experiences and problems which are common to all of you, and it'll be appropriate for you to make a passing remark. Knowing your audience can go a long way to being successful with your talk.

Summary:

- X Humor unites audiences
- X Use common problems and shared experiences
- X Avoid telling jokes
- X Collect funny stories
- X Never read your humorous lines
- X Air for chuckles, not for belly laughs

Summary

There are a number of subjects not covered in this session, like coping with nerves, using your voice, relaxation exercise, handling questions, and writing the script, all of which are equally important as the ones covered in this session. Listening is an important subject for the speaker to understand, and this knowledge and using eye contact to read the group is essential to keeping the group alert. By understanding and observing the listener, you will know better how to serve your audience (when to take breaks, stand and stretch, or do an exercise, for example).

While all the elements we have talked about are important and your application of them is critical, I want you to consider two additional things that are paramount to a good talk and performance. First is having a passion about what you are talking about. Have a deep desire to want to share this information with your audience. The passion is the spirit and fire which will be a redeeming factor and will forgive a lot of other sins. With passion alone, you could have a well-received exchange between yourself and the group.

The second is belief in yourself. There are a couple of axioms I would like to share with you: The *axiom of belief* says that whatever we believe with feeling becomes our reality, and if we wish to change our realities we must change our beliefs about ourselves. The *axiom of expectations* says that whatever we expect with confidence becomes our own self-fulfilling prophecy, and that's why we must expect the best of ourselves and of every situation. The *axiom of attraction* says that we inevitably attract into our lives the people and circumstances that harmonize with our dominant thoughts. If we want to attract different people and circumstances, we have to change our thinking. Using the information contained in this session, along with the axioms, and investing in yourself, you will find there is one outcome!

“Come to the edge, He said. They said, We are afraid. Come to the edge, He said. They came. He pushed them. . . and they flew.”

....Guillaume Apollinaire

Exercise One Answers

**Results of Random Survey
The Ten Worst Human Fears (in the US)**

- | | | | | |
|------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| <i>10.</i> | <i>Dogs</i> | <i>5. Deep Water</i> | | |
| <i>9.</i> | <i>Loneliness</i> | <i>4. Financial Problems</i> | | |
| <i>8.</i> | <i>Flying</i> | <i>3. Insects/bugs/snakes</i> | | |
| <i>7.</i> | <i>Death</i> | <i>2. Heights</i> | | |
| <i>6.</i> | <i>Sickness</i> | <i>1.</i> | <i>Public</i> | <i>speaking</i> |

Exercise Two Answers

Arithmetic Test

Work as quickly as possible. Answer as many as you can in the time allowed. In the following simple arithmetic problems, a plus (+) sign means to multiply, a divide (\div) means to add, a minus (-) means to divide, and a multiplication (x) sign means to subtract. Complete the problems following these directions.

$$8 + 2 = 16$$

$$9 + 11 = 99$$

$$4 \times 3 = 1$$

$$6 \div 2 = 8$$

$$9 - 3 = 3$$

$$7 \times 4 = 3$$

$$4 + 4 = 16$$

$$8 - 4 = 2$$

$$12 \times 2 = 10$$

$$20 - 10 = 2$$

$$14 - 7 = 2$$

$$6 \times 5 = 1$$

$$8 + 3 = 24$$

$$7 \times 2 = 5$$

$$9 + 2 = 18$$

$$8 - 4 = 2$$

$$9 + 6 = 54$$

$$1 \div 1 = 2$$

$$8 \times 7 = 1$$

$$13 - 1 = 13$$

Upon completion turn papers over face down and wait for the rest of the class to complete their test before we check the answers.