

## LESSON-21

### Involving your audience and improving your podium power

#### *Pick Your Audience*

Virtually every Public speaking presentation done, one can find some excuse to get someone on stage with the speaker. When an audience member is on stage, the rest of the audience is glued to the action for the following reasons:

1. They want to see what is going to happen to one of their own.
2. They are priming themselves to be up there.
3. They are worrying to death that they may be asked to be up there.

Reasons 1 and 2 are good and reason 3 is not so good. For 1 and 2 the mindset of the observing audience member is that, "I want to watch to see what my colleague or other audience member will do when they are on stage.

The other mindset is, "I better watch what is going on in case I am asked to go up there." This mindset is good too, because it forces the audience member to actually think about the point we are trying to make.

For number 3, we want to keep shy/sensitive audience members from withdrawing altogether because of the fear that they may be asked to stand up in front of everyone. This chance of withdrawal is easily eliminated by asking to volunteer to come on stage instead of forcing them to come up.

What are things one can do with the audience member once we get them on stage. Public recognition is one of the top motivators of people thus it might be a good idea for us to use our highly public profile while we are speaking to give out public recognition. Find out the good things that particular audience member(s) have done during pre-program research.

Here are some ways to use the information we learn:

- Recognize a single audience member for a particular achievement, or for a period of high performance.
- Recognize a group of audience members for a particular achievement, or period of high performance.

While they are on-stage highlight their achievement, or performance

Another reason to get an audience member or group on stage is for some sort of demonstration or an exercise. Try to have pre planned ad-libs ready to go for many of the comments or questions we anticipate from the people on stage.

We can have someone on stage to assist in writing on the flip chart, changing overheads, or just to blow a horn when someone in the audience' asks a good question. Use imagination.

Whenever, someone is up there to assist, make sure that they get some kind of prize. And always lead the audience in a round of applause for the helper as they return to their seat.

### **Improving your Podium Power**

When Leann Anderson prepares a speech, she doesn't worry about whether her audience is going to like her; instead she focuses on whether she will offer useful information to her audience. As the owner of Anderson Business Resources, Anderson helps businesspeople improve their business relationships by showing them how to enhance their image and become better public speakers. Anderson advises her clients to "know as much as possible about your audience." By understanding your audience, "you can create examples specifically for them, personalize your message, avoid sensitive topics, and appeal to the most important issues on their minds."

Anderson learns about her audience by being an active listener-something she believes is an essential skill for successful businesspeople. Whether she is speaking to an audience in Bangkok about how to do business in the United States, consulting with clients on how to project a favorable image, or lecturing to college students on how to survive after they graduate, Anderson always focuses on giving something of value to her audience. She anticipates her audience's needs, carefully selects her topic, does extensive research, organizes her thoughts, and prepares her speeches meticulously. "Too many people wait until the last minute to work on their speeches, and once they've finished writing their rough drafts, they have no time left to edit and revise them."

Anderson advocates being a ruthless editor. "Most of us fall in love with our own words, and our presentations get too long and complicated. A good speech is built on an intriguing introduction, a substantive body, and a memorable conclusion. Eliminate anything that is not truly necessary to make your talk more interesting. Keep sentences simple, work from an outline if possible, and highlight key points. If you use generalized statements, be sure to follow them with specific examples and facts. Support your points with evidence, anecdotes, and data to strengthen your message and reinforce your position as an expert."

However, being an expert is not enough. "Learn to be conversational. Cultivate the art of small talk-be an interesting person first; then be an expert in your field. When you talk to people, make them feel at ease with you-then they will be in a frame of mind to accept what you have to offer. When writing a speech, use *we* and *you* frequently to make your talk seem like more of a dialogue. Ask yourself, does that sound like something a person would say naturally-you have to sound conversational"

One way to increase your conversational ability is by reading magazines, books, journals, and newspapers. Anderson knows the value of being well-informed when preparing and delivering speeches, so she clips articles, collects meaningful quotes, jots down ideas, and collects words. "Words can distinguish you from others. By using visual words you catch people off guard, and they pay attention to what you have to say. . . . For example, consider the words *seamless* and *embroidered*; both are visual words and have a greater impact than the words *smooth* and *included*. Economy of language is the

real key to good communication-that means choosing the best way of saying something to get the desired result.”

In fact, getting results is one of the many reasons Anderson’s clients seek her advice. “If entrepreneurs knew how much they could improve the health of their businesses by becoming effective public speakers, more of them would jump on the band-wagon. . . . When you are successful as a public speaker, most people will assume you are a successful businessperson too.” So Anderson offers this advice: “Fine-tune your public-speaking skills. Be prepared and rehearse more than you think you need. The more you practice, the more confident and relaxed you will be.” Anderson cautions speakers to “inject your personality into the speech. Have some fun with it. . . . Stop concentrating on ‘will they like me?’ and instead focus on ‘what will they gain from hearing me?’ “

### **Apply Your Knowledge**

1. Using the information in this chapter and the recommendations by Leann Anderson, discuss the meaning of the following quotes:
  - a. “Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall:’ -*Oliver Wendell Holmes*
  - b. “It usually takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu *speech*:’ -*Mark Twain*
2. List some of the things you should know about your audience before preparing a speech.

### **Delivering the speech**

When it’s time to deliver the speech, you may feel a bit of stage fright. Most people do, even professional actors. A good way to overcome your fears is to rehearse until you’re thoroughly familiar with your material. 8 Communication professionals have suggested other tips:

- Prepare more material than necessary. Extra knowledge, combined with a genuine interest in the topic, will boost your confidence.
- Think positively about your audience, yourself, and what you have to say. See yourself as polished and professional, and your audience will too.
- Be realistic about stage fright. After all, even experienced speakers admit that they feel butterflies before they address an audience. A little nervous excitement can actually provide the extra lift that will make your presentation sparkle.
- Use the few minutes while you’re arranging your materials, before you actually begin speaking, to tell yourself you’re on and you’re ready.
- Before you begin speaking, take a few deep breaths.
- Have your first sentence memorized and on the tip of your tongue.
- If your throat is dry, drink some water.
- If you feel that you’re losing your audience during the speech, don’t panic. Try to pull them back by involving them in the action.
- Use your visual aids to maintain and revive audience interest.
- Keep going. Things usually get better, and your audience will silently be wishing you success.

Perhaps the best way to overcome stage fright is to concentrate on your message’ and your audience, not on yourself. When you’re busy thinking about your subject and ob-

servicing the audience's response, you tend to forget your fears. Even so, as you deliver your presentation, try to be aware of the nonverbal signals you're transmitting. To a great degree, your effectiveness will depend on how you look and sound.

As you approach the speaker's lectern, breathe deeply, stand up straight, and walk slowly. Face the audience. Adjust the microphone. Count to three slowly; then survey the room. When you find a friendly face, make eye contact and smile. Count to three again; then begin your presentation. Even if you feel nervous inside, this slow, controlled beginning will help you establish rapport.

Once your speech is under way, be particularly careful to maintain eye contact with the audience. Pick out several people positioned around the room, and shift your gaze from one to another. Doing this will make you appear to be sincere, confident, and trustworthy; moreover, it will help you perceive the impression you're creating.

Your posture is also important in projecting the right image. Stand tall, with your weight on both feet and your shoulders back. Avoid gripping the lectern. In fact, you might step out from behind the lectern to help the audience feel more comfortable with you and to express your own comfort and confidence in what you're saying. Use your hands to emphasize your remarks with appropriate gestures. At the same time, vary your facial expressions to make the message more dynamic.

Finally, think about the sound of your voice. Studies indicate that people who speak with low voice tones at a slightly faster than average rate are perceived as being most credible. Speak in a normal, conversational tone but with enough volume so that everyone in the audience can hear you. Try to sound poised and confident, varying your pitch and speaking rate to add emphasis. Don't ramble or use meaningless filler words such as *urn*, *you know*, *okay*, and *like*. Speak clearly and crisply, articulating all the syllables, and sound enthusiastic about what you're saying.

### ***Handling Questions***

Brady Keys believes that preparation is the key to handling questions effectively. Spend time before your speech thinking about the questions that might arise—including abrasive or difficult questions. Then be ready with answers. In fact, some experts recommend that you hold back some dramatic statistics as ammunition for the question-and-answer session. <sup>11</sup> Bear in mind, however, that circumstances may require some changes in the answers you've prepared.

When someone poses a question, focus your attention on that individual. Pay attention to body language and facial expression to help determine what the person really means. Nod your head to acknowledge the question; then repeat it aloud to confirm your understanding and to ensure that the entire audience has heard it. If the question is vague or confusing, ask for clarification. Then give a simple, direct answer. Don't say more than you need to if you want to have enough time to cover all the questions. If giving an adequate answer would take too long, simply say, "I'm sorry that we don't have time to get into that issue right now, but if you'll see me after the presentation, I'll be happy to discuss it with you." If you don't know the answer, don't pretend that you do. Instead,

say something like “I don’t have those figures. I’ll get them for you as quickly as possible.” Remember that you don’t have to answer every question that is asked.

Don’t allow one or two people to monopolize the question period. Try to give everyone a chance to participate; call on people from different parts of the room. If the same person keeps angling for attention, say something like “Several other people have questions; I’ll get back to you if time permits.” If audience members try to turn a question into an opportunity to mount their own soapboxes, it’s up to you to maintain control. You might admit that you and the questioner have a difference of opinion and offer to get back to the questioner after you’ve done more research. Then call on someone else. Another approach is to respond with a brief answer, thus avoiding a lengthy debate or additional questions.

## **CHECKLIST FOR SPEECHES AND ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

### **A. Development of the Speech or Presentation**

1. Analyze the audience.
2. Begin with an attention-getter.
3. Preview the main points.
4. Limit the discussion to no more than three or four points.
5. Explain who, what, when, where, why, and how.
6. In longer presentations, include previews and summaries of major points as you go along.
7. Close by reviewing your main points and making a memorable statement.

### **B. Visual Aids**

1. Use visual aids to show how things look, work, or are related to one another.
2. Use visual aids to highlight important information and to create interest.
3. Select appropriate visual aids.
  - a. Use flip charts, boards, or transparencies for small, informal groups.
  - b. Use slides or films for major occasions and large groups.
4. Limit each visual aid to three or four graphed lines or five or six points.
5. Use short phrases.
6. Use large, readable type.
7. Make sure equipment works.

### **C. Delivery**

1. Establish eye contact.
2. Speak clearly and distinctly.
3. Do not go too fast.
4. Be sure everyone can hear.
5. Speak in your natural style.
6. Stand up straight.
7. Use gestures in a natural, appropriate way.
8. Encourage questions.
  - a. Allow questions during the presentation if the group is small

- b. Ask the audience to hold their questions until the end if the group is large or hostile.
9. Respond to questions without getting side-tracked.
10. Maintain control of your feelings despite criticism.

Finally, you might thank the person for the question and then remind the questioner that you were looking for specific questions. Don't indulge in put-downs, which may backfire and make the audience more sympathetic to the questioner.

When the time allotted for your presentation is up, call a halt to the question-and-answer session, even if more people want to talk. Prepare the audience for the end by saying: "Our time is almost up. Let's have one more question!" After you've made your reply, summarize the main idea of the presentation and thank people for their attention. Conclude the way you opened: by looking around the room and making eye contact. Then gather your notes and leave the podium, shoulders straight, head up. The Checklist for Speeches and Oral Presentations is a reminder of the tasks involved in these types of oral communication.

### **On the Job**

#### **SOLVING A COMMUNICATION DILEMMA AT THE KEYS GROUP**

When Brady Keys retired from professional football in the late *1960s*, he pursued his dream of owning his own business. After noticing how well a friend's restaurant was doing, he decided on a fried-chicken business.

His first hurdle was raising enough money to launch the restaurant. Ten banks said "No thanks;" but he finally persuaded his former team to loan him \$10,000 -enough to open his first All-Pro Fried Chicken store. Within three years, he'd presented himself and his ideas to banks and to the government, convincing them to loan him enough capital to open 35 more outlets in Pittsburgh, New York, and Cleveland. By that time, he was selling a million dollar's worth of fried chicken a year.

He decided it was time to try something new-hamburgers. Keys convinced Burger King to let him try turning around a struggling Burger King franchise in Detroit's inner city. Realizing that something had to spark sales, "we introduced a couple of themes that are now universal in the industry;" says Keys. "We found that black people didn't want the Whopper fixed the usual way, so we made it to order." That concept eventually formed the basis for Burger King's successful "Have It Your Way" advertising campaign.

Then as lines began to form for the new customized Whopper, Keys stationed employees at the end of the lines to take orders and cut the waiting time-a practice that has become standard in many fast-food restaurants. These innovations transformed the struggling franchise into the top-selling U.S. Burger King outlet, which Keys eventually sold.

As Keys points out, "You don't get acceptance by going in and saying 'accept me: You get it by doing worthy activities.'" For example, Keys has used his position to help other African Americans succeed in franchising: He founded both Burger King's and KFC's Minority Franchise associations; he talked Burger King's management into awarding the construction contract for the company's first inner-city outlet to an African American

general contractor; and he convinced management to increase the number of minority people on Burger King's roster of franchisees, employees, and vendors.

After taking over the Burger King franchise, Keys sold his All-Pro Fried Chicken stores and became a KFC franchisee. Most of his new outlets were in Albany, Georgia, where worthy activities became even more important. Gaining acceptance in the predominantly white community was more of a challenge than it had been in either Detroit or Pittsburgh. So, says Keys, "I became a philanthropist, I stressed my athletic background, and we brought in the Harlem Globetrotters as a benefit to the Special Olympics." He also served as chairman of the board of the Albany Civic Center Commission, and he is one of the largest individual contributors to the city's March of Dimes fund.

Keys's abilities to speak, to win friends, and to influence people help him deal with employees too. He believes in giving people a chance to live up to their potential. He promotes from within, and he rewards long-term employees with a piece of the business. In return, his employees are loyal, and his low turnover keeps costs down and service up. His restaurants actually serve as a "business school" for many young people who eventually move on to more challenging careers. In fact, a recent ad campaign featured distinguished graduates of the Brady Keys "School of Practical Experience:

Keys's current projects include real estate development, a video game company, a mining and brokering business, and a movie production company. In the process of selling these ideas, he uses his speaking skills to present his ideas to potential investors, to build goodwill in the communities where he operates, and to motivate his employees.

*Your Mission:* As a member of the Keys Group's public relations department, you help Brady Keys plan some of the speeches he delivers to employees and to business, professional, and civic groups. For the following assignments, choose the best solution and be prepared to explain your choice.

1. Keys has agreed to give a 20-minute talk in Albany, Georgia, to a group of approximately 35 businesspeople who meet for lunch and networking on a monthly basis. The president of the group has suggested that Keys deal with the topic of franchising. Which of the following purposes do you think he should try to accomplish?

- a. To inform the audience about the history of franchising in America
- b. To inspire members of the audience to buy a franchise
- c. To entertain the audience with stories about Keys's franchising experiences
- d. To analyze the impact of national franchises on small, independently owned local businesses

2. Keys has asked you to help plan a ten-minute speech that he can give to his KFC employees during the annual summer picnic.

He expects up to 1,000 employees to attend. His topic is "the state of the company." His purpose is to inspire employees to keep up the good work. His main idea is that the Keys Group is doing an excellent job in meeting the competition, thanks to the efforts of the workers. What general organizational scheme do you recommend for developing this idea?

- a. Chronological: Highlights of company performance over the past year and outlook for the future

b. Geographical: Performance, problems, and opportunities in each of the 11 KFC outlets  
c. Topical: Achievements of various types .of employees such as store managers, kitchen workers, order takers, maintenance workers, and so on

d. Comparison and contrast: KFC versus Boston Chicken and other fast-food competitors

3. Keys is trying to persuade a group of investors to put some money into his new movie production company. He has pre-pared a presentation that describes the company's goals, activi-ties, and financial prospects. He is currently wrestling with the introduction to the presentation. Which of the following intro-ductions would you recommend?

a. Years ago, when I opened my first restaurant, I knew I had to do something to attract business. So I said to myself, why not try some TV advertising? I was operating on a shoe-string, so I decided to write, produce, direct, and star in the commercial myself. If I'd had more money and more sense, I probably wouldn't have taken on the job, but lacking both money and experience, I was willing to try anything. Any-way, once I got started, I discovered that making commer-cials isn't really all that tricky. All you need is a little money, a little equipment, a little imagination, and a little luck. And Bingo! You're in business. I've made a lot of my own commercials since then, and I've thoroughly enjoyed the process.

That's one of the reasons I decided to get into the movie business. I said to myself, "Brady, if making commercials is fun, imagine what a ball you can have making movies." But fun is only one reason to start a movie production com-pany. My principal motive is making money. And that's what I want to talk to you about today: how you can make money in the movie business.

b. In the last ten years, the number of movie screens in the United States has increased by 50 percent, to nearly 25,000. Those screens are all designed to do one thing: show films. But the major studios cannot possibly provide enough films to fill all these new theaters. As a result, a new breed of in-dependent filmmaker is springing up, many of whom are far more profitable than their larger rivals.

I'd like to talk to you today about how you can participate in this exciting business opportunity. I think you will be intrigued by the potential payoff and the relatively lim-ited risk involved. I'll begin by giving you a little back-ground on the revolution currently under way in the movie industry. Then I'll describe the film production company that I'm forming in partnership with actor Leon Issac Kennedy. After you've heard our strategy and plans, I'll brief you on the returns that you could expect on your in-vestment in my business.

c. When's the last time you went to the movies? And when did you last see a film on HBO or network TV? What about videocassettes? Have you rented any of them lately?

If you're like most people, you're hooked on movies, whether you see them in theaters or on TV. Somebody is making all those movies, and it isn't necessarily Paramount or Walt Disney. Many of the films you see are created by in-dependent companies.

Starting an independent film production company requires relatively little capital and the financial returns can be con-siderable. If you're careful you can whip out a low-budget film for as little as \$2 million. Even if you don't do well at the box office, you can still



clear maybe \$3 or \$4 million from the TV rights and videocassette sales. Multiply that by, say, ten movies per year, and you have a \$30 to \$40 million business.

d. Who wouldn't jump at the chance to rub shoulders with Jennifer Jason Leigh, Spike Lee, Julia Roberts, Tom Cruise, Winona Ryder, Denzel Washington, Martin Lawrence, Michael Keaton, Marisa Tomei, and all the other box-office stars of the 1990s? Well those are just some of the famous actors you'll meet when you visit the movie production company we're going to build together. Notice that I said "when" and not "if." After you've heard my speech today, you'll agree that there's no better place to invest your cash than in our movie production company.

Although you'll be happy you made this investment, we all know that money isn't everything. You'll also have the prestige of working on Hollywood's most exciting movies with the biggest names in the business. Give me your attention for a few minutes as I talk about the movies we're considering right now.

4. In his role as chairman of the board of the Albany Civic Center Commission, Keys must give a speech outlining the center's financial position. The audience will include other board members, the mayor and members of the city council, and a group of 15 to 20 influential business and professional people. How should he handle the quantitative financial details?

- a. He should prepare handouts that summarize the financial data in tabular and graphic form. As the audience arrives, he should give everyone a copy of the handout and refer to it during the speech.
- b. Keys should write the information on a blackboard while he delivers the speech.
- c. He should prepare simple overhead transparencies to use during the speech. As he concludes his remarks, he should tell the audience that detailed financial statements are available at the door for those who are interested.
- d. Given the size and importance of the audience, he should show full-color 35-mm slides that summarize the financial information in tabular and graphic format. The slides should be professionally prepared to ensure their quality.

### **Critical Thinking Questions**

1. Would you rather (a) give a speech to an outside audience, (b) be interviewed for a news story, or (c) make a presentation to a departmental meeting? Why? How do the communication skills differ in each situation? Explain.
2. How might the audience's attitude affect the amount of audience interaction during or after a presentation? Explain your answer.
3. Have you ever attended a presentation or a speech in which the speaker's style seemed inappropriate? What effect did that style have on the audience? Briefly explain.
4. What similarities and differences would you expect to see in the introduction to a formal presentation and the introduction to a formal report? Explain.
5. What problems could result from using visual aids during your speech?
6. From the speaker's perspective, what are the advantages and disadvantages of responding to questions from the audience throughout a speech or presentation? From the listener's perspective, which approach would you prefer? Why?

## Exercise

1. For many years, Toastmasters has been dedicated to helping its members give speeches. Instruction, good speakers as models, and practice sessions aim to teach members to convey information in lively and informative ways. Visit the Toastmasters Web site at <[http://www. Toastmasters.com](http://www.Toastmasters.com)> and carefully review the linked pages about listening, speaking, voice, and body. Evaluate the information and outline a three-minute presentation to your class telling why Toastmasters and its Web site would or would not help you and your classmates write and deliver an effective speech.
2. Attend a speech at your school or in your area, or watch a speech on television. Categorize the speech as one that motivates or en-tertains, one that informs or analyzes, or one that persuades or urges collaboration. Then compare the speaker's delivery and use of visual aids with the Checklist for Speeches and Oral Pre-sentations. Write a two-page report analyzing the speaker's per-formance and suggesting improvements.
3. Analyze the speech given by someone introducing the main speaker at an awards ceremony, a graduation, or some other special occasion. Does the speech fit the occasion and grab attention? Is it related to the audience's interests? How well does the speech motivate the audience to listen to the featured speaker? Does the speech provide the information necessary for the audi-ence to understand, respect, and appreciate the speaker's back-ground and viewpoint? Put yourself in the shoes of the person who made that introduction. Draft a brief (two-minute) speech that prepares the audience for the featured speaker.
4. Which media would you use for the visual aids that accompany each of the following speeches? Explain your answers.
  - a. An informal ten-minute speech explaining the purpose of a new training program to 300 assembly-line employees
  - b. An informal ten-minute speech explaining the purpose of a new training program to five vice presidents
  - c. A formal five- minute presentation explaining the purpose of a new training program to the company's 12-member board of directors
  - d. A formal five-minute speech explaining the purpose of a new company-training program to 35 members of the press
5. With three classmates, practice audience analysis by analyzing the audience of a particular television program. Note the age, gender, race, marital status, relationships, and occupations of the characters. Also pay attention to the commercials that run during the program. On the basis of these clues, who do you think watches this program? Now choose a topic that this audi-ence is likely to feel strongly about. How would you prepare a speech on that topic if you thought the audience would proba-bly be hostile? What would you do differently if you

thought the audience would be sympathetic? Present your group's analysis to the class, and defend your answers.

6. Select one of the following main ideas and outline a brief (three- to five-minute) persuasive speech to your business communication class.
  - a. As a requirement for graduation, every college student should demonstrate proficiency in basic writing skills by passing a standardized national test.
  - b. College students should be allowed access to their confidential academic records at least once a year and, if they choose, to submit a written statement disputing or correcting information in the files.
  - c. Rather than ask all students to pay an activities fee to support campus sports, require only those students who participate pay a special sports fee.
  - d. The campus computer laboratory should remain open 24 hours a day throughout the week to give students the opportunity to complete their assignments at their own convenience.
  - e. All college students should be required to complete a period of community service during their junior or senior year.