

LESSON-32

THE IMPRESSION YOU MAKE

When you stand before others to, after information, ideas, or guidance, you are acting as a leader. The functions of public speaking and leading are closely” connected. You may never have thought of yourself as a leader, but as you develop’ your speaking ability, you will also be growing in leadership potential.

Both leading and’ communicating begin with listeners forming favor-able impressions based” on perceptions of competence, integrity, likable-ness, and forcefulness. The this section we explore ways you can convey these desirable qualities of *ethos*.

Competence.

Competent speakers seem informed, intelligent, and well prepared. You can appear to be competent only if you know what you are talking about. People listen more respectfully to those who speak from both knowledge and experience. You can build a perception of competence by selecting topics that you already know something about and by doing sufficient re-search to qualify yourself as a responsible speaker.’

You can further enhance your competence by citing authoritative sources who are qualified by training or experience as experts on a topic. For example, if you are speaking on the link between nutrition and heart dis-ease, you might quote a prominent” medical specialist or a publication of the American Heart Association: “Dr. Milas Peterson heads the Heart Institute at Harvard University. Last week in his visit to our campus, he told me.”Note the factors of effectiveness here:

- The speaker has cited the qualifications of the expert, including his con-nection with a prestigious institution.
- The quotation is recent, suggesting that it contains the latest informa-tion on the subject.
- The connection between the expert and the speaker is direct and per-sonal, suggesting a favorable association.

When you cite authoritative sources in this way, you- are in effect “borrow-ing” their ethos to enhance your own as you strengthen the points you make in the speech. Remember, though, that “borrowed” ethos enhances but does not replace *your* ethos. Personal experience related as stories or examples can also help a speech seem authentic, bring it to life, and make you seem more competent. ‘I’ve lived this myself” can be a very dramatic technique. Your competence will be further enhanced if your speech is well organized, if you use language ably and correctly, and if you have practiced your presentation.

Integrity

A speaker who conveys integrity appears ethical, honest, and dependable. Listeners ‘are more receptive when speakers are straightforward, responsi-ble, and concerned about the

consequences of their words. You can enhance your integrity by presenting all sides of an issue and then explaining why you have chosen your position. It also helps if you can show that you are willing to follow your own advice. In a speech that calls for commitment or action, it should be clear to listeners that you are not asking more of them than you would of yourself. The more you ask of the audience, the more important your integrity becomes.

Let us look at how integrity can be conveyed in a speech. Mona Goldberg was preparing a speech on welfare reform. The more she learned about the subject, the more convinced she became that budget cuts for welfare programs were unwise. In her speech Mona showed that she took her assignment seriously by citing many authorities and statistics. She reviewed arguments both for and against cutting the budget and then showed her audience why she was against reducing aid to such social programs. Finally, Mona revealed that her own family had had to live on unemployment benefits at one time. "I know the hurt, the loss of pride, the sense of growing frustration. I didn't have to read about them in the library." Her candor showed that she was willing to trust her listeners to react fairly to this sensitive information. The audience responded in kind by trusting her and what she had to say. She had built an impression of herself as a person of integrity.

This example also shows how a "halo effect" can cause competence and integrity to be linked in judgments of credibility.¹ Speakers who rank high in one quality may get positive evaluations in the other.

Likableness

Speakers who receive high marks for likableness seem to radiate goodness and good will and inspire audience affection in return. True likableness comes only when the speaker really cares about the audience and is willing and able to adapt his or her message to meet audience needs. Audiences are more willing to accept ideas and suggestions from speakers they like. A smile and direct eye contact can signal listeners that you want to communicate. Likable speakers share their feelings as well as their thoughts. They enjoy laughter at appropriate moments, especially laughter at themselves. Being able to talk openly and engagingly about your mistakes can make you seem more human and appealing.

The more likable speakers seem, the more audiences want to identify with them.² Identification is the feeling of sharing or dowerless that can develop between speakers and listeners despite different cultural backgrounds. Audiences may identify with speakers who talk or press the way they do. Audiences also respond well to speakers who use gestures, language, and facial expressions that are natural and unaffected. When talking to an audience, you should speak a little more formally than you do in everyday conversation, but not much more. Similarly, you should dress well for your speech, but not extravagantly, just simply and nicely. although superficial, these identification factors can be important. You not want to create distance between yourself and listeners by language dress that seems either too formal or too casual.

When there are obvious cultural differences between the audience and the speaker, identification may yet be built on shared experiences, values, or beliefs. In such

situations, speakers can invite identification by telling stories or by using examples that help listeners focus on what they share in common. Such stories may also help the audience appreciate their differences. For example, Jimmy Green's tales of his outdoor life helped his audience understand both him and his background. By educating them and engaging their interest, he bridged the gap between his rural background and their urban experiences.

Forcefulness

Anne Gilbert, who introduced Spider Lock ridge as both poet and football player, later confessed to us that before her speech she lacked confidence, was not sure how her speech would be received, and worried that she might make a mistake. But when Anne walked in front of the room to speak, she seemed confident, decisive, and enthusiastic. In short, she conveyed the qualities of forcefulness. Whatever she might have secretly felt, her listeners responded only to what they saw and gave her high marks for her sense of command. You will also be forceful if you convey qualities of confidence, decisiveness, and enthusiasm.

At first you may not feel confident about public speaking, but it is important for you to appear *so*. If you seem self-assured, listeners will respond to you as though you are, and you may find yourself becoming what you appear to be. In other words, you can trick yourself into developing a very desirable characteristic! When you appear in control of the situation, "you also help put your listeners at ease. This feeling comes back to you as positive feedback and further reinforces your confidence. One of our students, John Scipio, was at first a bit intimidated by his public speaking class, but John was blessed with two natural virtues: he was a large, imposing person with a powerful voice. And then he found a subject he truly believed in. When John presented his impressive classroom tribute to, Dr., Martin Luther King, jr.'s final speech, he radiated force, in addition to competence, liability, and integrity:

When I asked him during a telephone interview why he thought Dr. King was such an effective leader, Ralph Abernathy said, "He possessed a power never before seen in a man of color." What was this power that he spoke of? It was the power to persuade audiences and change opinions with his words. It was the power of speech. . . . In this speech, Dr. King had to give these people hope and motivate them to go on. . . . He spoke to all of us; but "especially to those of us in the black community, when he said, "Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars." And when he talked of standing up to the fire hoses in Birmingham, he said "There's a certain kind of fire that no water can put out." And on the, last night of his life, with less than twenty-four hours to live, he was still thinking of our nation: "Let us move on," he said, "in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. "Dr. King's oratorical brilliance is personified in this, his last speech. Many can be referred to as "speaker, " but only a select few have earned the title of "orator." Dr. King was truly an orator.

To appear forceful, you must also be decisive. In persuasive speeches, you should consider all the important options available to your audience, but there should be no doubt by the end of the speech where you stand and why. Your commitment to your position must be strong.

Finally, you gain 'forcefulness from the enthusiasm you bring to your speech. *Your face, voice, and gestures should indicate that you care about your subject and about the audience. Your enthusiasm endorses your message.* We discuss more specific ways of developing 'confidence, decisive-ness, and' enthusiasm in speech presentations at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 11.