

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Participant's Workbook



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Developed for:



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PUBLIC SPEAKING

Preface:

Welcome to one in a series of individualized Optimist International Skills Development Modules. Our goal is to help you, our members, learn and apply practical skills to deal with the opportunities and issues in your life. This series of modules is not designed to deal with "theoretical" issues, but rather to provide a practical "hands on" approach.

Each of these modules is to be used, written in and applied. You can learn skills on your own, or join with others in a collaborative learning venture. Each module contains an instructor's guide in addition to a separate participant's guide which can be duplicated as often as necessary to supply the needs of your Club members.

Future modules will deal with individual as well as group-oriented skills, all of which are designed to help individual Optimists enhance their personal leadership ability in any chosen field of activity, i.e., employment, home, school, and volunteer activities. This is a significant development for our organization in its service to its own members, and we hope that participants will provide feedback about each module to the International Headquarters (c/o Leadership Development). In this way, we can maintain our focus on providing meaningful leadership training to Districts, Clubs and individuals throughout our Optimist organization.

We truly hope you enjoy the journey to self-improvement.

INTRODUCTION

I'd rather die than give a speech! How many times have you heard that phrase uttered? Have you ever made the statement or at least thought it?

You're not alone in your feelings. One version of the "Book of Lists" identifies speaking before a group as the greatest human fear. The list includes - heights, insects, snakes, sickness and even death. Death, as a matter of fact, comes in seventh place on the list - so when people say they would rather die than give a speech, THEY ARE SERIOUS!

Why, then, do people like me, a professional speaker enjoy the platform? We are really not sick or masochistic. Indeed, many professionals are as scared in front of an audience as some of you. Other speakers, including me, come from a performance background and enjoy being in front of people. That is not to say we aren't nervous; of course we are. But the nervousness is good for us and shows that we are concerned. This module provides steps to help deal with these fears.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Upon completing this module, participants should be able to prepare and give a short presentation to an Optimist meeting (or other similar group of their choice).

The participant will be able to break the overall presentation into small steps which can more easily be accomplished while striving to achieve the main goal of actually giving the presentation.

NOTE TO OPTIMIST MEMBER...This workbook will not discuss research of a topic or expertise. It is assumed you will be knowledgeable on your topic or do appropriate study. This workbook is designed to help you in improving your presentation skills.

LESSON DESCRIPTION

This module will cover. . .

- tips in preparing for a presentation,
- presentation format (including openings and closings),
- tips for just prior to actually presenting,
- things to do and not to do while giving the presentation and
- handling questions.

PHASE 1 - PREPARING FOR A PRESENTATION

Preparation goes a long way in helping overcome the fear of giving a speech or presentation. The more prepared a person is, the more confident one becomes. This confidence is then translated into a relaxed presentation to the audience.

Have you ever seen or heard a speaker who is unprepared? Did he/she appear knowledgeable? Confident? Were you excited about their message? Or were you insulted because the speaker didn't think enough of you and the other audience members to do his/her homework? More than likely the latter! Even if that wasn't true.

The preparation steps outlined below may, at first glance, seem more difficult than actually giving the speech. But in reality these items, in many cases, will be covered in just a matter of minutes. Other situations might actually require hours invested in the preparing phase, but this investment will pay dividends.

Question 1 - WHAT

The first question to ask is: "What is the purpose of the presentation?" Purposes might include:

- a) To inform
- b) To entertain
- c) To convince
- d) To call to action

Let's define each of these in a little more detail...

a) To inform - This could be an announcement at an Optimist Club meeting of a project or activity. Or it could be a lecture or report with little or no interaction.

Can you think of other examples?

b) To entertain - Normally this type of presentation is done by comedians, humorists, hypnotists, etc. who are considered professional entertainers.

List other examples:

c) To convince - The best example of this type of presentation is the debate. Today we see this frequently in the political arena.

List other examples:

d) To call to action - This type of presentation could be anything from a President of the U.S. seeking a vote to a person asking for contributions, to you asking Club members to help out working or selling tickets.

List other examples:

Presentations most often cover more than one of the purposes, but this purpose question is necessary to answer before you proceed. Presentations will be different in a situation where you only inform (e.g. instructor) than in one where you only entertain (e.g. after dinner speaker). Take a minute to decide the purpose(s) of your presentation.

Audiences and speakers sometimes lose sight of the fact that the speaker is normally not the information or the message - but is a conduit for the transmittal of that message. We have all heard the phrase - "don't shoot the messenger"? We do, however, sometimes have a difficult time separating the two. But the role of a speaker is to create an environment where the transfer of information can effectively take place, and then be that conduit for the information. Creating the environment may differ depending on the presentation purpose. For example, it would probably not be appropriate to begin a presentation on employee cutbacks with a joke. Knowing the purpose can help determine much of what must follow.

Question 2 - WHO

The second question to be asked is "Who is my audience?" We can answer the question by doing some basic audience analysis. Several questions can be asked to help define your audience. Whom do you ask? Whoever asked you to speak, or as we call it in the speaking industry - the Meeting Planner. You may know most of these answers yourself, but the exercise of thinking about them helps prepare.

a) What is the audience make up - is it All men, All women, Both? Are they Older, Younger, A Variety? Examples used in the presentation must be relative to the audience where possible.

Note any other questions you might ask . . .

b) What is the audience knowledge of the topic? Is there diversity? Do I have to be very basic, or assume they already know about the information to some extent?

Are there other pertinent questions that need to be asked?

c) What is the audience attitude? This usually applies more to business audiences than service clubs since many times audiences are “sent” by their bosses (e.g. employee training, United Way presentations). It is usually good to start with statements like - “Well, I know most of you have volunteered to hear me give this presentation, so thanks.” or “I sat in a chair similar to yours last year and asked ‘What in the world am I doing here?’ - maybe some of you can relate to that.” This lends to your credibility and relationship with the group.

Can you think of any other questions or ideas?

Question 3 - WHEN

What are the situational elements? What time of day is the presentation - Early, Late, Right after lunch? This can help you decide if you want to use slides or not, or if humor or audience involvement might be helpful to keep up interest. After a meal and late sessions are usually the most difficult to keep audience attention. A variation of presentation formats (e.g. slides or movie), audience involvement activities (ask them questions on the subject to get their input) and use of appropriate humor are all ideas which might improve the presentation chances for success.

Can you list any other situational elements to consider?

Question 4 - WHERE

What type of room or facility is being used? - Can everyone see visuals? Is a microphone needed? Is half the audience facing away from you? (circular tables) Are there distractions in the room (e.g. waiters or waitresses cleaning up)? Is there noise adjacent to the facility which could be distracting? Are the lights easily dimmed or shut off?

List any other distractions you may have seen or encountered:

NOTE TO PARTICIPANT. . . It is not always possible to change facilities. Being aware of the problems or shortcomings in advance helps you to alter your presentation to cope with the problems to the best of your ability. It is OK to politely ask for changes but demanding them at the last minute only gets you off on the wrong foot.

This presentation phase may appear to be very significant, but many situations will take only a few minutes to plan. Other situations may take longer preparation but end result will be a more effective presentation.

PHASE 2 - PRESENTATION FORMAT

No matter what the length of a presentation, it has a basic five-part format which should be used.

A. Part 1 - Opening

It is essential to have something which will grab the audience's attention. It could be a question (e.g. What is the greatest fear people have?), or it could be a statement, true of course, (e.g. Over ½ of you have the potential to be affected by ? in your lifetime.), or a story or joke could be used. **BUT BE CAREFUL HERE!** The old saying that makes the circle of professional speakers is the response to the question, "Should I use humor?" The response "Only if you want to be paid." Professional speakers work days, weeks and months practicing humor, stories or personal life revelations to maximize effectiveness. The professional speaker may seem very casual in his/her delivery but rest assured that came about after much effort. If you feel confident using a joke or story, by all means to ahead. A personal story is usually best because the chances are no one has heard it yet. With a joke, you may use one already told by a previous speaker. Additionally the opening should relate to the overall topic being discussed - not just a joke for humor sake. Some speakers including me, use music in openings because it is unique and helps audiences remember the message. Music should be relative to the topic being discussed, however.

B. Part 2 - Tell the group what it is you plan to tell them

"I'm here to discuss the three main reasons why Optimists don't volunteer."

How many points should be conveyed in a speech? Three to five depending on length. Five is OK if the presentation is an hour or longer but even then three is better. In a shorter program one or two key points should be made. I have heard a speaker give me thirty ideas in thirty minutes but I don't remember any of them.

C. Part 3 - Tell them your key points

Here you should cover the basic meat of your presentation. (e.g. "Reason number one in my opinion is that no one asks members to volunteer"), etc. Depending on the presentation length, key points can be illustrated or reinforced with stories, material or examples.

D. Part 4 - Tell them what you told them

Don't worry about repetition. Why not? Most of us can listen at rates up to 640 words per minute but speakers speak at about 180 words a minute with gusts up to 240. So the listener has the ability to take little side trips to worry about what is going on at home; what should I do tonight; can I really afford this program; did I shut off the coffee pot, etc. People usually do take these little visits but the good news is, they do return. So to get your key points across by repetition is usually good and sometimes even necessary. (e.g. "So in summary, I explained the three basic reasons for lack of volunteerism are . . . , etc.")

CAUTION - Of course, common sense must be used. If you have a three minute speech - you wouldn't spend as much time on Part 1 and 2 and Part 4 as you would on Part 3 or the key message. But if the key points are being reinforced in your presentation by stories, or examples, then repetition helps reinforce these key messages.

E. Part 5 - The closing

This is the last but maybe the most important thing most audiences hear and thus becomes a key point in the retention of your message. Several closings are possible. A joke might be used but if you decide this is the method, see the discussion about humor in Part 1.

Another possible closing might be a personal story that relates to the topic, such as how you were asked to be involved in Optimism and what it has meant in your life. A poem is another powerful closing. I personally use several including one called "Anyway" about handling all kinds of people and adversities. In my time management program I use a writing entitled "Take Time" which covers the important things in life we should take time to do. Or occasionally I use one called "The Man In The Glass" which, in verse form, says you can't fool yourself in your life's effort even if you fool all others around you.

Whatever you decide to do, it should also be related to your topic in some way, and be powerful enough to help your audience relate to you and your message. Libraries and book stores have numerous books with poems, stories or jokes for speeches.

Summary Activity

Are there any openings, closings or other techniques you might consider for yourself?

As you speak more and more, it will become essential that you begin to write down stories or jokes you want to keep for future use. By card file, or computer you can assign categories or topics to these stories for future use. I have a friend in North Carolina who is famous for her journals. Every day she finds one humorous or personal event, saying or story that she can enter into her journal (computerized) and retrieve when developing a speech. You may not be quite to that point yet, but all of us have heard a good story or have had a great event happen to us which eventually slips from memory if not captured.

PHASE 3 - TIPS JUST PRIOR TO PRESENTING

We have covered most of the preparation work. Now it's time to get ready to actually deliver your presentation. There are a few tips which you can follow just before presenting which might make your overall performance easier.

- a) Don't eat or drink dairy products just before speaking. Being a Wisconsin person, it hurts me to say this, but dairy products leave a coating which tends to dry out the throat and mouth during a presentation.
- b) Never drink alcohol before speaking. Even if someone wants to buy you a drink at a cocktail party - best to take a raincheck. Many a good program was ruined by slurred words or a slip of the tongue. Enough said . . .
- c) Drink warm liquids - not cold. Cold liquids tend to contract the throat muscles, making speaking difficult. Warm water, tea or coffee tend to relax the throat muscles making speech easier. That's why I always wonder why speakers keep reaching for ice water on the platform. It may help the dryness, but doesn't do much for tightness.
- d) Be nervous - all speakers have butterflies, but the professional speaker learns to have them fly in formation; you can too! Being nervous is natural and means you care. When professionals stop being nervous, they feel it is time to quit. But they don't let the nervousness show. In other words - "Never let them see you sweat." How? One way is to take deep breaths in through the nose and out the mouth. Don't hyperventilate - just breathe easy. Some other tips I have heard include walking, praying, thinking of a loved one, smiling, exercising, stretching and visualizing how your program will go. Common sense again prevails. While sitting at a head table,

exercising or stretching might not work. But find something that works for you and use it to help train those butterflies.

- e) Show up early for your presentation - Check on the room arrangements - Does the microphone work? Is everything OK or what do I have to do to adapt? Is the projector working? What else should I check?

List any other suggestions you have which might work for you just prior to presenting:

PHASE 4 - TOO LATE NOW

The time for your program has arrived. You hear your name being announced - Is it too late to duck out? - When I go to the lectern should I just keep on walking out the exit door? Or what if I just say that since we are running late, I'll forfeit my time to someone else. Can I think of any other good reason not to do this? We all have experienced most or all of these feelings at some time in our life. But you are prepared. You have done all those things we talked about above. You are ready! Well, not quite. There are some Do's and Don't's for when you are "on stage" or "on the platform." Let's talk about the Do's first.

DO

1. Be sincerely enthused as you begin - I say sincerely because I have seen speakers who were so over enthused their phoniness kept spilling out. But be enthused. In sales training we teach that selling is a transfer of feeling. And that is what you are doing - selling. Selling a message. Selling yourself. How can you ask an audience to be excited about you or your topic if you are not. The majority of audiences really want you to succeed as a speaker - Why? Remember back on Page 1 we said speaking was one of the greatest fears people have. When they are the audience they are glad it is you up there and not them.

WHAT CAN I DO TO BE ENTHUSED?

2. **Smile**

This helps relax you and your audience and helps with that enthusiastic feeling. A smile costs little but gives so much. Try it!

3. Use Natural Gestures - I'm sure we may have all been taught (in some of our speech classes) specific effective gestures to use. But some people look too much like they are doing a military drill which distracts from their message. You don't want to look stiff and programmed. Instead be very natural in your gestures and movements.

CAUTION: We sometimes do things naturally that might be distracting to others. One way to determine this is to have a friend, or instructor observe you while speaking to see if this might be the case. Even better have someone videotape your performance so you can see your gestures. View the tape with another person because what affects us might affect an audience differently. Gestures I need to avoid . . .

Gestures I should use more . . .

4. Use Voice Variations - This applies to both rate and volume. Nothing is more boring than a speaker who drones on and on in a monotone voice without any variation in voice. To avoid this, and to keep people from taking the side trips we talked about in Phase 2, speed up or slow down to emphasize points. Or raise your voice (don't yell - just raise your voice) to illustrate your message. Two other very effective variations are the whisper and the pause. During a presentation, if you lower your voice to a whisper, people become very conscious of you and your message and even lean forward to catch your thought. The pause also works in several situations. If people are noisy or seem not to be paying attention, pausing refocuses them to you. A pause works equally well just prior to making a significant point since again it refocuses your audience.
5. Involve Your Audience - The most successful speakers make their audiences feel like they are part of the presentation, not a target. As mentioned in Phase 2 regarding openings, a question might be a way to get them involved. The type and length of involvement will vary greatly depending on the length of the presentation. Even in a short speech, however, the question "How many of you _____?" is a way to have some involvement. As you become more experienced and comfortable, the use of your audience as part of your presentation will be more natural and will enhance your presentation effectiveness.

What question or method could I use in my presentation?

6. Use Good Posture - Remember that teacher you had who entwined him/herself all around the lectern? Sure made you want to learn, didn't it? Have you ever seen a speaker lean over a lectern? Sit backwards in a chair? Lean on a wall? It does happen! Use of videotape or a friend/instructor can help you determine if improvement is needed in your posture, even if not to the extremes mentioned here.

When I present make sure I do/don't do:

7. Make eye contact with your audience. - Many of us previously learned that to overcome nervousness in front of an audience we should look at a clock on the back wall or pick a spot over everyone's head. Some speakers feel more comfortable with their head buried in notes at the lectern. But how do you feel when you talk to someone and they constantly avoid eye contact? Do you feel like they might be hiding something or are dishonest? Speakers can have the same problem. By making contact with members of your audience they'll feel you are speaking only to them. This will not only increase the effectiveness of your presentation, but will demonstrate your sincerity and that of your message.

CAUTION - Speakers seem to have a tendency to focus on one specific part of an audience. Those who move around usually favor one side or the other while speakers who remain at a lectern look straight out - not side to side. If you want to include the entire audience you must practice making eye contact with all audience members equally. A videotape or instructor observation will also be helpful in determining if you have a dominant audience focus.

While presenting I have to make sure I look at the _____ of the audience as well.

8. Use handouts only if appropriate. - If you are doing a long presentation and you want people to take notes, some form of study guide might be acceptable. The majority of the time, however, speakers have too little time but still want to share a lot of information, or want the audience to take something with them for future reference. Handouts are fine in either case since they help reinforce the message.

CAUTION 1 - This caution may seem like a contradiction, but don't give an audience a handout prior to your speaking if they might spend the time reading it instead of listening to you. Unless you plan to use the handout or refer to it in the presentation, give it out after you are finished or at least closer to the end of the presentation.

CAUTION 2 - Don't read the handout material to the audience - refer them to key points during your presentation.

9. Dress Appropriately - This is always a difficult decision for a speaker. Most professionals prefer to dress primarily in business attire. But speakers also don't want to overdress to distract from their message. Here are just a few suggestions for you to consider.

- a) Business dress is seldom unacceptable
- b) Always err on the upside - never underdress
- c) Don't let your appearance detract from your message

The speaker is looked upon as having knowledge to share, or is a celebrity, etc. For that reason a good rule of thumb is to dress one level above the audience. If an audience is in casual attire, a sport coat or dress might be considered very acceptable. Remember that speakers never get a second chance to make a first impression and audiences usually see the speaker long before they hear the message. Don't dress such that your audience has formed a negative impression before you ever speak.

When presenting I should wear the following:

10. Be Yourself - You cannot be Zig Ziglar, Tony Robbins, Barbara Walters, Tom Peters or any other great speaker you might admire. Why do you enjoy these speakers? Because they are who they are and it comes out in their programs. When you get up to speak and try to be someone else, usually someone will say "He/she is trying to sound or look like _____." The tip here is to spend the time being - not someone else - but the very best you can be.

When presenting make sure I don't try to be too much like:

Here are a few Don't's . . .

- 1) Don't use inappropriate humor. It should go without saying that nationally known people violate this rule. No matter how great your presentation, improper humor will destroy its effectiveness. Someone is usually going to be offended when ethnic or foul humor is used. I've heard men say, "Well

it was just the guys.” but why lower the quality of your message unnecessarily? Humor focused on you and true stories work the best.

- 2) Don't pick on people in the audience without permission. I have seen speakers attempt to involve an audience by poking fun at a CEO or meeting planner without getting permission. The result has ranged from people actually walking out of a room to the speaker not being rebooked in that company or industry again. Picking on yourself is best but if you want to use someone in the audience, ask them in advance.
- 3) Don't apologize for anything except being late. I have heard people get up and start a program by saying, “I'm really not a very good speaker.” Then WHY SHOULD WE LISTEN TO YOU, is my question. Get someone who is good. Or another great excuse is, “I'm sorry that I'm not really prepared.” WHY NOT? DID THEY CALL YOU TODAY? Or “I know these slides are not very readable,” THEN DON'T USE THEM. I could go on and on about the topic, but a general rule is - if you think you have to make an excuse in the talk - fix it before the talk. That includes everything from being prepared with extra bulbs for projectors to having sufficient copies of handout material. If you don't have enough copies don't even bother to bring them out.

People don't know what you plan to say, so everything you say will be the first time they heard it that day (hopefully). Don't start out apologizing - fix it first.

- 4) Don't read your presentation. This is a controversial subject for some people. It is my feeling that rather than read a speech, give a copy to the audience and let them read it themselves. Audiences are usually insulted when someone reads a speech stumbling over words, etc. People do become very good at reading speeches, (TV people, politicians) which don't sound as if they are being read. But until you acquire the skill level to read in a conversational tone, use notes or key ideas to help keep you on track.
- 5) Don't use “UH” or “YOU KNOW”. We have all heard people inject these phrases every few words and it is very distracting. During speech training workshops I count these phrases and give the number to the speaker at the end. Most of them don't believe the frequency because it has become a habit. When they see a videotape of their speech and finally agree with me, they are amazed at how distracting these phrases can become. Using your own videotape or having your instructor observe you, make sure you work hard to avoid these or other distracting phrases.

During my presentation I have the tendency to use _____

PHASE 5 - WHAT A DUMB QUESTION!

That phrase sometimes crosses a speaker's mind right after giving (in their mind) a great speech and having someone ask about something they just covered. We have to learn that . . .

- 1) There are no dumb questions.
- 2) Maybe we didn't cover the material as well as we thought, particularly if more than one person had a similar question.
- 3) Even if it is a dumb question, other members of the audience know it and want to see how you respond. If you insult the questioner, the audience will usually rally to the person in their group even if it was a dumb question. Handle the question sincerely and professionally and the audience will respect you even more.

Questions and how you respond can go a long way in helping you with audiences, but it can backfire. How? I've seen speakers demonstrate, during Q & A, a shallow knowledge of the subject they just addressed. Or I have seen speakers give a warm enthusiastic speech but then turn cold and unresponsive in question responses.

A good Q & A session is like a critique - Did the presentation stir interest? Did my key points hit home? Was I believable or did I offend?

You also can reinforce your message or cover areas not covered in your program when responding to questions.

Here are a few tips to help you be better on your feet during Q & A:

- 1) Repeat or restate questions. This accomplishes several objectives:
 - a) Makes sure the entire audience heard it.
 - b) Assures the questioner you understand the question.
 - c) Gives you time to think of your response.
- 2) Be factual. Don't speculate - This usually leads to trouble. Answer questions with factual information and don't be afraid to say, "I don't want to speculate on what might happen but here is what I know for sure."
- 3) Try to avoid using yes or no first. Why? - Because any explanation or clarification is lost on the audience. You want to answer the question but questions such as, "Answer Yes or No, Do you still cheat on your spouse?" cannot be answered

correctly in any case. If the question is truly answerable with a yes or no go ahead! But if clarification is needed - give clarification first and then say it is partially yes, no or whatever.

- 4) Don't criticize the question by verbal or nonverbal gesture. Rolling eyes and shaking heads say more than words. No matter what the question, look at the questioner, acknowledge the question and answer. Even if you have to say, "That question is inappropriate," or some similar phrase, don't appear to attack the questioner personally.
- 5) Be confident. You want to appear as confident during a Q & A session as you do during a presentation. Deep breaths, smiling appropriately and taking time to think about answers are all ways to keep a confident appearance during questions.
- 6) Admit you don't know. (Hopefully this is not about a basic point of your talk, however.) There are people who will answer a question even though they haven't a clue if it is correct. This is not a good idea! Audiences understand that speakers can't know everything and respect people who admit it. You might ask the members of the audience if someone else has an idea or answer. Or you might say you will check and get back to the questioner. If you do say that - do it or your whole presentation and your credibility might suffer.
- 7) Answer the question by restating a key point from your talk. We have seen presidential debates where the candidate answered a question with a key campaign theme totally unrelated to the question. We want to answer questions, but whenever possible you can add to your answer the phrase, "and as I mentioned in my presentation, etc." This helps the audience remember one of your key messages.

PHASE 6 - HOW DID I DO?

Every speech, and every speaker, can always be improved. That is not to say that at the time we didn't give it our best. But we should always look ahead for improvement the next time. We certainly don't anticipate doing worse, do we? Always try to analyze yourself, how you did - What would be better? What worked? What didn't?

Having an instructor observe and critique you, will help you learn things which can enhance your presentation. Another method of critique is through the use of videotape. Every presentation has a new audience and a new challenge. We are only as good as the next one, we can't rely on what we did in the past as good enough.

For that reason, we must be willing to do the three P's of presentation enhancement . . .

- 1) Practice
- 2) Practice
- 3) Practice

Speaking to a mirror, the family, the family pet, your instructor or the audience all give you opportunities to do better. Roger Ailes, a communications consultant to several presidents, says four things an audience will not forgive are . . .

- 1) Being unprepared
- 2) Not knowing your stuff
- 3) Being indifferent
- 4) Being boring.

By taking the steps outlined in this workbook and being willing to invest the effort in preparation and practice, you will not be one of the four things Mr. Ailes mentions.

GOOD LUCK!

Knock 'em Dead!

Break a Leg!

**Be the Best YOU That You
Can Be!**