

SPEAKING¹

Our stock-in-trade is public communication, be it in the classroom or among our colleagues. It should be surprising that although we spend 90% of our time communicating publicly, we spend virtually no time learning public speaking skills! The following pages offer suggestions on ways to improve the two categories of skills that comprise effective public speaking:

- a. *Content* -- what you say
- b. *Delivery* -- how you say it

I. Content:

- A. Students are busy people with a lot on their minds. In order to be effective, you must build presentations that are of benefit to them and that consider *their agenda*:
 - a. What's your point? (focus)
 - b. What's in it for me? (benefits)
 - c. Now what? (follow-up)
- B. *Focus* your content with an objective for each lecture. The more focused you are, the more successful will be your presentation. Your objective is the single most important idea you want your students to remember -- can you reduce it to a single sentence?
- C. *Lecture preparation*. Shaping a presentation without an objective produces a formless mess. To focus your communication, identify precisely what you want to accomplish, know exactly what results you desire. It is difficult to make another human being fully comprehend you. You face students with different cultural backgrounds, language skills, values, perceptions, psychologies. More times than we realize, people arrive at a conclusion entirely different from what we intended. When you communicate in-person, face-to-face, you have the opportunity to cut through these barriers. Take the time to outline a lecture that clearly leads your students to your objective:

¹For more, see the excellent book by Bob Boylan, *What's Your Point?*. New York, NY: Warner Books, 1988. Also helpful is Judy Marcus' book, *Communication Dynamics*, 1980. The following points are summarized from these sources.

- a. *Facts and analysis.* Don't bore people with facts they don't need to know.
 - b. *Benefits to the audience of achieving your objective* -- logical/emotional.
 - c. *Personal experience.* This is the most powerful content you can use. This makes you human -- more natural, empathetic, real.
- D. *The outline* -- a road map for your presentation:
- a. Objective (single sentence if possible) -- What's the point?
 - b. Agenda (tell them what you're going to tell them)
 - c. Main body (facts, analysis, benefits, personal experiences) -- What's in it for me?
 - d. Key points to remember (tell them what you told them)
 - e. Recommended actions for next week -- Now what?
 - f. Question and answer.
 - g. Summarize.

After deciding on the objective, work out the main body. List the *relevant points* you want to get across, group the points into digestible *categories*, *structure* the categories to lead students to the correct conclusions. Decide how points may best be communicated: lecture, problem solving, group exercises, personal experience, homework.

- E. *Beginnings:* a good beginning should:
- a. Establish the subject you are about to discuss (get the students focused on your objective)
 - b. Tell students why this is important -- from their perspective (people become more receptive if they think you understand what they consider important)
 - c. Preview the content of your presentation (people feel more comfortable with your leadership if you give them a road map before embarking on your journey)

Start your class by:

- a. Telling a (relevant) personal story
- b. Asking a good question
- c. Make a statement that cements mutual interest between you and your students (don't use the word "we", not "I" in this statement)

DON'T start with:

- a. Platitudes

- b. A lengthy introduction
 - c. Any notes for the first minute
- F. **Main body:** the main body of your lecture should include:
- a. Facts and analysis -- don't bore people with irrelevant material.
 - b. Mention of the benefits to your students of meeting your objective (logical/emotional)
 - c. Personal experience -- this is the most powerful content you can use. This makes you human -- more natural, empathetic, real.

People retain ~20% of what they hear, ~50% of what they hear and see, and ~90% of what they hear, see and do. Think of ways to get students involved in the learning process -- for example, develop team breakout exercises.

You provide two types of benefits to your students. The obvious are *logical* benefits -- things like improving one's grade, or clarifying the professor's lectures, or saving time in learning required material. However, there are also *psychological* motivations -- things like gaining recognition, security, pleasure, self-confidence. Students will have most of their one-on-one interaction with *you* -- use this fact to bring out the best in your students.

- G. **Endings:** make sure your lecture doesn't end with a whimper -- you want a strong, positive conclusion.
- a. Summarize the key points
 - b. Tell people what they should focus on in the upcoming week
 - c. Occasionally, the impact of your message can be increased by ending with a memorable quote.