

2. SPEECH PREPARATION ANALYSIS

2.1 PLANNING SPEECHS: Occasion The nature of the occasion will obviously have a great bearing on your speech. The occasion will dictate not only the content of your speech, but also the duration, the tone, and the expectations of your audience. For example, humor may be inappropriate during a business presentation or a eulogy, while it may be welcome during a wedding speech, or a sports event. You should also be aware of your role and any observances that you should make during your speech (For example, a Best Man ought to close his speech with a toast to the Bride and Groom).

Digging deeper, *The Occasion* is fairly self-explanatory, or so we think. But you should never stand in front of a large group of people and make a speech based on assumptions. The very first thing we must get to know before speaking in public is the occasion itself.

Perhaps you think you know the occasion and are tempted to skip to the next chapter. *It's a best man speech, what else is there to know?* you may ask. Let's have a closer look.

You've been asked to be the Best Man of a good friend who you know through work. You start thinking about the guy you know through the office, the joker, the work-related social gatherings you've attended. You figure you've got some great material for your speech. But, you think smartly, it's time to find out if there is more to the occasion. Aspects to his life of which you are not aware. You contact the groom's sister and ask whether there is anything to consider. Yes, she tells you, their mother has a grave illness and will not be able to attend the wedding. Also, the groom's brother is serving overseas and also not be able to attend the wedding.

Suddenly a simple best man speech has become something completely different. It is a bittersweet occasion due to the absence of close family. There is also serious illness in the family. You also realize that you have likely been asked to be best man due to the absence of a brother in patriotic duty overseas.

You have an idea. You contact the groom's sister and ask if she thinks the family would object to you featuring a message, a recorded message, from the groom's absent brother as part of your best man speech. She loves the idea!

The point being of course, that a speech is never just a speech. There is always an occasion, and labels such as *wedding, retirement, eulogy* do not constitute an occasion while *marriage of childhood sweethearts, retirement of much loved lifelong company man whose grandson has just joined the firm* and *eulogy for first generation immigrant, mother of four and grandmother of eleven* certainly are occasions.

Knowing this distinction, and taking the time and care to do your research, set you on the road to a very special, memorable speech.

At the heart of every speech is a message. Your job as a public speaker is to pass that message to your audience and in so doing, convey a theme, evoke an emotion or elicit a response - be it emotional or otherwise.

The first step is to identify the single most important idea, theme or message you want to convey in your speech. This message will likely be informed by the public speaking occasion you identified earlier.

For example, if you identified the occasion as the *retirement of much loved lifelong company man whose grandson has just joined the firm*, some potential themes you identify may include:

- Family (grandson & grandfather, also the company family)
- Continuity
- Gratitude
- Respect
- The future

Once you have identified 3-7 potential themes, it's time to decide which of them will be the dominant one. Again, there is no right and wrong answer. It's your speech, pick the theme that resonates most with you. It's important to note that the themes not selected as your primary theme should still play a part in your speech. DO not discard them just yet.

2.2 Speech Structure - How to organize your speech:

Most good writing, we are told, must have structure. A good speech is no exception. By providing your speech with a beginning, a middle, and an end, you will lay the foundations for a successful speech that fulfills all of your aspirations.

Opening

The first thirty seconds of your speech are probably the most important. In that period of time you must grab the attention of the audience, and engage their interest in what you have to say in your speech. This can be achieved in several ways. For example you could raise a thought-provoking question, make an interesting or controversial statement, recite a relevant quotation or even recount a joke. Once you have won the attention of the audience, your speech should move seamlessly to the middle of your speech.

Body

The body of your speech will always be the largest part of your speech. At this point your audience will have been introduced to you and the subject of your speech (as set out in your opening) and will hopefully be ready to hear your arguments, your thoughts or even your ramblings on the subject of your speech.

The best way to set out the body of your speech is by formulating a series of points that you would like to raise. In the context of your speech, a "point" could be a statement about a product, a joke about the bridegroom or a fond memory of the subject of a eulogy.

The points should be organized so that related points follow one another so that each point builds upon the previous one. This will also give your speech a more logical progression, and make the job of the listener a far easier one.

Don't try to overwhelm your audience with countless points. It is better to make a small number of points well than to have too many points, none of which are made satisfactorily.

Closing

Like your Opening, the Closing of your speech must contain some of your strongest material. You should view the closing of your speech as an opportunity. It is an opportunity to:

- – Summarize the main points of your speech
- – Provide some further food for thought for your listeners
- – Leave your audience with positive memories of your speech

- – End with a final thought/emotion (e.g. With well wishes to the Bride and Groom, With fond memories of a departed friend, With admiration for winners and losers at an awards ceremony).

2.3 Comprehension and keywords: putting the stress on key words is an important aspect of speaking that not enough people are doing well. As you work towards improving your verbal communication, make sure you spend sufficient time practicing the act of accentuating the important parts of your conversation.

What Are Key Words?

Key words are the important parts of your message. If the person you're talking to hears nothing else but the keywords, they'll still have a pretty good idea of what you were talking about. As such, think of key words as those specific terms and phrases that are the most vital to what you're communicating. They not only give you as a speaker a thin red line in your speech, but also help the listener by grabbing attention.

Newscasters

Watch newscasters on TV and pay attention to those times when their tonality and enunciation changes. If they're good, you'll notice them do it every time they're uttering an important key word in the piece. If you use a language learning software or an audiobook, launch it and listen to the sample conversations. Nine times out of ten, you'll notice the same thing - they're stressing the key words in their sentences.

Monotony

Stressing your key words help break the monotony of your communication, apart from making your conversation style more engaging. It adds to your magnetism and draws attention to what's coming out of your mouth.

Your formal outline represents a lot of hard work on your part, but remember-it is a blueprint of your speech and not the speech itself. *You should not use your formal outline during the actual presentation of your speech.* Prepare a key-word outline which reduces your formal outline to a few essential words that will jog your memory and remind you of the sequence of your main points.

Your key-word outline should fit on five (5) index cards. Number the pages or cards to help keep them in order. If you are preparing your key-word outline by hand, use dark felt marker and print your letters large enough to read without straining. If you prepare it on a computer, choose a large font size, such

as *fourteen-or eighteen-point*. If your printer prints lightly, choose the **BOLD TEXT** command. YOU MAY FIND YOUR KEY-WORD OUTLINE EASIER TO READ IF YOU ACTUALLY USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.

Because it will be used strictly as a memory jogger, you may *not* want to include the Introduction, Body and Conclusion headings from the formal outline. However, follow the same format for lettering, numbering, and indentation that you used in the formal outline. If you are preparing your outlines by hand, go through a copy of your formal outline and mark the numbers, letters, and key words with a highlighter. You can then copy these onto your note cards for use as a key-word outline. If you are working on a computer or word-processor, make a copy of your formal outline. On the copy, select the numbers, letters, and key-words, change them to **bold**, delete the rest of the material, and save. Just a few stylistic changes will usually suffice to create your key-word outline.

While you reduce much of your formal outline to the essentials for the key-word outline, I recommend that you expand and alter your source citations as needed to help you remember vital details during oral documentation. You may also wish to copy important brief quotations word-for-word so that you can present them accurately

TIPS FOR KEY-WORD OUTLINE

1. Keep your key-word outline as brief as possible. Reduce your speech to key words and phrases (except for direct quotations, statistics, source citations, and certain key ideas) to enhance the extemporaneous quality of your delivery.
2. Follow the visual framework of symbolization and indentation used in your presentation outline. This will make it easier for you to see where you are in the speech at any given time.
3. Some people put their key-word outlines on index cards; others prefer to write them on paper or to print them from a word processor. Either can work fine as long as your notes are immediately legible to you while you are speaking.
4. Most speakers who use index cards find the 3x5 size to cramped and prefer the 4x6 or 5x8 sizes instead.
5. If you put your key-word outline on index cards, try to use one card for each main point, plus one card for the introduction and conclusion. This will

reinforce the distinctiveness of each point and will help you pause at appropriate moments during the speech.

6. Whether you use index cards or regular paper, write on only one side of each card or sheet of paper. Limit the amount of information on each card or sheet of paper so you can read it at a glance under the pressure of the speech situation. Number each card or sheet of paper in the upper right-hand corner so it is easy for you to make sure they are in order.

7. If you compose your key-word outline on a word processor, use large readable font. It is not a good idea to use all capital letters, since research has shown that a lot of words in ALL CAPS is harder to read than is normal text. Use generous margins and provide extra space between lines.

8. If you are composing your outline on a word processor and want to use index cards for your speaking notes, format the pages on your word processor to correspond with the size of your index cards. You can then print your notes on computer paper and tape or glue them to your index cards.

9. If you write your key-word outline by hand, do not use pencil, which smudges easily and is often too light to read without straining.

10. Give yourself cues for delivering the speech. Remind yourself to maintain eye contact and to gesture. Tell yourself when to pause, where to speak louder, and the like. Also include signals that will remind you when to display and remove visual aids. Use highlighters or brightly colored markers for delivery cues to make sure you will not overlook them during the speech.

11. Prepare your key-word outline far enough in advance that you will have plenty of time to practice with it as you rehearse the speech.