

SPEAKERS' CORNER



What's the Story?

APRIL 2017

It's time to bake the cake and light the candles. We're celebrating our 20th anniversary.



Just to remind you what else was happening 20 years ago.

The film Titanic was released and became a blockbuster.

The Spice Girls hit America.

Blood on the Dance Floor was No 1 in the UK for Michael Jackson.

Tiger Woods won his first major – The Masters – in April.

We launched on April 1, 1997 – the two of us – with the line “Good Decisions come from Good Presentations” It was as true then as it is today.

Digital communication now dominates all our lives. But some things never change. The ability to connect and engage with someone face-to-face is paramount.

In the last 75 newsletters we have passed on our advice and tips on becoming better storytellers, better communicators and better presenters.

Here's our top 20 tips for our 20th anniversary issue.

1. What's in it for the audience? This is the question you should write at the top of your screen before you write a single word of a presentation or before you start a story. Once you've answered it, you will better understand your audience's point of view and the angle you need to adopt to win them over.

2. The trick of being a good speaker is to know what you want to say. This is the hardest part of writing a presentation. But follow our 3 steps to achieving it – Purpose, Audience, Core Message (<http://www.speakersco.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Speakers-Corner-1st-steps-to-writing-a-speech-major-presentation.pdf>) The UK Times said the best rhetoric was the six words used to describe the most famous Northern Ireland footballer on the day of his funeral: Maradona Good; Pele Better; George Best.

3. It's all about the start. 3 things to do at the start of any presentation: 1. Be different, surprise them – open with a bang. 2. Be a great host – make them feel comfortable, relaxed and excited to hear what you have to say. 3. Start with you - not a slide – use a story which highlights your core message.

4. Practise, Practise, Practise. The more you practise the better you become. If you practise a presentation 3 times you will become more relaxed and it will flow more easily. If you rehearse it 6 times it will be embedded in your mind. You will be more confident, fluent & passionate.

5. Love your audience and respect them. The more you love and respect them, the more they will feel the same about you. They will listen harder, consider your proposals seriously and want you to succeed. This will make you more confident and ready to do what you can to meet their needs. Pursue the relationship not the deal.

6. Vision trumps all other senses. Words are powerful but you need to create visual imagery with your words so they'll be remembered. We'll never forget a delegate who opened her presentation with - My 89 year old granny said "If you're not learning, you're dead".

7. The Presenter's Highway Code. Stop [don't rush in] Breathe [to diaphragm] Look [at audience] Listen [silence is power] Feel [and don't forget to smile].

8. 5 lessons for effective speech-writing. 1. Begin strongly. 2. Have one theme. 3. Use simple language. 4. Create a 'mind picture'. 5. End dramatically.

9. Think like an Economist journalist, write like a UK Sun journalist. If your average character count per word is 6 or more, you're using less easy to understand vocabulary and jargon. Use short words – an average of 5 characters - they're more concrete and convey meaning quickly.

10. 10 minute rule. John Medina author of "Brain Rules" says audiences check out after 10 minutes. But you can keep grabbing them back after 10 minutes by telling stories, creating events rich in emotion.

11. Power of the pause. Pause every 8 words or so. Barack Obama does and he's recognised as one of the best speakers of our time. It also allows your audience to reflect on what you say.

12. Smile more. A smile opens doors – people think you're someone worth spending time with. A smile will also help you feel more positive. It's a medical fact – a smile sends endorphins to your brain and you feel things are going to be OK.

13. Language is so much more than 'the what' and how you say it. Of course, you need good vocal variety and a clear diction but good physical and emotional body language too. People are more convinced when you show energy, enthusiasm, excitement and engage with them.

14. Eye contact. Not only are you showing your audience you're interested in them, but you need to really look at them to see how you're coming across. Before you start a presentation look around the group so they see you are looking at them individually with warmth and interest. Keep looking at them.

15. Edit your message until everyone can understand it. A French mathematician once said: "A theory is not a theory until you can explain it to the first person you meet on the street." Can you articulate your core message?

16. Start a storybook. Your own personal stories are the best. They sound more credible and real; you can remember them more easily; you own them; you show more conviction & passion. See our storybook for inspiration (<http://www.speakersco.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Speakers-corner-ebook-2.pdf>)

17. How to find your stories? 1. Think of a time when you succeeded or even more powerful when you failed. 2. Think of a mentor who you learnt from at school, university or work. 3. Think of a film, book or play which made a big impression. What did you learn? What was the story?

18. Your voice is your most powerful tool. Research shows that people like to listen to slower, richer, deeper voices like Jeremy Irons. Delivery speed should not exceed 164 words a minute. You should pause half a second at the end of a sentence. Record and listen to your own voice – does it sound interesting, warm, open, caring?

19. Slides aren't mandatory. If you're giving an ideas/vision speech you shouldn't need slides. If you're delivering data you probably do. But slides should be as visual as possible – try to make it look like a roadside poster with one message – the take out message you want your audience to remember.

20. Read as much as you can. Over the years we've read most of the storytelling, pitching and presentation books. The ones we regularly go back to are: "Made to Stick" by Chip & Dan Heath; "Words that Work" by Dr Frank Luntz. "Lessons from the Top" Gavin Esler.

Good luck with your stories, presentations and pitches in 2017.

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