



Why the Most Important Part of Your Speech
Has Nothing to Do with Words

The Secret to Delivering a Stunning Speech with Impact

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Regardless of the business or industry you are in, at some point you may need to make a public presentation. Do you have an important message that you need to convey to a group such as clients, employees, or investors? Maybe you're an executive, a coach, or a group leader and need to effectively deliver a message to teach, inspire, or motivate others. Perhaps you just want to influence one important person. In all of these scenarios you will be called upon to deliver a verbal presentation.

For most of us, the thought of giving any public presentation or speech is enough to trigger fear, crippling anxiety, and even pure panic. It is no wonder that the fear of public speaking (glossophobia) is one of the [top phobias](#) that people experience around the world. At the core of glossophobia is the fear that we might make a fool out of ourselves, become embarrassed from saying the 'wrong' thing, or that we will forget what we intended to say.

In the acting world we call this stage fright. Yes, even we fearless-looking professional thespians at Peers and Players, who crave the spotlight and throw ourselves onto the stage exposing ourselves to the scrutiny of an audience, experience anxiety about performing. However, the secret that we will reveal in this white paper will help you to shift your focus in a way that will empower you to present with confidence and impact. You will discover the strategies that will help you to deliver stunning presentations and you will understand why the most important part of your speech has nothing to do with your words.

The first challenge to rebooting your speaking confidence is to address any obsession you have with your actual speech, with getting the words and information laid out perfectly. While the purpose of your speech is to deliver information, your speech itself may not be the main vehicle that actually conveys that information. In other words, it is not your words that deliver the majority of your message. Think about that for a moment and ponder what that really means.

The research on this is revealing. Back in the 1960s, [groundbreaking communications research](#) was conducted, by U.C.L.A. Professor, Albert Mehrabian. The most compelling result from Mehrabian's research was the determination that the actual words we use to communicate are responsible for only 7% of the message that is received. This means that a powerful 93% of our communication is not based on the words we use. The research concluded that 38% of the way we receive information is derived from the tonality of the speaker. In other words the way we say things sends 38% of our message. The remaining 55% of message communication was based in body language, including our physical appearance and facial expressions. This is why your speech itself, the words that you meticulously labor over to convey the right message are, for all intents and purposes, relatively insignificant!

Given these counter intuitive facts, that the words you choose are just a teeny tiny portion of any message people receive when you speak, you probably want to know what you can do to deliver a stunning and impactful presentation. This is a useful insight when you consider that most people devote the majority of their focus and time on the minutiae of word selection and structure for a presentation. Are you spending 93% of your prep time on the component that is only having a 7% impact, and little or no time on the way you convey that message, and on the instrument (you), that is carrying the message? Is the solution is to devote up to 93% of your effort and preparation, on the factors that have a 93% impact on your effectiveness?

Since Peers and Players was launched in 1998, we have worked with thousands of people, individually and in groups. In our experience this inverted ratio of effort to impact is pretty common. Most people spend most of their effort on the elements that create the least lasting impact, and minimal prep time on the things that matter the most. In fact, one of the first issues that we help our clients to tackle is the tendency to overcomplicate the message. We are so keen to get across how much we know about our subject that we tend to overwhelm our audience with more words than they can take in. Sure, you may have a mass of technical information to deliver, but if that's the case, then it's even more important to know how to make those facts land effectively. Often it is our fear of getting it wrong, looking stupid, or sounding uninformed that gets in the way of effectively informing and inspiring people to know what they need to know in order to be more effective.

The secret to delivering a stunning presentation with impact, and to influence others, requires mastery of at least some of the 93% of non-verbal skills that people need to absorb to get your message. Your challenge is to skillfully incorporate what is known about non-verbal communication into your presentation and to deliver the message you want to convey as concisely and accurately as possible. Only this way will your audience experience the true impact of your message. Only this way will you get the results you have worked so hard to achieve!

Here are some actionable ideas and strategies to help you master the 93% non-verbal portion of your message.

Effective Speaking Preparation Strategies

For every hour you spend on what you want to present, allocate at least another hour on how you plan to present it.

Get really clear on what the big picture is. What is it that you want to convey (ideas, information, etc.) and why do the recipients (your audience) need this information? Are you trying to inspire, influence, teach, model, explain, or inform? 20% of your revised focus should be on conceptual elements. By clarifying the purpose of your communication, you are more likely to determine the most effective way to deliver the message. As actors, we call this naming your Objective, that's the big picture idea that we want to be received. Create a sentence which reminds you succinctly of what your message is, and why knowing it can have benefits for your your audience.

One way to do this is to create an “Elevator pitch” to sum up your talk. This is something that will help to keep you on track and on point. This is a concise explanation, which last no more than 30 seconds. This will also train you to place less value on the quantity of words and more value on the conciseness and clarity of your message. You will be less likely to overwhelm your audience with useless fluff. You will choose your words more frugally and you will structure them more efficiently.

Train your instrument

The remaining 80% of your non-verbal preparation should focus on body and vocal awareness. You must recognize and use the power of your voice, presence, stance, and breathing. These are all major factors in how your message is conveyed. The challenge is to first be aware of what you are currently doing (physically/body language) during all of your daily communications (professional and personal). Take a moment now and then to become aware of your breathing, posture and voice in every day situations. If you’re aware of what you’re already doing, you can control it and potentially use it as needed. Determine what works for you and what doesn’t. Choose the physical communications (body movements, mannerisms, gestures, etc.) that are effective in supporting and reinforcing your verbal messages.

It’s important to understand that any presentation is NOT a one-way communication. When you present you are engaged in an intense 2-way conversation with each member of your audience. Of course, this is predominantly non-verbal. This is an invitation for you to also receive the messages that your audience communicates throughout your presentation. Put your attention on them, rather than yourself, focus on their behavior and notice what they do when they are engaged, interested, bored or distracted. You can benefit from your attention to cues, signals, and other sensory indicators that will present live interactive feedback to help you adjust and adapt your presentation to improve your effectiveness. Learn to readjust your approach if you are not getting the result you want. For example, sometimes just a pause or a physical shift or movement can help them to refocus on you.

Planning Tips for an Awesome Speech

“We learn by doing”. Denzel Washington

So let’s get you ready to deliver an awesome speech.

Get Inspired!

- To help prepare you for better speech delivery, watch videos of a speaker who inspires you. Pinpoint their body stance, pauses, and language use. Do they use different speeds, sentence lengths, tones or emphasis on certain words? Watch and listen for effective strategies, like gestures, repetitive phrases, or speech patterns.
- Choose behaviors and techniques that will be authentic for you, or create your own.
- Watch the talks to determine the non-verbal components that resonate with you and that you can learn from. Break down the technical aspects that work.
- Try things! No actor would ever dream of going on stage without rehearsal, so why should you?

Think before you speak

- Create a phrase to inspire yourself before (and during) your talk.
- Know what it is that YOU bring to this talk that is unique – that’s why it’s you up there, and not someone else!
- Be aware of any self-talk that gets in your way – know your own obstacles. Thank them and move on! Start to speak to yourself as you would to someone you care about, in an encouraging way.

What do you want?

- Be certain of your objectives for the talk (motivate action, inspire sales, etc.).
- Be clear on how this talk feeds into the bigger picture, what follow up will be required?
- Make sure you know how long you have to delivery your speech, and if you can spend some time in the actual environment beforehand, so you know where the best light is, how much space you have to move around or stand up for effect, and what distractions there may be.

Structure

- Plan the beginning, middle, and end of your talk.
- Create an introduction that projects clarity and confidence. Practice it till it becomes natural. Using a story, metaphor or picture can engage the audience and get them wondering what’s next.
- Be sure that your conclusion is delivered clearly and confidently. Practice it, and make sure you leave a nice long pause when you are done, so that your message will ring out loud and clear.

Be quiet!

- Embrace the power of silence. Silence and dramatic pauses can allow you to recover your own thoughts, readjust if you are a bit off track, ground you, add emphasis to key points and allow your audience to absorb and process your message. Mark out where you think some pauses will assist, while you are writing your speech, and practice using them!
- Know your audience and adapt your message to their most receptive learning style. Some people are auditory learners, others are visual and some are kinesthetic. If your audience is comprised of a mix of various types of learners, it is best to utilize all methods to engage all of your audience. Engage them with what they see, hear and feel.
- Encourage audience participation and engagement. This gives you a break from the spotlight, and gives your audience the opportunity to be engaged.
- Choosing one powerful gesture that really resonates with you is a good idea. This could become your anchor and you can use it during your warm up and brief preparation before a talk, as well as to illustrate an important point. It should be a movement or stance that helps you to feel comfortable and physically confident.

Get ready

- Before you practice, imagine yourself giving the presentation, notice how you look, sound and feel. Get an image of your audience, nodding, smiling, or whatever they will do when they understand you. Hear them asking questions, congratulating you, or talking among themselves about your ideas after the talk. Feel the sense of pride you'll have when it's all over, and you did a great job.

Find a private place where you won't be interrupted.

- While you are planning your speech, as well as just before you give your presentation, get your body and voice warmed up.
- Use practical physical and voice exercises to relax and prepare.
- Know how to control your voice and body for maximum effect. Remember they are the tools, which you use for 93% of your impact on others.

Warm up

Would you go on a long run without doing some stretches? Play a ball game without practicing how you handle the ball? Drive your car without oil or gas? Cook a meal without making sure you have all the ingredients? If the answer is no, then why would you consider giving a presentation without being as fully prepared as possible?

Here are a few easy exercises to help you warm up your instrument (you).

Tried and tested by Peers and Players actors - use these or invent your own!

1. Get grounded, feel the earth beneath you. Loosen any tension in your knees, hips and ankles. You can stamp your feet 5 times, turn around, and stamp your feet 5 more times. This releases tension and anxiety.
2. Stand with your feet slightly apart for a few spinal rolls. Let your head slowly roll down towards the ground, rolling down one vertebra at a time, as far as it can comfortably go, make sure your ankles, knees and hips are slightly bent and feel relaxed. Let your head feel heavy. When it has fallen forward as far as possible gently shake and nod your head yes and no. The gradually stand up straight, letting your head unfold and stand easily upright. Do you feel relaxed and ready for action?
3. Exaggerated yawning helps to trigger oxygen circulation. Do 3 huge yawns; before you make any sounds and feel your energy expand into the back of your throat and into our lungs. Train your body to use all that air and space which will support your sound.
4. A quiet exercise is to stand with arms expanding out, take a deep breath and make these sounds: ahhhhh count of 8, eeee, oooooo.

5. If you have a private place to warm up you could imagine you are calling out to a taxi across the street. Say 'hey' as loudly as you can, a few times as if you're life depended on it! This will train you to control and vary your volume for maximum effect.
6. Choose a quote that inspires you and keep it on a card. Keep it with you, initially whisper it to yourself, this will engage your mouth and tongue, help with articulation, and inspire you to be great. Then when you feel comfortable, play with delivering that quote with different tones, speeds and emotional qualities.

Be yourself!

Remember not to be perfect! People like people who are like themselves, so if you make a mistake, or something doesn't come out as you had planned, incorporate it into your presentation. Maybe that's the very thing, which will endear your audience to you, and inspire them the most.

"Imperfections are not inadequacies; they are reminders that we're all in this together."
Brené Brown

Now do it! And remember, it is what you don't say that your audience will "hear" the loudest!

About Peers and Players

Lisa Peers founded Peers and Players in 1998, assembling a team of experienced professional actors to role-play for corporate assessment and development programs. With extensive experience in role-play and coaching, Lisa selected actors with a shared understanding of business culture. Lisa has worked consistently in TV, film and theatre, acting, teaching, directing and producing. She has hosted many training programs, on and off camera, and has access to a wide network of industry professionals. More than 600 actors make up the Peers and Players team across the globe.

The team has grown, from a small group performing role-play around Australia, to a big team of professionals working in Australia, the USA, Mexico, Brazil, Germany, Dubai, India, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam and more. Peers and Players offer the cream of corporate actors, chosen for their acting ability and business experience. Our services include coaching, facilitation, presentation and communication skills as well as the creation of training videos. Our clients range from HR professionals, recruitment officers, organizational psychologists to business owners and identities, in all kinds of industries and corporations.

Are You Ready for an Even Greater Edge?

Peers and Players is ready to help you take all of your business communications to the next level. **Mention this Paper when you contact us, and receive a complimentary 20-minute Skype coaching session to work on an upcoming presentation, by one of our skilled coaches.**

To contact Peers and Players www.peersandplayers.com

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