Lend Me Your Ears

Profile
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Overview
When you are presenting or giving a speech, the audience is your customer and so the audience is always right. Your aim is to engage and to entertain the audience and to keep their attention until you get your message across. If they also remember what you have said then even better and are more likely to act on your ‘call to action’.

Professor Max has written perhaps the most comprehensive and clear book on how to best present yourself in your public speaking.

Part 1 The Language of Public Speaking

Chapter 1 – The Battle for Audience Attention: Keeping Listeners Awake and Engaged

You need to hold the attention of your audience to get your message across. That means you need to tailor your way of speaking to meet the audience needs.
In conversations, you are expected to listen and then talk back and so you stay awake. Audience attention drifts when:
• Speeches and Presentations are long.
• Audiences know they won’t have to speak for a while.
• They get confused.
• The audiences cannot follow the flow of the presentation.
• They get bored

As a speaker, you can use a number of techniques to keep the audience engaged:
• Encourage the audience to clap.
• Use humour to induce laughter.
• Generate a level of audience participation.
• Encourage questions
• Use eye contact to generate attentiveness

Make the most of eye contact:
• Look around the audience to monitor their interest levels.
• The more you look at the audience, the more pressure there is for them to pay you attention.
• Some audience members are more responsive than others so use them as a gauge of your interest levels.
• Make sure you include everyone.
• Look people in the eye rather then above or below them.
• Spend as little time as possible looking back towards the screen. *Turn, Look, Talk!*

**Chapter 2 – Speaking in Private and Speaking in Public: Conversation and Public Speaking**

Conversations tend to flow and are more forgiving.

‘Ums’ and ‘Ers’ can be forgiven in conversation but can distract and irritate audiences.

Silences may be embarrassing and troublesome in conversation, but are good practise in presentation:
• They slow down the pace of delivery and breaks material into short clear chunks.
• They help to clarify and convey different meanings.
• They can increase dramatic impact.
• It gives you a chance to recover when things go wrong.

Use changes in intonation, stress and emphasis to convey different meanings and moods.

Of all the emotions possible to convey through intonation, enthusiasm is the most important one of all.

You need to exaggerate your intonations as an ordinary level flattens out over distance.

When using a script, underline or highlight words to be delivered with extra emphasis as a cue to lift your tone.

**Chapter 3 – The Sight and Sound or Words: Difference Between Writing and Speaking**

Written and spoken words differ. The way we speak does not transfer well to a written work and when we speak the way we write, it sounds stale.

We need to consider this when building a presentation.

There are several factors to consider:

1. The cloak for formality
   • If you speak in a very correct way, there is a risk of sounding stilted and pompous and will hide your personality.
   • Using unusual words makes it difficult for people to follow and understand your presentation.
   • Jargon and acronyms should be kept to a minimum and make sure your audience knows the terms.
   • using the full form of words such as ‘Will not’ instead of ‘won’t’ will make you sound formal and stilted.
   • Slang and swearing may offend some people so it is best practise to avoid it.
   • The longer and more complicated the structure of the sentence, the more difficult for audiences to follow. Keep it simple.
   • Repetition is useful to emphasise a point and can help an audience remain clear.
   • Not all forms of repetition are helpful. Words like ‘actually’, ‘basically’ repeated can be distracting.
   • Using the passive can obscure the precise meaning of a sentence.
• Passive voice conveys neutrality, objectivity and detachment from direct responsibility for something.
• Keep your word selection as simple as possible.

2. Information Overload
• Writing means storing and transmitting detailed knowledge far in excess of anything that can be conveyed in the spoken word.
• A common mistake is to try to get too much detail across to the audience.
• The slide-driven style allows speakers to project large amounts of information on a screen.
• Providing too much detail poses the risk of looking insecure and lacking in confidence.
• Simplifying the content not only makes it easier for the audience to understand and give you the air of being an expert.

Part 2 Visual Aids and Verbal Crutches

Chapter 4 – Reading from Slides and Talking with Chalk: Visuals Ancient and modern

Presentations have tended to use Powerpoint much more in recent years and they can lead to very stale and dull presentations, even for the Powerpoint Ninja’s amongst us. So consider using a style of presentation that is less show and more show and tell.

Disadvantages of Wordy Slides:
• Textual slides can lead to uninspiring language and information overload.
• Reading and listening at the same time means the audience may not be focusing on you.
• If you haven't planned what to say for each bullet, you will seem unprepared.
• Eye contact can be diminished by the speaker looking at the screen and the audience not looking at the you.
• Speakers can block the audience' view of the detail on the slides.
• Speaking while trying to manipulate overheads or other technology can be a distraction.

Advantages of Chalk and Talk:
• Focus of attention is on you while you write or draw.
• Coordination of the words and visual is more readily synchronised making it easier to understand.
• Pace of delivery is reduces and allows the audience to follow more easily.
• Spontaneity and authority is increased because you are the sole source and in control of the material and its pace of delivery.

Disadvantages of Chalk and Talk:
• If you write too much or too slowly, it will slow things down too much and can result in spending long periods with your back to the audience
• Pens can run out (Check them and take spares)
• Some colours can’t be seen at a distance. Avoid green and use black or dark blue.

Simulating Chalk and Talk with Powerpoint:
• Builds can simulate the chalk and talk approach.

Chapter 5 – Showing What You Mean: Visuals for Viewers

Visual aids can significantly enhance you presentation.
The aids that go down well with audiences are:

- Objects, props and demonstration
- Pictures
- Video
- Maps
- Organisation charts
- Graphs
- Bar charts
- Pie Charts
- Blank charts
- Handouts

Advantages of Powerpoint:
Pictures are easy to incorporate in to a presentation
Graphics add emphasis and illustrate points
Builds create anticipation and emphasis
Slide changing can be smoothly accomplished and even timed if required

Disadvantages of Powerpoint:
Bias towards to much detail
Bias towards lists
Bias against build up
Bias against pictures and charts as the default templates have no pictures
Bias against changing from the default settings that powerpoint provides

**Part 3  Winning with Words**

**Chapter 6 – The Persuasive Power of Words**

Perhaps the most important in the book, this chapter illustrates how words can be used to create effect you want.

The key tools Prof Max offers are those of Rhetoric including:

1. **Contrasts**
   - Contradictions - Not this but that - What I do here is not for me but for those that come after me.
   - Comparisons - More this than that - A man who reads nothing is still wiser than a man that reads only newspapers.
   - Opposites - Black or White - there is nothing that is so bad that it cannot outweigh was it good here.
   - Phrase reversals - Not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country.

2. **Puzzle and Questions**
   - Puzzle and solution format - I thought that it would last forever, but forever was shorter than I thought it would be.
   - Rhetorical questions - Shall I compare they to a summer’s day.

3. **Lists of 3**
   - 3 Identical words - Location, Location, Location
   - 3 Different words - Liberte’, egalite’, fraternite’
   - 3 Phrases - By the people. of the people, for the people
• 3 Clauses - Happiness is when what you think, what you say and what you do are in harmony.
• 3 Sentences - Some people like us, some people hate us but most just don’t care!

4. Combinations of any of the above.

Chapter 7 – Painting Pictures with Words: The use of Imagery and Anecdotes

Imagery, poetry and fables are central to oral traditions. Copying these will enhance your speech making.

1. Types of Imagery
   Similes - Float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.
   Metaphor - If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.
   Analogies - It is no time to take the tranquilliser of gradual progression.

2. Anecdotes
   Stories that illustrate key messages. Keep them short and to the point.

3. The sound of words
   Alliteration - We cannot Fail nor Falter.

Part 4 Putting Principles into Practise

Chapter 8 – Translating Messages to Increase Impact: Political Speeches and Business Presentations

1. The Creative Process
   • The search for alternative ways to express a thought involves trial or error.
   • A word, phrase or idea can set of trains of thought that help the creative process along.
   • You can often put a key statement into the first or second part of a contrast or the third item in a list.
   • If 2 points are related, consider contrasting them.
   • Rhetorical techniques are useful at pivotal points in a speech. e.g. beginnings, endings summing up a section.

2. The Position Taker
   This is an adaptable and effective way to package political messages. It involves 2 stages:
   • Talk about an issue that the audience knows you have strong position on,
   • The state you position (in support or opposition).

Chapter 9 – Putting it All Together: Structure and Preparation

Prof Max offers a 7 step process for developing a speech:

1. Analyse the Audience
   • Who is in the audience?
   • How big is it going to be?
   • What message is for this audience?

2. Brainstorming
   • Subjects: make a list
   • Sectionalising: Put topics into sections
• Sequencing: Reorder the sections into a logical sequence

3. Creating a structure
• Pre-introduction
• Introduction
• Main body
• Summary
• Conclusion

4. Saying it the right way
Use Rhetoric, Imagery and positions to get your points across in the most effective way

5. Creating the visual aids
• Do you need visual aids?
• Which are the best?
• How will you use them for best effect?

6. Rehearsal
Go through it all and say it out aloud. Record it if possible.

7. Preparing for questions
Take some time to anticipate possible questions and how to answer them.

Chapter 10 - Unaccustomed As You May Be: Making Social and Duty Speeches

1. Reasons for Reassurance
People dread having to speak at social occasions but:
• The audience is likely to be grateful that you are doing something that they all expect and want to be done.
• You aren’t expected to speak for much more than a few minutes.
• The scope of material is more straightforward.

2. Approach and Subject Matter
• All the techniques in the book will work just as well.
• Anecdotes are an extremely important ingredient in social speeches.
• You audience is likely to have differing ages so ensure you avoid giving offence.
• If others are speaking, consult with them beforehand to ensure you deconflict material.

3. The Master of Ceremonies
• Ensure that everything runs smoothly.
• Ensure the attention of the audience.
• Find out beforehand who will be speaking.
• Be sure to get their names right.

4. Use Names to Prompt Applause
A simple and effective way of getting an audience to applaud someone is to say a few words about them and then say their name.

Part 5 Body Language and Speech
Chapter 11 – Physical Facts and Fiction: Body Language, Movement and tension

1. Claims to be sceptical about
   • What we actually say is a minor part of our communication
   • 93 per cent of communications is non-verbal
   • There is some scientifically based secret of what clothes will have most impact
   • People with folded arms are defensive
   • Lecterns and tables are barriers to effective communications
   • Moving about while speaking distracts the audience
   • Using gestures distracts the audience

2. Claims worth taking seriously
   • Speaking is a physically stressful experience that can cause a rise in blood pressure, irregular heartbeat and sweating
   • Physical tension both increases nervousness and directly affects the parts of the body that produce the voice
   • Breathing is the foundation of good delivery
   • If your mouth is not fully open, you are likely to sound dull
   • Most people speak too fast
   • Alcohol is never the answer!
   • When it comes to reducing tension and nervousness, the aim should be minimisation, rather than total elimination.

Chapter 12 – The Power of Speech: Restoring confidence in the spoken word

We are social creatures who share experiences through speech and story telling. The requirement is not going away very quickly.

To be the best speaker you can be, you will need to develop knowledge and technique and experience with practice. It is the only ting that will turn you into a more effective and potentially gifted speaker.

Overall

Prof Max has written a highly practical book about one of the life skills that will make you more effective in most parts of your life. His logical and practical approach gives the reader some great insights into how to improve their public speaking skills and make great speeches. reading and studying this book is highly recommended.

Rating 4.5/5