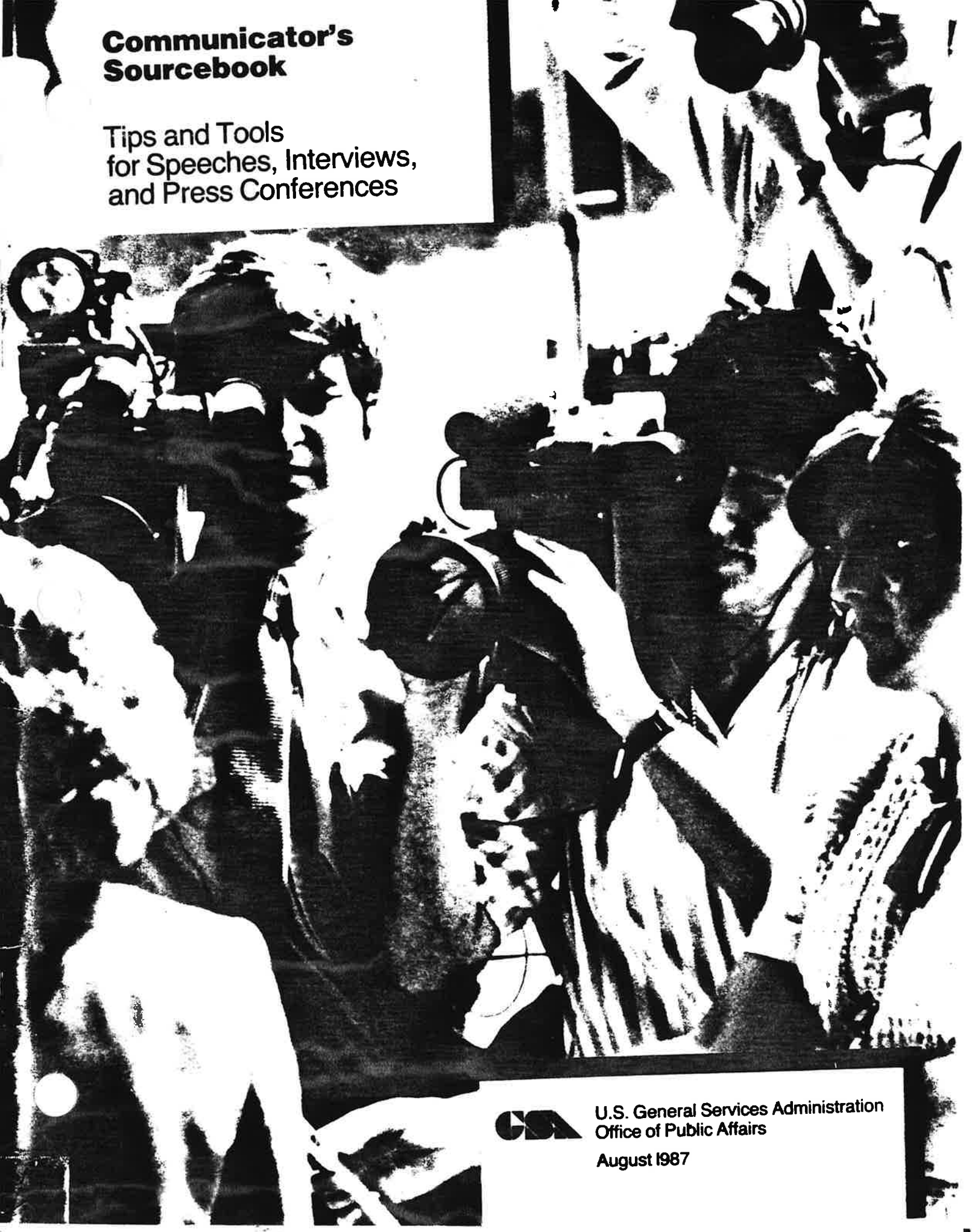
Communicator's Sourcebook

Tips and Tools for Speeches, Interviews, and Press Conferences



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Foreword

As a Federal Government official, you are very likely to be called upon to represent your agency before the public. You may be asked by a professional or special interest group to speak at an event. You could be interviewed by a reporter for television, radio, or the print media—either by prearrangement or as your agency's spokesperson during a breaking news story. A reporter may call you with questions or ask you to comment on an agency policy or program. Or you might have to respond to reporters' questions at a news conference. Public speaking and media interview skills are essential to every executive.

Speaking in public can be a discomforting experience. But it doesn't have to be that way if you do your homework—know your topic and related current events, research your audience and the program or event you are addressing, correctly anticipate the questions you will be asked by audience members or reporters, and pay attention to delivery and appearance.

Speeches and interviews give you a chance to promote your agency's goals and programs. As a side benefit for yourself, you could become well known in your professional peer group and community. So don't avoid opportunities or take them lightly. Like the people who make public speaking look so easy, you, too, can relax, tell your story, and leave your audience with the message you intend to convey.

The ***Communicator's Sourcebook*** is designed to help you. It covers such communications basics as preparation, delivery, and followup and contains many useful guidelines for making the most of your speaking opportunities. The last section, "Tips From Published Sources," consists of reprinted articles by and about experts in public relations and image building.

The ***Communicator's Sourcebook*** was prepared by the U.S. General Services Administration. For a single copy, write the Office of Public Affairs (X), U.S. General Services Administration, Washington, DC 20405, or telephone (202) 566-0705.

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Making the Most of Your Speech

A good speech is probably the most effective tool for delivering your agency's message to business, professional, civic, and other groups. Unlike an interview, a speech gives you a chance to speak first and in a carefully thought-out manner. You get to make the points you want to make, in the order in which you want to make them. You have the opportunity to leave the audience with the message you want to get across.

Getting Ready

Whether you deliver a successful speech depends—above all—on how well you prepare. Preparing for a speech means not only having a thorough understanding of your subject and a well-developed presentation, but also knowing who else will be on the program and the nature of the audience. The site and timing of your speech are important. What you wear, how you stand and gesture, advance notice to the media, and how you handle questions—these all add up to the overall impression you give of yourself and your agency.

Know Your Subject

You probably have a good grasp of the subject on which you have been asked to speak or you would not have been asked. However, if someone else in your organization knows the topic better, consider arranging for him or her to give the talk. If your agency has a Speakers Bureau to coordinate speeches by agency officials, this group may be able to assist you.

Assuming you decide to make the speech, be sure to brief yourself on related subjects and pertinent current events. If you will be speaking in an unfamiliar city, find out if any local issues or events bear on your subject. If your agency has an office in or near the city where you will be speaking, be sure to contact that office. Get the latest local facts on agency programs. How does your program affect that community?

Know Your Audience

Don't make assumptions about the composition of your audience. Find out as much as you can about the group. Men and women? If a large percentage of the audience is female, use women in your examples. Spouses invited? Will they be familiar with your subject?

How much might your listeners already know about your topic? What are their special interests? Have they already taken a position with regard to your topic? What is the level of their involvement? Will they look upon you as neutral, friend, or foe? Will they want some form of action from your agency? Answers to these questions should shape your speech and prepare you for followup questions and media interviews.

Language

As you research your audience, you'll develop an idea of the language you should use in your speech. Don't use technical terms with a nontechnical audience. Avoid phrases or nomen-

clature your listeners might not understand. ***Never*** use acronyms; they may exclude some audience members from your message.

Above all, speak in a way that is natural for you. Stay away from compound sentences, multisyllable words, parenthetical phrases and qualifications, clichés, and hackneyed phrases such as "you know." Use short sentences. Overall, think news media. Ask yourself: "Is there anything here, in 50 words or less, of local impact, that is newsy enough and sprightly enough to be quoted?"

Openings

A strong opening statement will grab attention and set the tone for the rest of the speech. You may wish to acknowledge the person who introduced you and thank the group for inviting you. Then get right on to establishing the purpose and importance of your speech. Express your main point in a declaratory sentence ("This administration believes. . . . . ."). Or ask a rhetorical question ("What is really needed to get America's economy moving?").

Other options for introductions include one or a series of startling facts ("Are you aware that. . . .?"), a human interest story, or a joke or humorous anecdote. However you choose to begin, be sure it's pertinent to the topic of your speech and launches you toward making your main points.

Anecdotes and Humor

Anecdotes and jokes can be useful speechmaking tools if they are chosen carefully and delivered naturally. Of course, humor should always be in good taste; in no way should it offend your audience.

Not everybody can handle humor without some practice. It is good to memorize and practice delivering anecdotes and one-liners. Anecdotes and jokes fall flat if you read them. A pause is essential before the punchline and at the end of an anecdote.

Generally, if you are good at telling jokes privately, you will be able to joke publicly. If you're not a funny person, don't try to be funny at the podium.

Keep your humor pertinent. A humorous introduction that bridges smoothly into the body of your speech will not only attract your listeners' attention, but also help you to relax. Some apt humor within the speech can help maintain your rapport with your audience. A totally irrelevent joke will be recognized for what it is.

Statistics

Like humor, statistics are desirable, but too much data is hard for a listener to absorb. Government speeches in particular can be easily overloaded with statistics.

Save most numbers for written communications. For oral presentations, try to use them to create complete thoughts or comparisons.

Visuals

Good visuals add impact to your words. They should, however, support your speech and not overpower it.

Use chalkboards, slides, jumbo charts, maps, pictures, and other "show and tell" items when they are pertinent and can be seen by everyone in the audience. Avoid complexity. Each visual should, at a glance, convey a single idea. The more "pictographic" a visual aid is, the better.

Endings

Always clue the audience that you are about to wrap up. ("Before I finish, there's one point I want to emphasize.") End forcefully: Summarize your main point, repeat your objective, or give your audience something extra. ("In conclusion, let me add just one bit of advice.")

Let your audience know if there are opportunities for them to pursue your topic further—in future meetings or seminars, for example.

Then, offer to answer questions.

Remember the Clock

Regardless of the subject matter, the best time frame for most speeches is 15 to 20 minutes, with another 10 minutes for questions and answers. You are sure to lose your audience if you go on longer than this.

Manuscript Preparation

Experts recommend that you always write out your speech, even if you later decide to deliver it from notes. This makes it easier to determine whether you are within your time frame and gives you something to edit. You'll probably need to cut your original manuscript in half to stay within your allotted time.

If you use a manuscript during delivery, have it typed in extra-large type, all capital letters, on 8-1/2 by 11-inch bond paper or 5 by 7-inch cards. Mark pauses with a slash (/) and circle or underscore words and phrases requiring emphasis. Ask the typist to use only the upper half of bond paper and to be sure to number the pages or cards.

Rehearsal

Practice delivering your speech by yourself (in front of a mirror), in front of a family member or co-worker, or before a video camera if you have access to one. Watch the clock so you don't run too long. Test your anecdotes and jokes, as well as your stance and gestures. Check your visuals to be sure they are clear, pertinent, and emphatic.

Capitalizing on the Occasion

Your public affairs office can advise you on media coverage of your speech. It is, of course, up to your hosts to invite the media to attend.

Always provide members of the press with copies of your speech and stick fairly closely to the text. This will help ensure that you are not misquoted. If possible, get the text to the media at least 24 hours in advance. Send related material, such as an announcement of the speech and your biography, even sooner. Good background materials will encourage media coverage.

If you'll be speaking out of town, plan your itinerary to allow for media interviews if they would be beneficial. These can be arranged a week or 10 days in advance by your public affairs office in coordination with your agency's nearest field office. You can do them at the speech site or go to the broadcast studio or newspaper office. Radio interviews can be done over the phone.

Delivery

A speech is only as effective as its delivery. If you appear overly nervous, if the audience can't hear you or can't see your visuals, if you speak in a monotone, the time you spent writing your text will have been wasted. How you look, stand, and gesture all have an effect on how the audience reacts and responds.

Your Stage and Props

Arrive at the speech site early so you have a chance to check the ambiance, chat with your hosts and the person who will introduce you, and meet the other speakers if there are any.

Note the location from which you will be speaking and of your visual aids. Be sure your charts, slides, and/or viewgraphs can be seen by everyone in the audience. Will you have to operate a projector yourself, or will someone else do so on signal from you? If the latter is the case, review your materials with that person and agree on what signals you will give.

Be sure your visuals are in the right order; if they are slides or viewgraphs, see if you or the projectionist can run them through the projector before the audience is seated to preclude technical malfunctions.

Your Appearance

Your speech actually starts the moment you enter the room. Dress conservatively unless the occasion dictates otherwise. Check your grooming beforehand. Don't "dead pan." Smile, nod, shrug your shoulders—move naturally and appropriately. Stand tall, with your head level and your shoulders square.

Eye Contact and Body Signals

Think of your audience in three segments—left, center, and right. Look at, and speak directly to, individuals in each segment.

When speaking from behind a lecturn, don't grab onto it and hold tightly with both hands. Your body will tense up and you'll appear even more nervous than you are. If the microphone is removable, you may wish to pick it up and move about.

Gestures can help you look more relaxed and add emphasis to what you are saying. However, like every other element of your speech, they need to be controlled and pertinent.

While you are speaking, be aware of the signals your audience is sending you. Are they looking right at you or are their eyes wandering? Are they sitting up and listening or slouched and dozing? If you begin to lose too much of your audience, you may have to change your style.

Voice and Diction

A clear, strong voice sets off a speech just as an attractive frame enhances a picture. The general tendency is to speak too low, so speak louder than you consider normal. Good volume communicates confidence.

A monotone is boring, so change volume and pitch during your speech. Absorb this technique by listening to newscasts and commercials on radio and television. Note how they create interest by changing voice pitch and emphasis. Work to develop enthusiam and "sell" in your voice.

Diction is important. You need to enunciate without going overboard and appearing stilted. The bottom line is to be clear while appearing natural.

Speed

People tend to speak too fast. Pacing and pausing are among the most effective techniques for public speaking. Change speed: go faster for excitement and slower for suspense. You do not have to keep talking. Pauses attract attention and may even trigger applause after strong statements.

Responding to Media Inquiries

A reporter could call you at any time with an inquiry regarding your agency's policies and programs. What you say will reflect on both you and your agency. Remember that the reporter and his or her editors need to be satisfied with your answers. Incomplete answers, wrong leads, and rudeness can only lead to problems.

Attitude

As a public official, your attitude toward the media should be courteous, open, honest, and direct. If information cannot be released, say so. Never answer with a terse "No comment."

Evaluate the Inquiry

What is the reporter looking for? If the question or motivation is not clear, bring the line of questioning into focus by asking some questions of your own.

Ask the reporter about the concept of the story: Who else has been contacted? What other information will be used? How will your information be used? How big will the story be played?

Get Help

If you are unsure of an answer, don't risk a guess. Tell the reporter you will provide an answer as soon as possible. Erroneous information can damage your agency and your own credibility. Make sure you know and confirm the facts.

Are you really the right person to answer the question? No reporter likes to be given a runaround but will surely understand being referred to someone more knowledgeable. Better still, ask the "expert," or your agency's spokesperson, to phone the reporter.

Focus

Does the reporter represent a general newspaper or a specialized magazine or trade publication? Is he or she researching a story for the 6 o'clock news or an "in-depth" program? Make your answers relevent to the reporter's audience.

Deadlines

Every reporter has a deadline whether he or she works in print or the electronic media. However, if you are asked a difficult or complex question, don't feel obligated to give an answer on the spot. Ask what the deadline is and offer to return the reporter's call within a satisfactory time period. The extra time and effort will benefit both sides.

General Interview Guidelines

An interview can be harder to prepare for than a speech because someone will be asking you questions right from the start and has the first chance to set the tone. An interview may also be more stressful because you may be sitting before a television or video camera or your words may be recorded for radio broadcast.

Read the following general guidelines first, then refer to the sections on television, radio, and print interviews for more specific advice.

Some things you can do before and during an interview will enhance your chances of an effective presentation whether it is for radio, television, or the print media.

Generating an Interview

Usually, a publication or a radio or television station will initiate an interview opportunity. However, don't always wait to be asked, especially if you come across a good story angle. Reporters are always looking for interesting new stories, and no one knows what's going on in your field better than you do.

Take the initiative—if the story is positive.

Subject Matter

Although it is not appropriate to ask for specific interview questions in advance, you and the interviewer should have some agreement on the topics that will be covered. This will allow you to develop one or two key points that you will want to get across. Make sure you make these points regardless of the reporter's questions. You'll have to be forceful without seeming to bulldoze or bully the interviewer.

Sometimes a reporter may not take the time to do the necessary background work for a productive interview. This may present you with an opportunity to bring up what you want to talk about. Be prepared to take the lead and direct the interview into positive areas of information about your department or agency. However, be fair: Be sure your points are pertinent to your original agreement on subject matter.

Research

If you and the interviewer have agreed on subject parameters, you should be able to anticipate many of the questions you will be asked. You can be absolutely certain you will be questioned about controversial issues and hot spots.

Have answers ready for the key questions you have anticipated, including—if possible—phrases that present your answers in a catchy way and are quotable.

Do some additional homework. It's hard enough to remember everything about your activity when you're not under pressure; it is much more difficult in a stressful situation. Take time to brush up on current events as they affect your agency.

Find out all you can about the interviewer and about the publication or station he or she represents. Does the publication or station have a particular editorial stance or philosophy? De-

termine the interviewer's style. The more you know, the less chance you will be surprised or caught off guard.

Practice

Do some role-playing and rehearsal before co-workers and before someone not involved with your agency. Other experts can point out questions you had not anticipated, while an objective listener can comment on the clarity and understandability of your point of view.

During the Interview

Here are a few tips to remember during the interview:

—Be confident. You are looked upon as the expert or you would not have been asked for the interview.

—Be alert. Avoid answering speculative "what if" questions. Be prepared to lead the interview from problems and negatives to positive points you want to make.

—Be concise. Keep your statements direct and clear. Say the most important thing first, then elaborate if necessary. Make one point at a time. Speak in simple, rather than compound, sentences.

—Be believable. Credibility is vital to getting your message across. Be personable and conversational. Use the interviewer's name once or twice. Use anecdotes if they make good points.

—Be honest. Tell the truth. If you can't answer a question, say so. Don't ever say "No comment."

—Remember who you are. You represent the Administration. You have ***no*** personal opinion. Period.

Your Rights as an Interview Subject

You have certain rights an an interview subject. You can either claim them or negotiate for them as part of your agreement to be interviewed. This is especially true if the reporter, not you, initiated the contact.

—You can help determine the time and location.

—You can determine the amount of time you will give the interviewer.

—You can insist on knowing in advance the topics to be covered.

—You can set your own pace for answering questions and give yourself time to think before answering. Of course, this is truer in interviews for the print media than for radio or television.

—You can challenge questionable facts and assumptions.

—You can question dubious sources of information.

Before the Cameras

For a televised interview or panel show, you need to project a total image: You must look good as well as sound knowledgeable, confident, and convincing. Review the points below and the "Do's and Don'ts for Television."

A Few Basics

Get some background on the station—its call letters, network affiliation, and editorial philosphy. Know the format of the program on which you'll appear, the host's name, and the names and specialities of the other guests.

Know What To Expect

Preview the program—more than once, if possible. Note the interviewer or moderator's style. Does he or she tend to be well-informed about the guests? Are the questions fair? Are guests given ample opportunity to present their points of view?

Dress and Makeup

What you wear for your television appearance should convey what you are: an intelligent, authoritative spokesperson for your agency. Your clothes, accessories, and makeup should fit that image and not overpower what you have to say.

Men should wear suits, preferably blue or gray. Shirts should be white or pale gray, blue, or pink. Red is a good tie color. Suits (with skirts, not pants) and pastel dresses are recommended for women. Avoid frills, flashy colors and patterns, and noisy or flashy jewelry.

Ask the studio's makeup consultant for advice. Everyone can use a little face powder to cover shiny areas.

Before the Show

Arrive early so that you can meet the producer, the interviewer, and some of the crew before going on the air.

Be receptive to advice. The people at the station are television experts.

From the moment you arrive at the studio until the moment you leave, assume that the camera is on and the microphone is live.

During the Program

Although time is limited, don't let haste lead you into giving a wrong, partial, misleading, or incomplete answer. If you can't frame your answer in a reasonable amount of time, ask the interviewer if you can come back to it later.

Do not hesitate to challenge questionable facts and assump-

Do's and Don'ts for Television

Do. . .

- Wear dark, tailored clothing or, for women, pastel colors. Women may use bright colors for accents, while men may choose bright ties in solid colors or conservative patterns.
- Wear (if male) a long-sleeved shirt in white, light blue, or pale gray; socks should be over-the-calf style, dark, and should not sag.
- Keep your jacket buttoned.
- Ask for makeup if it is available.
- Cross your legs at the ankle or knee if it makes you more comfortable.
- Ask the interviewer beforehand about the topics he or she plans to cover.
- Tell the interviewer if there are questions you would like him or her to ask.
- Keep your cool.
- Thank the interviewer and the technical staff at the end of the interview.

tions and to question dubious sources of information. However, don't be rude or lose control, even if the interviewer appears to be doubting your authority or credibility. Give the facts as you know them and cite your own sources. The audience can tell when an interviewer is "baiting" his subject; let the interviewer lose face, not you.

If you are interrupted, wait for the interrupter to finish and then proceed with your answer. You may wish to repeat the original question to bring your audience back on track.

Challenge any efforts to put words in your mouth. If you don't, you may end up appearing to agree with something you actually disagree with.

Don't act evasive. Your evasiveness may be interpreted as an attempt to hide something.

Put your main point, or conclusion, first and follow it with your supporting points.

After the Show

Thank the producer, the host, and the members of the crew. Make appropriate farewells to the other guests.

Send a followup letter to the host and/or the producer thanking them for the opportunity to appear on the show.

On the Air

Because Americans spend so much time in their cars, they still get a good deal of their news over the radio. The most important point to remember for a radio interview is to get your point across quickly before you run out of time.

The 30-Second Target

Radio news operates on even tighter schedules than television. The average radio interview lasts just a few minutes. Of that, less than a minute probably will be used on any one newscast. Your responses, therefore, should be especially short and to the point. No more than 30 seconds or about 120 words.

Editing is the rule. Isolate your main point at the beginning of your answer. Expect anything after that to be erased unless it is especially exciting or entertaining.

Don't. . .

- Go to a televison interview alone.
- Wear stripes, plaids, wild patterns, bright or noisy jewelry.
- Wear white, bright blue, green or yellow.
- Spring visual aids on the interviewer unannounced. If you feel visual aids will help make your point, arrange for their use in advance.
- Peer at the camera or monitors during the interview. An occasional glance is okay, but address your answers to the person asking the questions.
- Smoke or chew gum during the interview.
- Assume the camera or microphone is off.
- Get out of your chair until the floor manager says you may.
- Lose your cool.

Take care not to overlap the interviewer's question. Start your answer only when you are sure the interviewer is finished. This allows the editor to cut out the interviewer and insert another reporter's voice.

Delivery

Sounding your best on radio usually results from a combination of good genes and friendly engineers. There's not too much you can do about how you sound. Speak naturally. And remember, you will sound much better if what you say makes interview sense.

If you must read a prepared statement, try not to read stiffly or in a stilted manner. Relax. Act as if you were speaking to a friend and explaining your message to him face-to-face. Some people find that shuffling their feet under the desk or swaying in their chairs helps relax their voices.

Most radio interviews are taped over the phone. For engineering reasons, the interviewer sometimes has to tuck the microphone under his chin, so his or her voice may seem somewhat remote. Resist the natural impulse to speak in a half-shout as you would over a genuinely bad connection.

The Print Media

A face-to-face interview with a reporter from the print media should cause you little distress. Unless you are responding to questions about a breaking news story, you have complete control over the time and place of the interview. You can welcome the reporter into your territory, so to speak, and set the tone for what is to follow.

Initial Contact

When a reporter from the print media calls for an interview, establish immediately what it is he or she is looking for. What is the concept of the story? Will it be a major feature article? Who else is being interviewed? Will the reporter be playing you against one or more people representing different points of view? Will a photographer be present?

In accomplishing the above, don't be defensive ("Why are you asking questions about my agency?") and don't evade the opportunity to be interviewed if you can genuinely contribute to the article. If you feel you have nothing to contribute, say so, but give reasons the reporter can accept.

Preparation

Preparing for an interview for the print media is not much different from preparing for a speech or broadcast interview. It requires the same type of research and knowledge of the audience. One extra thing you can do, however, is have some printed material ready for the reporter to verify facts and, particularly, figures. This will help ensure against your being misquoted or accused of misrepresentation.

During the Interview

Greet the reporter cordially, and be sure you've noted his or her name and the name of the publication correctly.

You may wish to invite the reporter to join you on a sofa or in comfortable chairs rather than sitting face to face with your desk between you. If you do sit at your desk, don't put your feet up.

As with any interview, answer all questions as directly and completely as possible. If you don't know an answer, say so and offer to get back to the reporter with an answer as soon as possible. Be aware of the reporter's deadline. If information cannot be revealed, or cannot be released until a certain time, indicate this as well.

If necessary, you may wish to give the reporter the names and telephone numbers of other people in your agency who will

be able to support your claims or supply additional, perhaps more specialized, information. Let these people know that the reporter may be phoning.

When the interview is over, ask the reporter when the article might appear in print and if he or she would be so kind as to send you a copy.

Interview Etiquette

Don't give away a reporter's exclusive. If a reporter develops a story on his or her own and comes to you for information, respect that reporter's rights to the information. Don't use the reporter's initiative as an excuse to get even more coverage for your agency by contacting other reporters.

If two reporters seek the same information, tell each that the other is working on the story. This will avoid subsequent conflict and keep you from getting caught in the middle.

Don't ask to see a story prior to publication. However, you can suggest tactfully that you are available to confirm facts and figures at the reporter's convenience.

Followup

Once you've seen the article, you may wish to phone or write to the reporter with a complimentary comment. Of course, you are also entitled to point out any factual errors or misrepresentations.

If the story doesn't appear in print, don't make a fuss. Space is limited, and judgments have to be made on the information value and timeliness of each story.

The Press Conference

There may be times when your agency receives numerous inquiries from the media about a particular program or event. Or your agency may be ready to make an announcement that will invite broad media inquiry. At times like these, hold a press conference.

The agency's spokesperson at a press conference should be its chief officer or someone he or she designates to speak for the agency. This may be the public affairs officer or an agency expert on the subject of the press conference.

Getting Ready

A press conference requires preparation. The time available for preparation depends on the reason for the press conference. There may be very little time to prepare your agency's comments on a breaking news story. On the other hand, if you are calling the press conference to make an announcement, you can pay attention to many more details.

Scheduling

Select a day and time that are convenient for reporters. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday mornings at 10:00 or 10:30 are usually best for full coverage, enabling you to make that evening's early and late newscasts and the next morning's papers.

Announcement/Invitation

A week before the press conference, an announcement or invitation should be sent to representatives of the media. It should contain enough information for an editor to decide whether to send a reporter.

Follow up each invitation/announcement with a phone call a day or two prior to the press conference. Ask if someone will be coming. If not, ask if you may send a press kit.

Press Kits

Prepare press kits to be handed out as reporters arrive at the press conference. Each press kit should include a copy of the spokesperson's opening statement, if there will be one, or an agency statement on the issue or announcement. Also include appropriate fact sheets and press releases, biographies, photographs, and brochures.

Do not provide press kits to non-attendees prior to the press conference.

Location

Choose a room with good acoustics and ventilation. The room should be near telephones and away from distracting noises. Be sure that the public address system is in perfect working order.

Holding the Press Conference

The guidelines below should help you run a smooth press conference.

Time

Be sure to begin and end the press conference on time. Reporters may have other stories to cover and may not be able to wait for you to begin. By the same token, you don't want your audience to leave before you've finished.

Sign-In Sheet/Press Kits

A sign-in sheet should be available at the entrance to the room in which the press conference is being held. Have someone there to ask reporters to note their names, affiliations, addresses, and telephone numbers.

Be sure each reporter gets a press kit.

Opening

The agency public affairs officer or local representative may introduce the speaker. Otherwise, the speaker may open the press conference with a statement like: "Good morning. I'm . . . (name and title). I have a brief statement to make, after which I will answer questions. Copies of my statement and press kits are available in the back of the room."

Questions and Answers

Fielding questions at a press conference requires considerable skill. The following are pointers for the person who finds himself or herself in that position.

—Repeat every question, so that everyone can hear. This also gives you a few seconds to organize your thoughts.

—Rephrase unclear questions.

—If a question contains offensive language or words you do not like, do not repeat them even to deny them. Reporters often try to put words into a subject's mouth.

—If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Ask the reporter to leave his or her name and telephone number so that you can provide an answer. Do this quickly.

—Do not exaggerate the facts.

—Tell the truth, even if it hurts.

—Never argue with reporters or lose your cool. News people are always looking for an interesting story and may use whatever techniques they can to obtain one. Let your news, and not you, be the story.

Closing

After four or five questions, if the communications objective has been met, the press conference may be ended with a statement like: "That's all the time I have this morning. If you have further questions, please contact (person's name) or give me a call at my office."

Tips from Published Sources

The importance to government and business executives of good communications skills and a positive public image is underscored by the vast number of articles on these subjects that have appeared in publications with executive audiences.

Reprinted here is a selection of these articles. They provide further advice on preparing for and giving speeches, maintaining successful media relations, conducting productive press and electronic media interviews, and conveying the image of the successful executive.

Reprinted from *Small Business Report*.*

PUBLIC SPEAKING

An Executive Tool Requires Effective Preparation

Of the various forms of communication, none is more vital than public speaking. Speakers can persuade, inform, impress, and entertain. Public speaking is an essential executive skill.

Today's corporate executives must be conscious of their accountability to shareholders, consumers, labor, environmentalists, government regulators, and other outside groups that affect business operations. To effectively communicate organizational activities and objectives, top executives spend a great deal of time addressing business meetings, seminars, symposiums, and conferences.

Getting the message across is a formidable challenge: experienced, sophisticated business audiences now expect high-quality speeches and tend to compare business speakers with professional speakers.

Unfortunately, public speaking is frequently the most mishandled form of communication. A poorly executed performance can damage a company's as well as one's own personal image. Audiences remain unpersuaded, or worse yet, misunderstandings result. Therefore, careful preparation is required.

Executives should never arbitrarily turn down speaking engagements. At the same time, speaking invitations should only be accepted if executives feel they can: a) make a positive contribution to the event, and b) enhance the company's or their personal image.

Once the commitment to make a speech has been made, the executive must begin a thorough preparation, regardless of how brief the speech will be. In fact, the shorter the speech, the more preparation is needed, since every word must count. Although experienced speakers often sound as though they were conversing with a group of friends, that fluent delivery is the result of thorough preparation.

Obviously, business people who speak publicly must be well versed in the subject matter they are planning to discuss. Just as important, the speaker must be well informed about current events, as well as the total speaking event, to be prepared to handle questions which may range far beyond the scope of the actual speech. This requires thorough research of the audience and the program.

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The Audience

It is critical that the speaker determine the composition and size of the audience. Without this knowledge, the speech might be too basic or complex, particularly when dealing with technical subjects.

Similarly, the composition of the audience will directly affect how the topic should be presented and what slant the speaker should take. The content of a speech on offshore oil drilling, for example, will differ dramatically depending on whether the audience is composed of oil executives or Sierra Club members.

Writing a good speech is not enough. An awareness of the total speaking event is the overview that must be achieved.

Therefore, speakers must find out everything they can about their audiences. Questions that need to be answered include:

- What are the size and demographics (age, sex, income, education, etc.) of the audience?
- How thorough is audience knowledge of the proposed topic?
- What specific areas of the topic will the audience be most interested in?
- What specific wants and needs can the speech satisfy?
- What are the audience's values and attitudes?
- Will the audience most likely be hostile, supportive, or neutral to the total program and the speaker's particular topic and position?
- Are there any controversial issues surrounding the speech that might require special attention or avoidance?

From the answers to these questions, a speaker can determine whether the speech must provide a basic explanation of the topic, describe unusual applications, recount current developments, offer a full background presentation, or do a combination of these.

Speakers who not only know their audience but also thoroughly prepare the speech material can predict many audience questions in advance. For example, questions can be anticipated to arise from areas in the speech that are covered lightly, are innovative, or are otherwise of particular interest to the audience.

Regardless of the preparation, successful speakers realize that they cannot make everyone in an audience listen. Most will listen attentively, but there are always a few who will be engrossed in their own personal thoughts, be preparing rebuttals to the speech because of personal prejudices, or simply be dozing off. Speakers, however, can make their speeches more compelling by identifying who they are speaking to, about what, and why.

The Program

The nature of the program itself will put many restrictions on how the speech will be presented. The speaker should find out the names, backgrounds, and topics of other speakers, as well as the flexibility allowed in selecting a topic. The topic, time limits, and order of appearance should all be agreed upon in advance. Questions that need answering include:

- How much time is allowed for the speech?
- Exactly where will the speech take place and how is the room set up?
- Are there a lectern and microphone? Are roving microphones available for audience participation? If so, who will moderate, and can questions be "planted" to get discussion going?
- Will audio-visual aids such as projectors, sound equipment, blackboards, etc., be available? (When possible, have a personal aide handle logistical problems.)
- Who will introduce the speakers? (A speaker's opening remarks typically refer to the person who made the introduction.)
- Which speakers will precede and follow, and what will their topics be? (Care must be taken to avoid repetition of material.)
- Will speakers remain on stage before and after their speeches?
- Will the press attend? (Public and private speeches are never "off the record." If the press attends, the speaker should prepare copies of the text to avoid being misquoted.)

Purpose and Scope

Once the audience and program have been identified, judgment must be exercised in tailoring the purpose and scope of the speech. A list of objectives, ideas, opinions, and conclusions should be drawn up, keeping in mind the composition of the audience and time limits involved.

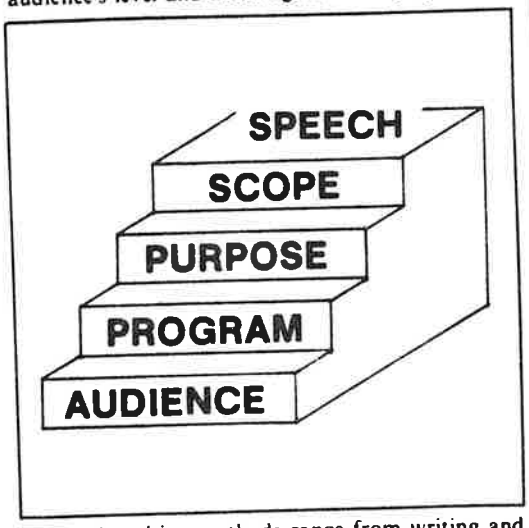
The purpose of any speech is to achieve desired results and to leave the audience better informed on the subject matter than before. To do this, the scope of the speech must be limited and the presentation of

the facts, strong. Questions that need to be answered include:

- What action should result from the speech?
- What message must be communicated to initiate it?
- When should this action be taken?
- Who should originate the action?
- Should opinions, general concepts, and conclusions be stated forcefully or moderately?

COMPOSING THE SPEECH

With the audience, program, purpose, and scope defined, the speech can be composed. A logical and concise progression of the material must be arranged that will achieve the speaker's desired results. The goal is to effectively communicate with—not impress—the audience. This means speaking on the audience's level and avoiding technical jargon.



Speech writing methods range from writing and memorizing the entire speech, to jotting down a simple outline. Which method is best depends on the speaker and the topic, but most speakers avoid being chained to written material. Flexibility can be provided by memorizing the opening and closing statements, and referring to brief notes for the body of the speech. Only highly technical speeches should be read word-for-word.

Regardless of the method used, the writing process starts by outlining the speech, including an introduction, a main body, and a conclusion. Even if the speech is not going to be read in its entirety, it should be completely researched and written down. The desired result is a speech that is short and to the point, not long and overly methodical. Although some executives retain a professional speech writer to accomplish this, it is only effective if the writer knows and can write in the speaker's style.

The Introduction

The introduction should provide a brief bridge to the body of the speech—for example, a series of rhetorical questions, a human interest story, a dramatic illustration, startling facts, a familiar quotation, or humorous anecdote. When properly used to illustrate a line of thought, humor is an effective means of establishing speaker-audience rapport. However, inappropriate, distasteful, or failed humor will detract from—rather than add to—the speech.

The introduction is perhaps the most important part of the speech—the audience will decide whether or not to listen after the speaker's first few words

The purpose of the introduction is to gain attention and create a desire to listen. This is possibly the most important portion of a speech, since the audience will decide whether or not to listen after the first few words.

The introduction should begin by briefly acknowledging the audience and chairperson with a thank you and quickly establishing the importance of the topic. Remember, audiences listen only if they believe that the speech will benefit *them*. Their first thought is: "What will this information do for me?" Therefore do not waste time in the introduction flattering the audience with compliments (which often sound insincere), or outlining the content of the speech. Instead, explain the importance of the topic in brisk, factual terms that launch the speaker into the main body.

The Main Body

The main body of the speech should be stated and amplified through explanation, rather than confrontation. The facts, examples, and logic of the body of the material should speak for themselves. However, speakers should not avoid controversy, since it often stimulates interest and participation. It is better to have the audience actively involved in debate than nodding in boredom.

Using abbreviations and acronyms (e.g., OSHA) under the assumption that the audience is familiar

with them should be avoided. Specify the full name of what you are referring to at least once—Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The ideas presented within the main body should be introduced and substantiated one at a time. The speaker should be prepared to reveal the sources of facts and bases for assumptions supporting each position. At the same time, care must be taken not to overburden the audience with too many ideas. When discussing abstract concepts, use examples with descriptive names that the audience can identify with.

The Close

The close is the speaker's final chance to get across the purpose of the speech. All significant points should be pulled together to clarify meaning and increase audience retention. Then the closing should be delivered in a dramatic, encouraging and enthusiastic manner—perhaps containing a memorable quote—leaving the audience with a positive image of the speaker and the topic.

Editing

After the first draft of the speech has been completed, it must be edited and re-edited. As a general rule, the editing process should cut the original draft in half. Plan on using all of the allotted time, but have an abridged version in the event time runs short.

Editing also improves the speaker's familiarity with speech content, thus increasing confidence during the presentation. After editing, the speech should be put into the form of condensed, typed notes, double or triple-spaced for readability, using upper and lower case letters to increase word recognition.

Use of Aids

The following aids are useful in improving audience retention:

Handouts. When giving a highly detailed or technical speech, handouts can improve audience understanding and retention. The handout might include examples or illustrations for later reference, sources for additional information, or a basic outline of the entire speech.

If the handout is to be used by the audience as a guide during the speech, follow it. If the audience cannot follow the speech, they become confused and distracted. If the handout is for later reference, do not distribute it until after the presentation.

Visual Aids. An imaginative and appropriate use of visual aids can greatly improve audience retention. Aids such as charts and graphs are especially effective for illustrating numerical data that cannot be dramatically illustrated with numbers alone.

The goal of a speech must be to effectively communicate, not impress

Slide projectors, flipcharts, blackboards, video tapes, etc., can also be effectively used. However, a speaker must ensure that visual aids are not overused to the point that they interfere with speaker-audience attention.

Examples. Abstract concepts are much more easily understood when illustrated with real-world examples. Examples should be considered before the speech, thus avoiding the confusion that results from poorly-conceived examples constructed on the spur of the moment. To enhance the impact of an example, the speaker should use situations that the audience can relate to.

Background Information. When speaking about an innovative technical breakthrough or any area with which the audience is not familiar, background information can be extremely useful. With the proper background, the audience can better appreciate the benefits that can be gained from the speech. Background information can be delivered verbally, in a written handout, or through an audio-visual presentation. □

NEXT MONTH:

Public Speaking: Making an Effective Presentation.

Topics include: overcoming speaker anxiety; the importance of rehearsal; effective use of eye contact, voice projection, and body movement; and handling the unexpected.

Reprinted from *Small Business Report.**

PUBLIC SPEAKING:
The Presentation

When the speaker is more important than the speech

Of the various forms of business communication, none is more vital than public speaking. Speakers can persuade, inform, impress, and entertain—public speaking is an essential executive skill.

Last month, Part 1 of this two-part report covered steps in preparing an effective speech. It demonstrated the need to be well-informed on the topic matter as well as the total speaking event—the audience, the program, and the intended purpose and scope. Part 1 also covered the proper method of writing and editing an effective speech, as well as the proper use of aids.

This month, Part 2 will focus on making an effective presentation, and how to overcome the barriers to a successful speech. Anxiety is often the first obstacle that must be overcome.

SPEECH ANXIETY

Some speakers feel comfortable in front of small, familiar groups, but lose their confidence when speaking to a large audience of strangers. Others are comfortable with large, impersonal groups, but are intimidated by small staff meetings or conference table presentations.

Speaker anxiety, or stage fright, is experienced by 80% of American adults. Although there is no cure, anxiety can be controlled by remembering four points:

1. Although speakers are conscious of their stage fright, audiences rarely notice it. Therefore, the message is usually successfully conveyed despite nervousness.
2. Audiences are usually present because they *want* to hear the speaker's message. The typical audience is receptive and cordial, not hostile.
3. Stage fright is nothing more than a sign of uncontrollable energy. When properly directed it can be used to add impact to the speech.
4. Unless a small amount of fear is present, the speech will be flat, dull, and lack energy. Fear, when controlled, gives the speaker an edge, adding excitement and anticipation to the entire presentation.

Simple methods can be successfully used by speakers to control anxiety and to channel excess energy. For instance, walking up a flight of stairs or doing discreet isometric exercises before a presentation may provide an outlet for excessive tension.

Although effective speaking comes only with practice, speakers need not wait until the next speaking engagement to sharpen their skills. For example, the following procedures can be carried out daily to improve speaking skills:

A little fear can give one's delivery an exciting edge

1. Expand vocabulary. Whenever the definition of a word is unknown, look it up in the dictionary for exact meaning and proper pronunciation. Increased vocabulary produces greater self-confidence and variety of expression when delivering speeches.
2. Identify words with punch. When reading or listening to others, isolate and memorize power words and phrases that are particularly effective. Analyze why these words are powerful. Rephrase the idea in different words and identify what makes the original words better.
3. Gather attention-grabbing facts. Remember unusu-

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al stories, pieces of information, and illustrative examples picked up from reading or conversations. These can be used to capture audience attention during the presentation.

4. Be conscious of poor speaking habits during daily business meetings, conversations, etc. These include rambling, mumbling, unnecessary repetition, and lack of eye contact with the audience. Make a concerted effort to avoid such habits; they distract the audience and lessen the impact of a speech.

REHEARSAL

Before delivering their speeches, speakers should practice in front of coworkers, friends, family, experienced speakers, etc. Have them serve as devil's advocates, checking for clarity, interest, length, speech patterns, and mannerisms. To develop skill in answering questions, have them fire off tough, demanding questions. Going through the speech several times will increase familiarity with material and identify bad speech habits.

Audio and visual tape recordings of speech delivery are very useful for self evaluation. The speech should be listened to repeatedly during the few days before the presentation. Be critical and try to determine specific areas that need work.

Also, a speaker should mentally rehearse the speech whenever the opportunity arises. Envisioning a competent delivery lowers anxiety and improves the chances of success.

Be aware, however, that too much rehearsal can lock a speaker into a rigid format that will not allow for possible contingencies (e.g., not enough time). Furthermore, excessive rehearsal can lead to a canned presentation.

An approach used by many successful speakers while rehearsing is to develop and memorize a forceful beginning and closing. Then build the body of the speech around major points, memorizing only their sequence. The only notes used are key words that serve as reminders of the order of major points. The goal is to maximize eye contact and audience response—excessive reading defeats this purpose. If more extensive notes are needed or if reading is necessary, make red marks at appropriate points for reestablishing eye contact. Break up long phrases with dashes to signify points for pauses and deep breaths.

THE PRESENTATION

Plan an early arrival to become comfortable with the audience and to pick up additional information through the general appearance and mood of the crowd. While waiting, be attentive to the audience and other speakers rather than studying notes or daydreaming. This is especially important when sitting on stage at a speaker's table. The audience will receive a negative impression of a speaker who appears bored or preoccupied while waiting to speak.

An effective introduction by the chairperson can solicit audience interest before the speaker says a word. It is a good idea, therefore, to write an introduction tailored to the audience and give it to the chairperson beforehand. The introduction should include all speaker accomplishments that will establish credibility with the audience. Another effective method is to have the chairperson ask an opening question that smooths the transition into the speech. After the introduction, wait for full audience attention before speaking.

When taking the lectern, speakers often seem to want to use it as a physical barrier, thereby restricting two-way communication. Whenever possible, a speaker should use a hand mike, moving freely on stage and, or among members of the audience. This creates a one-on-one situation talking *to* the audience, rather than *at* them. This conveys speaker confidence and creates a positive speaker-audience energy flow. To further stimulate participation, pose questions using "we" instead of "I"- "How do we benefit from this?"

80% of audience opinion is based on how the speaker looks and sounds; 20% is based on speech content

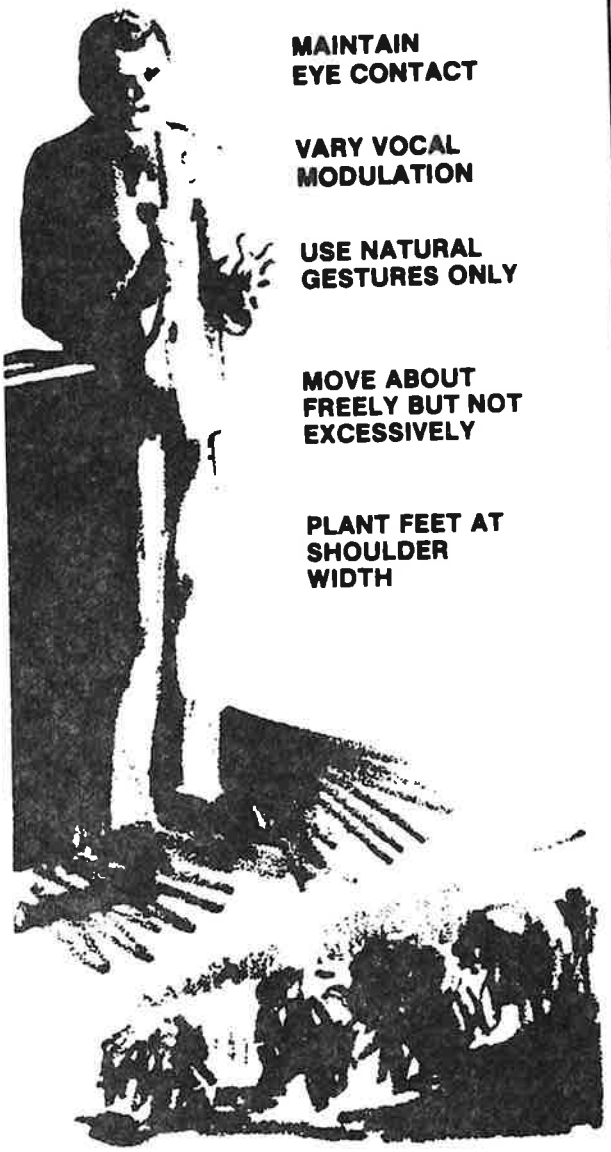
Remember, 80% of audience opinion is based on how the speaker looks and sounds, and only 20% is based on speech content and organization. Although the actual message is critically important, the appearance and presentation of the speaker clearly affects audience receptiveness. As a result, three areas should receive special attention: eye contact, voice projection, and body movement.

Eye contact is necessary to establish and maintain a positive relationship with the audience. It demonstrates speaker confidence and sincerity, and is particularly effective when focused on one individual for each idea being transmitted. This technique conveys the message that the speaker considers the idea very important and will give it to only one person at a time.

Eye contact also provides vital audience feedback that indicates whether the message is on target. Feed-

back comes primarily from nonverbal behavior, such as audience eye contact, facial expressions, head movements, and postures.

For example, when audiences look directly at a speaker it generally means that they are interested in the topic. Smiles and pleasant expressions often mean comprehension and/or agreement, facial frowns suggest confusion or disagreement, and head nods are usually positive. Audiences that sit upright are paying attention; slouching indicates boredom. Interpreted correctly, these signals provide insight as to how the speech is being received and whether corrective actions are necessary.



Voice projection, proper tone, inflection, and volume, create a positive listening environment. A low energy level and a monotonous delivery, on the other hand, make listening a chore. To achieve proper voice projection, speakers should vary the speed and volume of phrases and speak clearly.

A changing voice pattern makes the speech both easier to follow and more pleasant to listen to. Speaking softly can be extremely effective, especially following a period of greater volume. The key is to use a comfortable vocal range that is both natural and effective.

Before starting, check with the audience to make sure the speech can be heard by all. When necessary, use a microphone. Proper use of the voice means speaking in a manner to be heard by a group of 400 people, even if there are only 10. This eliminates the drawn-out, laborious, and boring sound that plagues many speakers.

Above all, be natural. The proper mix of planning and spontaneity greatly increases overall impact. A variety of vocal inflections should be used actively and purposefully, but not planned at specific points within the speech. The desired result is a natural flow of emphasis and excitement that develops from the meaning of the words.

Experience develops confidence, but confidence does not necessarily lead to competence

Body movement during a speech has a direct effect on audience impression. Although some movement is desirable (e.g., away from the lectern), too much movement is distracting and conveys speaker uneasiness. Nervous habits (pacing, scratching, rubbing eyes, wringing hands, playing with glasses, etc.) must be controlled. The challenge is to use movement effectively so that it captures the attention and support of the audience.

Although a certain amount of walking demonstrates enthusiasm and a high energy level, standing still is appropriate during most of the speech. Station-

ary feet convey authority, composure, and control. To present this desired image, feet should be firmly planted at shoulder width.

Body movement should never appear staged. Hand and arm movements are meaningful only when they come naturally. When not gesturing, hands should fall naturally down at the sides, not in pockets or behind the back. This neutral position may feel awkward, but it is less distracting than frequent, arbitrary motions.

To identify natural speaking motions, be conscious of gestures during everyday, one-on-one conversations. These same natural behaviors should be used when speaking in public. Some good rules concerning gesturing are:

- Be casual. Gestures should be a natural extension of your personality, not a stylized attempt at drama.
- Be purposeful. Gestures should be used only when they improve the overall quality and effect of the speech.
- Be active. Sweeping gestures are appropriate when they enhance the impact of words.
- Be varied. Use different gestures in conjunction with changes in emphasis, voice pitch, volume, and rate.

When concluding, let the audience know if there are any follow-up meetings, seminars, interviews, or presentations scheduled for those who desire further information. Finally, thank the audience for their courtesy and interest.

HOLDING AUDIENCE ATTENTION

Effective speakers make their messages so compelling, so interesting, and so clear that audiences want to receive them. Methods for keeping audience attention during a presentation include:

- Use "we" instead of "I," and pose questions when appropriate, to stimulate participation.
- Use visual aids (charts, graphs, blackboards, slide projectors, flipcharts, overhead projectors, etc.), especially when dealing with numerical data. However, ensure that these tools do not eliminate the necessary audience eye contact.
- Use humor when appropriate, relevant, and if it can reinforce the subject being discussed. Inappropriate or failed humor will reflect negatively on the entire speech.
- When discussing abstract concepts, use examples with descriptive names that the audience can identify with. When using abbreviations, don't assume the audience knows them—specify their meaning.
- Keep the speech short and to the point, and be prepared to shorten it even further if the program runs overtime.

THE UNEXPECTED

Distractions—coughing, late arrivals, walk-outs, background talking, etc.—inevitably occur during a speech. Ignoring them can cause the audience to shift attention. Instead, distractions should be used to the speaker's advantage. For example, after pausing to wait for the interruption to subside, use a related humorous anecdote to regain attention. Empathetic humor increases audience approval of the speaker.

Another unexpected obstacle is inadequate time when the speaking event runs too long. A speaker must be prepared to shorten the speech, skip the least important points, move as logically as possible to the conclusion, and still close forcefully.

Loss of memory, often triggered by a distraction, is another problem that many speakers experience. Toastmasters International makes the following suggestions to help speakers regain their train of thought following a disturbance:

1. Repeat the last statement for emphasis.
2. Ask for questions that have arisen at that point in the speech.
3. Expand upon the last statement with an example or anecdote.
4. Tell an appropriate joke or story.
5. Summarize the speech material up to that point. (Summarization not only helps speakers retrace their thoughts, but also helps the audience remember significant points.)

CONCLUSION

The fundamentals of public speaking—planning, preparation, and practice—are relatively easy to learn. Well-prepared speakers experience less anxiety, talk naturally, and effectively discuss topics about which they have extensive knowledge. This results in a clear presentation of ideas and the desired audience response. □

THE FEDERAL PAGE

Washington Journal

Talking in 5-Second Bites, and Other Tips for the Tube

By Bill Peterson
Washington Post Staff Writer

The audience included state legislators from Pennsylvania and Illinois, two congressmen from Venezuela, three representatives of Canada's New Democratic Party, the deputy mayor of Cleveland and four people from the National Right to Life Committee.

Michael Sheehan was telling them how to look good on television. A graduate of the Yale Drama School and a former associate producer at Folger Theatre, Sheehan is a videoage Dale Carnegie, teaching politicians and corporate bigwigs, in the words of the seminar brochure, how to "think and talk in five-second increments."

Sheehan's presentation was part of a seminar this week sponsored by Campaigns & Elections, a magazine aimed at political junkies. The seminar, titled "The Message is the Message," advertised as speakers "25 of the top political experts in America." But several of the biggest names, including pollster Patrick Caddell and media expert Bob Squier, didn't show up.

That gave a host of lesser known, younger pollsters, media experts, speechwriters and political strategists an opportunity to display their wares.

Sheehan's advice to the 60 politicians and political handlers gathered before him was that the press does not have a liberal or conservative bias, but it does have a "pervasive negative bias." Politicians should expect most questions they get on television to be negative ones, he said. The problem is that "negative questions invite negative answers."

The other thing a politician should realize is that, except in the biggest cities, most television reporters don't know much about politics, he said. Most are overworked general assignment reporters who might have to cover four stories a day. This means a political interview might be squeezed in between a circus and a fire. "How much time do they have to prepare to talk to you?" Sheehan asked. "Zero."

So what does a smart politician do?

Sheehan said a politician should spend a minute or two talking to the reporter before the interview begins, to establish rapport and provide a little background. Then, when the camera begins to roll, "Have something positive to say and say it positively," he added.

Sheehan offered a "quick list" of other performance techniques and had several people attending the seminar, including Mississippi Secretary of State Dick Moltus, appear on camera to illustrate them.

- Smile. Television flattens the face, Sheehan said. "You'll always look 15 percent more serious on the box than in real life."
- Lean forward, toward the camera. Males should cross their legs. "This breaks the flatness of shots."
- Be lively, but not jerky. "Animation is good on TV," he said. "It's easy to watch something that moves." Gestures are fine, but should be controlled and kept close to the shoulder level.
- Speak more slowly than in real life. "Keep it at a nice, easy, relaxed pace," he said. "Make something you say stand out."

If some of this seems basic, it is. Dress and appearance, Sheehan noted, can "help or hurt you." Sheehan recommended that men "always wear suits." Solid colors are usually better than patterns; blue and gray better than black, brown or tan. Light blue shirts and burgundy ties are good. "Light gray shirts are absolutely spectacular," he said. He recommends that women wear pastel, one-piece dresses. "Never, despite Nancy Reagan, wear orange or red," he said.

"What about bow ties?" someone in the crowd yelled. "No one takes anyone seriously in a bow tie," someone else shouted.

"Tell George Will that his career is over," replied Sheehan.

This is hardly the stuff of profiles in courage, but it kept the audience's attention.

"I've been in politics 15 years, and I figure it's time for me to either make a move up or out," said Joseph M. Tierney, a Boston city councilman. "I'm looking at either high office or going into the campaign managing end of the business. If there's one thing constant in politics, it's change, and I wanted to know a little more about it before I make a decision what to do."

James M. Dwinell, publisher of Campaigns & Elections, has tried to aim the magazine, and a series of "how to" seminars he launched earlier this year after purchasing the magazine, at people like Tierney. There are, he said, about 502,000 elected offices in the country and, for every office, "two people who want the job."

Television dominated the discussion. "In the old days, every neighborhood had a precinct worker," said Mike Murphy, who has made commercials for Sens. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Mack Mattingly (R-Ga.). "Now there is a precinct worker in every home. It's called a television."

Almost everyone at the seminar urged campaigns to select a single theme or message and stick with it. Consultant Jeff Brown said Americans spend an average of five minutes each week thinking about politics. Therefore, every campaign should operate on the "KISS rule"—"keep it short and simple"—or the "KISSS rule"—"keep it short, simple and stupid."

What the Experts Have to Say About Fashion, Color, Body Language, and Appearing in Public

SECRETS OF THE IMAGE MAKERS

By Laura Elliott

Can image really matter *that* much? Weren't we taught never to judge anyone by appearance alone?

"Let me put it to you this way," says media consultant Michael Sheehan. "How many times have you heard someone say, 'I don't agree with Reagan's policies, but I think he's a nice guy'? So far, Reagan has pretty much gotten what he wants through his nice-guy image."

"Reagan's clothes and demeanor make him look in charge," adds wardrobe consultant Helen Moody. "He's soothing. He seems sincere. He talks to people like he's Big Daddy, and they trust him."

Like it or not, our subliminal radar is always on, scanning each person we meet for clues that help us categorize, accept, or reject: A television newscaster who wears funny ties, a brother-in-law who has annoying table manners, a colleague who wears too much make-up.

In turn, we worry about how *we* come across to the people we're trying to impress. That's particularly true in a competitive, white-collar city like Washington, where a lot of people are concerned with getting an edge, with developing an image that both ensures and reflects success.

For a price, a new breed of Washington consultants—the image makers—will tell you how to dress, walk, and talk to score points with the right people. If you're after a stockbroker's job, they'll tell you how to dress the part. They'll show you which colors go best with your eyes and your complexion and will suggest fashion styles that enhance your figure. Or if you think you might end up on TV, they'll show you how to tilt your head to minimize the shadows cast by lights.

It's a booming business, especially in Washington, where the number of image consultants has doubled since 1982—there are now 30 with local addresses listed in the *Directory of Personal Image Consultants*. "Washington is really overloaded," says *Directory* editor Jacqueline Thompson. "It probably has to do with all the government people who were laid off at the beginning of this administration."

Some of the credit for the growth of the image trade should go to John Molloy, who popularized the IBM philosophy of corporate dressing in his 1975 bestseller, *Dress for Success*. "People who look successful and well educated receive preferential treatment in almost all of their social or business encounters," wrote Molloy, who advocated pinstripes and dark colors, which he dubbed "the positive authority symbols."

Taking their cue from Molloy's success and capitalizing on the insecurities that come with a tight job market, consultants have fine-tuned his "wardrobe engineering" strategy into what they consider a science of image-building. And they've found an eager market.

But it's not only corporate climbers who are seeking the advice of image consultants. More and more companies, such as Xerox, AT&T, and Ramada, are hiring local consultants to give their employees pointers on grooming and style. "These companies spend a lot of money on logos, stationery, and location to create an image. Their salespeople can ruin that. Would you want to buy a $300,000 house from a man in polyester?" says Brenda York of York Associates in McLean, who recently counseled members of the Maryland Association of Realtors and the Department of Agriculture on proper business attire and attitudes.

"Corporations hire consultants because they can't legally impose a dress code," says York. "They need me to say things that are too personal for them to say, like about hygiene—body odor and hair styles. They also complain about pregnant women walking around in bare feet because their feet hurt. If I say it for them, they can make their points without embarrassing anyone."

As the business grows, image consultants are branching into other areas. Xerox hired media consultant Sheehan, for instance, to teach its regional sales managers to conduct motivational meetings with their sales reps. Some lawyers hire consultants to dress their clients for court appearances.

Consultants basically fall into two categories, color/wardrobe and public speaking/media. Services and fees vary considerably—from color analysts who charge $55 to find your correct "palette" of flattering colors, to "personal shoppers" who charge comparable hourly rates for cleaning out your closets and revamping your wardrobe, to media consultants who can ask as much as $3,500 for a grueling ten-hour session to train corporate spokesmen to handle hostile TV interviews.

It's true, of course, that a person with common sense and an eye for color can often do as well on his or her own when it comes to choosing a wardrobe. But consultants contend that some people are too busy or not attentive enough to detail to create the proper image. And, they point out, even those who read wardrobe guidebooks sometimes analyze their colors incorrectly. An expert, trained to see details, can find faults or bad habits the client isn't aware of.

Some consultants classify people according to "seasons": Skin and hair coloring determine whether you're a winter, spring, summer, or fall, which in turn

determines which colors you should wear. Consultants then group clients according to body type—classic, dramatic, romantic—which dictates wardrobe, hair styles, and make-up. All elements must be consistent.

A "dramatic," the thinking goes, can't wear an "ingenue" hair style, nor should a "romantic" try a "dramatic" make-up job. To do so would simply ruin the whole look.

And there's only one way to be sure that your look is right for you, say consultants: Hire an expert.

The Right Colors

"When you're wearing the right colors in the right styles, you look at ease, balanced, and harmonious. You appear credible and capable," says McLean native Carole Jackson, author of the best-selling *Color Me Beautiful*.

Consultants also promise that such a holistic approach to wardrobe and make-up actually makes life easier, especially for women, who are the majority of their clientele. "It wastes so much time and money to have so many shades of lipsticks, shoes, and purses," says Executive Wardrobe Consultants' Lynda Rosenberg, who teaches "Pinstripe and Power" and "Image and Style" courses for Washington's Open University. "You really should have only one blush and two lipsticks. Knowing your colors makes you coordinate your closet and spend less money on unmatched pieces."

Jackson's "seasonal" system categorizes people according to the predominant coloring of the skin. The skin tone comes from the combination of three pigments: melanin (brown), carotene (yellow), and hemoglobin (red). "Cools," says Jackson, have a bluish tint to their skin and should wear clothes with the same blue-based coloring. Jackson subdivides them into winters and summers, according to the strength of coloring. A winter generally has deeper coloring and darker features and hair than a summer, who wears the same general colors but in much softer tones than a winter. "Warms" have a golden cast to their skin and are subdivided into autumn and spring, with autumn having the stronger coloring.

To determine skin tone, hold a white sheet of paper next to your face or wrist and look for a blue or gold highlight. A winter, according to Jackson, usually has a subtle blue coloring, with non-rosy cheeks. Hair is dark, sometimes with a touch of red and often graying prematurely. Eyes are deep and vivid browns, blues, and greens, often rimmed by gray. Jackie Onassis and Elizabeth Taylor are winters, says Jackson. A winter looks best in grays and clear primary colors, Chinese blue, emerald green, hot pink, and fuchsia and, according to Jackson, is the only "season" that should wear black and pure white. Brown is not recommended because it makes the face appear sallow.

Summers, meanwhile, have strong blue undertones, pink cheeks, fair or auburn hair, and blue, green, or hazel eyes. Nancy Kissinger and Caroline Kennedy, Jackson says, are summers. Summers look best in lighter grays, soft blues, roses, and other pastels. Jackson says they should never wear orange or peach because those colors fight with their natural coloring.

Autumns have golden undertones and are often freckled—redheads are generally autumns. Eyes are brown or green with golden flecks, but never blue. Shirley MacLaine, Ann-Margret, and Katharine Hepburn are autumns, according to Jackson. Autumns look better in earth tones—browns, golds, rusts, and burnt oranges, but should avoid black, navy, gray, pink, and purples.

Springs have delicate skin with peach and cream tones, hair generally blond, sometimes with red highlights, and eyes blue or green. Joan Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and Julie Andrews are springs. Springs should wear light browns, corals, and yellow-based pastels, Jackson advises. They shouldn't wear black or burgundy because their coloring is too delicate for those colors.

In Color Me Beautiful sessions, consultants drape clients with tea-towel-sized swatches—some flatter, some don't. After a process of elimination, the consultant informs the client of her season, provides her with prepackaged seasonal swatches and a guide to choosing correct make-up colors, and explains how to incorporate the proper colors into her wardrobe. If an autumn, for instance, has a closet full of winter blues, reds, and blacks, the consultant advises her to start bringing in the proper earth-tone colors through blouses, scarves, and sweaters to get flattering colors near her face.

Jackson's concept is having far-reaching effects in the retail and cosmetic industry. Cosmetic companies such as Lancôme and Clinique have issued guidelines to sales clerks that match make-up colors with the appropriate seasons. Retail stores are also starting to feel the pressure from "season" addicts coming into stores armed with swatches.

Nordstrom, a department store in Seattle, already has set up clothes racks according to seasons, says Jackson, and her consultants give regular seminars to J.C. Penney salesclerks to help them understand the season philosophy. In Washington, department stores such as Saks, Garfinckel's, and Lord & Taylor have personal shoppers, and some fashion stores, such as La Vogue in Georgetown Park, have trained their clerks to give advice on coordinating colors.

Even the toy industry might get into the color act. Color Me Beautiful has been negotiating with Mattel about the possibility of making seasonal Barbie dolls, complete with the correct color wardrobe and make-up.

Although the emphasis has been on women's clothing, more and more men are showing interest in seasonal dressing. In response, Jackson has written a *Color Me Beautiful* for men that should be out this summer. "We didn't look for the men's market," says Jackson, "but they want it and are already coming to us. Some stockbrokers I know claim they can close deals better when they wear certain colors."

But some consultants, such as Joanne Nicholson, founder of Color I Associates, feel that the seasonal concept, which recommends that people avoid certain colors, is too restricting. "Each individual can wear at least one shade of every color in the spectrum," says Nicholson.

"Most of the women I help," says York, "are petite and young-looking and have a problem looking authoritative."

"The trick is finding the right intensity and hue." Nicholson divides people into four categories, according to the intensity and clarity of their skin: contrast (dark hair with ivory or olive skin), muted (brown hair with red or bronze highlights and golden skin), gentle (ash-blonds with ivory or pink skin), and light/bright (golden hair and golden skin). Light/brights and contrasts typically look best in clear, intense shades; gentle and muted people better in softer hues. Light/brights and contrasts can also wear bolder patterns, according to Nicholson. For specific color choices, Nicholson advises:

- Beige—match the color of your skin.
- Brown—match the hair color.
- White—generally should not be brighter than the color of your teeth.
- Red—should be the same as your body's natural tint. Check the color in your palms or lower lip.
- Blue—if eyes are blue, match them. If not, hold the blue next to your face; if the skin appears sallow or grayish next to the blue, you need a different shade. The same applies for green.

The Right Clothes

"You must take in the person's personality and profession as well as skin coloring," says image consultant York. "A

winter, for instance, is told to wear bold colors, peacock blues, and black. But a person with a tall figure and an intimidating personality would be too overwhelming trying those colors."

However you decide to have your colors "done," the next step is to have your body type analyzed to determine what consultants call "clothing personality."

Jackson divides women into five basic types (she's still working on the men): dramatic (tall, thin, dark, with angular features; looks best in large jewelry, padded shoulders, and other fashion extremes); sporty/natural (casual, often athletic, with a square jaw; looks best in sportswear and tailored outfits); ingenue (youthful, dainty, and delicate; looks best in delicate prints, soft, feminine lines); romantic (generally has a curvy figure and soft features; looks best in billowy and softly draped silhouettes); and classic (neat, regular figure and facial features; can wear tailored and conservative dress, but nothing trendy).

Other consultants use systems dictated more by body shape. Alyce Klussman of Uniquely You divides women into X (broad shoulders and hips), athletic (built like a box, with no waist), pear (we all know what that means), T-shaped (thick ankles), and the slender model's body. "Given their types, we can advise women how to maximize their assets," says Klussman. "A pear-shaped woman should try to accentuate her upper torso. The average size in America is 14, so most women need help to make the most of themselves."

The next step is to perfect the image you want to project.

"Most people in Washington are near misses who aren't good with details—the right shoes or blouses," says Nancy Thompson, who grooms businessmen and political candidates and their spouses for the candidate school at the National Republican Congressional Committee. "I just need to help them with their accessories and attention to small touches so we can pull together what they already have."

"Most of the women I help," says York, "are petite and young-looking and have a problem looking authoritative. I tell them to get out of the blue pinstriped suit and bow tie because it makes them look straight out of college. No imagination is a bad image to have. Women on the top—or those who want to look like it—should have some individuality and femininity."

For such women, the consultants advise:

Wear silk blouses with stock ties, fastened with a good pin instead of tied in a bow; no pants; closed-toe pumps, which are kept polished; bone-colored stockings.

Wear pearls or solid, expensive jewelry. "Better to have one good piece you wear all the time than a lot of cheaper stuff," says Klussman. No plastic rings or bracelets. Wear a good leather belt with a metallic buckle to contrast with the fabric of a suit.

A jacket is a woman's power statement, says Rosenberg. Never take it off in the boardroom. Don't wear short-sleeved shirts or skirts with slits. Hair should be swept back from the face. Save sexy for after hours.

For authority, says Leatrice Eiseman in *Alive with Color*, stick to dark colors such as navy, gray, deep evergreen, medium and deep taupes, raisin, and wine. Use the bright and feminine colors like rose and teal for accents in blouses and scarves.

Leather is threatening, and suede too soft and sexy for the office. Avoid shiny fabrics, which make things look bigger.

For businessmen, Thompson has this advice:

Stick to dark-gray and navy-blue suits. (Molloy claims that brown is not an authoritative color.)

Shirts should be 100 percent cotton, light blue, pink for contrast, or white. Don't wear a button-down shirt with a three-piece suit; it's not dressy enough. If you want initials on your shirt, they should be small and simple block letters.

If wearing a vest, don't button the bottom button. Three-piecers demand lace-up shoes.

Sports jackets are acceptable but risky in the office. "Be aware that without a suit, you may lose some stuffiness but also lose power," warns Thompson.

Take your topcoat off before entering the boardroom so you don't struggle in front of your peers. Beards are not advisable. "A hairy face generally doesn't build trust, because no one can see you."

Don't wear green except in a tie. Wear socks that reach to the knee so that legs aren't exposed when crossed.

Clasping your hands behind your head during a conversation can indicate relaxed comfort or an assertion of power.

The Right Gestures

When you're all dressed up with someplace to go, let the body-language experts tell you how to carry yourself. Writing in *The Professional Image*, Susan Bixler makes the usual recommendations of a firm handshake and plenty of eye contact. But Bixler goes into more arcane points. A stranger will take only about five seconds to evaluate you when you enter an office, says Bixler, and your body language can help create a favorable reception.

Keep your face calm, she advises. Raised eyebrows indicate disapproval, nervousness, or questioning of the conversation. Jiggling feet, clicking pens, and tapping fingers are also dead giveaways that you're tense. You may cross your legs, but women should be careful not to show too much skin, and men are advised not to cross legs "in a feminine manner. It is a definite turn-off to most people in business," says Bixler.

Clasping your hands behind your head during a conversation indicates relaxed comfort or an assertion of power. Feet on the desk, she says, can suggest command and domination, but can be patronizing to women. "Steepling"—placing the fingertips of both hands together in front of you to form a steeple—"is a very effective gesture that is rarely offensive and will establish you as someone both evaluative and in control. It's a good counter to aggressive power-positioning," writes Bixler. If you really want to practice one-upmanship in a meeting, assume the steeple and let your glasses perch on the end of your nose.

Body language can also be effective for public speaking. "Don't shotgun your eyes around the audience," advises Lou Hampton, director of the Executive TV Workshop, who advises lawyers and businessmen on speaking in front of groups. "A lot of times before I speak, I greet people at the door of the reception, before the program starts, so I'll have some acquaintances in the audience. "Use gestures," Hampton adds. Stand with your hands at about chest level so that they move naturally during your talk. Don't use jargon or technical data, which bog down the flow. Don't grab the podium and hang on for dear life so that you never gesture at all. It looks as if you have no emotional commitment to what you're saying."

Some consultants will even advise you on reading the body language or "chemistry" of others. Stanley Hyman is director of the Identity Research Institute, which specializes in helping clients, many of whom are government and military retirees, to start new careers. And he contends that there are some important things you should look for when you go for a job interview.

"Jobs are gotten through chemistry," says Hyman, "and there are certain subconscious interactions you can control by understanding applied psychology. Say you walk into an office and see that the interviewer's desk is as neat as a pin, with papers piled carefully in the corner. This man is a workaholic, a neatnik. He

probably doesn't like innovation, is not particularly creative. It probably wouldn't endear you to him to say you're creative and would really like to change things in his business."

How to Handle Public Appearances

Media consultants go beyond fashion to concentrate on interview and speaking techniques. And these days, most of their clients are business people.

"It's like insurance," says Michael Sheehan, who has trained representatives of Xerox, American Express, PEPCO, and the Washington Capitals. "Each day across the country, there are 10,000 feature stories on local news, network news, and talk shows. Your local station alone needs at least thirteen stories for their six o'clock news, seven days a week. Somewhere along the line, a businessman is going to be approached for a story. It's better to be prepared, because there's nothing harder to recover from than a media disaster and nothing more damning than a 'no comment.' TV viewers are educated now. They recognize when someone is evading a question or is nervous. Executives can't afford to sidestep."

Using video equipment and mock interviews in studios and even on the street, media consultants teach clients to overcome nervousness, maintain eye contact, prepare for tough questions, and manipulate an interview so they can appear responsive to the interviewer but still make predetermined points.

"The camera is like truth serum," says Susan Peterson, who left TV news for media consulting a few months ago. "We can put someone who's normally calm in front of it and it's as if they're naked. You'll discover all sorts of psychoses. We help them deal with that."

To prepare for hit-and-run interviews, clients learn to talk in "soundbites" or "headlines—eighteen-second responses," according to Hampton.

"If you can make a concise, semi-colorful statement, you can almost be guaranteed it will make the six o'clock news," says Sheehan. "The most frequent complaint I hear is that clients have been taken out of context. That's what happens if you ramble on for three minutes."

For sit-down interviews, consultants have very definite advice:

Dress: No white. Wear blue shirts. "It comes off being closest to white," says Moody, who has done wardrobe consulting for several Channel 7 reporters and newscasters. "Ties can't be busy. And the knot should vary according to the job. A sportscaster can wear a thicker, more casual knot than an anchor."

Don't wear too much lipstick. Viewers will watch the lips move on camera rather than listen. "Lipstick should be the same color as the tongue to look natural," says Lillian Brown, chief of makeup for CBS, who also advises that you watch out for circles under the eyes, shiny foreheads, and five o'clock shadows. "They distract."

Dress in neutrals with no large patterns. Don't wear big jewelry that will reflect light. Women should have skirts below the knee. No open-toe shoes: "For some reason, they look terrible on camera," says Hampton.

Body language: Sit on the edge of your chair, "in a starter's position," looking eager to talk. Don't cross your legs; it looks like a blocking motion. If you must cross your legs, do it at your ankles.

Don't look to the side when asked a tough question. "It looks as if you're rolling your eyes to heaven for help."

Don't clasp your hands; it looks nervous and impedes natural gesturing.

Breathe deeply in yoga-like breaths to keep the voice in the lower resonances. This is particularly important for women's credibility, says Brown.

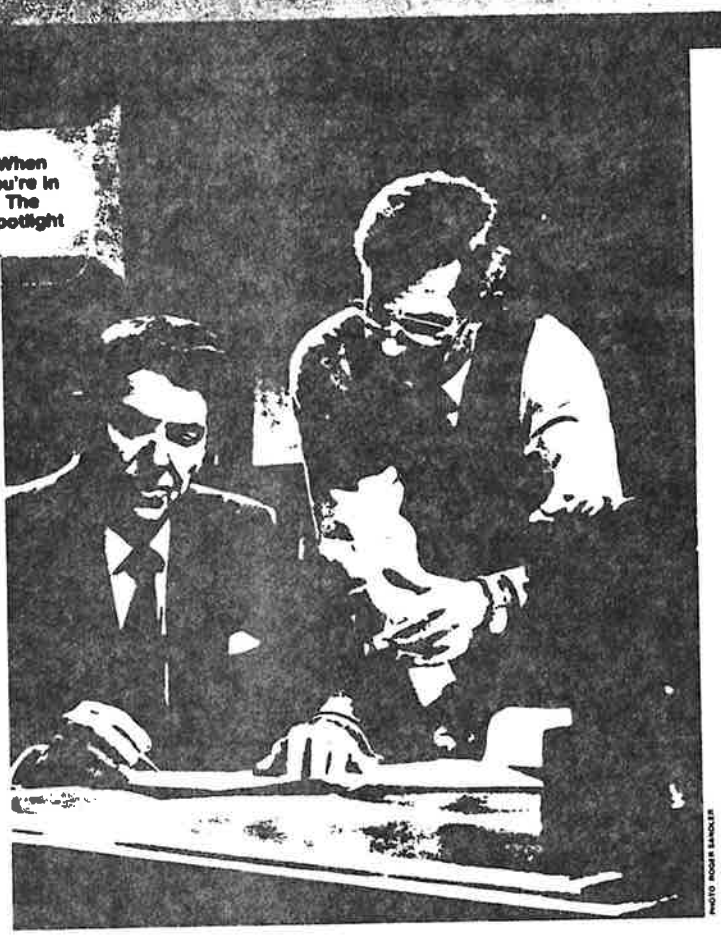
Interview techniques: Assert yourself when the reporter pauses to check notes. Take that time to go back to a point you want to make.

Use "sparklers," anecdotes and examples to brighten speech. "Don't repeat a pejorative. "If someone asks, 'Why does your company rape the land?' don't say, 'My company doesn't rape the land,'" says Peterson. "Rephrase it."

How much can an image consultant really accomplish? "Few people have the innate magnetism of a world leader," says Peterson. "We can't really give you it if you don't have it, but we can come really close."

A Nation's Business Reprint

When You're In The Spotlight



President Reagan and Peter Hannaford work on a speech. The President is prepared, even for his "impromptu" remarks.

PHOTO ROGER SANDLER

Why Off the Cuff Is Off the Mark

Many speeches put audiences to sleep, but you can wake them up instead. Preparation makes all the difference.

By Peter Hannaford

CLICHÉS LAP about your ears. The speaker's tone is flat. His message is muddy. After 30 minutes, you feel numb. This describes the audience reaction to a large number of the speeches given by business executives on any day of the year throughout the nation.

Why does this happen? The greatest single reason: too little preparation. Some executives with a speech commitment will be "too busy" or too preoccupied with "more important" matters to assign all but last-minute time to preparation. Others may disdain obligatory corporate speaking engagements as routine drudgery. Or they may be fearful of turning in a bad performance, so they choose a dull, low-key recitation rather than risk an effort to inspire their audience.

If the speaker has not thought out what he or she wants to accomplish with the speech (the objective) and has not developed a line of reasoning (the strategy) for reaching the objective, the speech is doomed to failure before it is given.

Unfortunately, the price of a poor speech, especially if it is delivered to one of the speaker's constituencies—employes, shareholders, customers—is an audience left thinking that management cannot communicate effectively.

Sometimes a speaker deludes himself into believing that, because he knows the subject well, he can "wing it" with an off-the-cuff speech. Mark Twain once said, "It takes three weeks to prepare a good ad-lib speech."

President Reagan might add that it can take years. I have been with him countless times when he had to give impromptu remarks to an audience. Those remarks were not composed out of thin air. In most cases he was relying on his excellent memory for anecdotes, well-turned phrases and examples to illustrate his points. His remarks thus had a pace and conviction that brought immediate and positive audience response.

By contrast, recently I went to a luncheon meeting of a well-known civic forum in a major city to hear a senior government official talk about his assignment. Instead of speaking for 20 minutes—a good length—and taking questions for 10, he spoke for 40 minutes and took questions for 20.

The audience squirmed as he pulled cards from a stack, more or less at random, and commented on this or that aspect of his organization's program. The speech was disconnected; the objective unclear. He had not organized or rehearsed it.

I left not knowing what message the official wanted to convey. It was an opportunity wasted.

Not everyone is a gifted phrasemaker or platform orator, but if a speaking date is important enough to accept, the speech is important enough to be properly prepared. Any executive can deliver a clear, effective message from the podium if he or she spends the necessary time to organize and rehearse.

Whether you write your own speeches or use a staff or free-lance speechwriter, you can avoid the problems described. Here is a seven-point checklist I have found consistently useful:

PETER HANNAFORD, *chairman of a national public relations firm, was a senior assistant to Ronald Reagan when he was governor of California and a communications adviser during the Reagan 1976 and 1980 presidential campaigns. Hannaford is the author of* The Reagans: A Political Portrait, *published by Coward, McCann.*

Reprinted From Nation's Business, May 1984

• Identify the subject. What is it you want to talk about?

• Focus on the objective of the speech. What basic message do you want the audience to remember?

• Get the audience's attention. Start your speech with something pertinent to the subject and vivid (it does not always have to be a joke).

• Show the need for whatever action you are going to propose or announce. In other words, set up the problem, using examples.

• Describe that action—such as a new company policy or a desirable change in a particular public policy or the introduction of a new product line—and why it will benefit your audience.

• Supply evidence to support the action—statistics, examples of the success of similar actions, your vision of expected results.

• Ask for support from the audience. In your conclusion, let them know there is something they can do.

While lack of preparation time—in both crafting the speech and rehearsing it—is the greatest cause of dull, ineffective speechmaking, failure to write for the ear instead of the eye ranks a strong second. Most business people do not speak from the podium as they do in everyday life. As a result, they are stiff and wooden on the platform. The remedy: use everyday words that come naturally.

THIS IS ANOTHER of Ronald Reagan's communications secrets. He long ago learned to write for the ear, not the eye. After years in radio, then in films (which require a well-developed memory) and then in television, his platform speaking was automatically tailored to a listening audience.

Today, even though he has a team of speechwriters in the White House, he works over the drafts (as he has for years), reshaping phrases so they sound more natural to the ear. He is in a minority.

Most business executives and politicians who have a hand in writing their own speeches treat them as essays. Many of their professional writers do the same, since they have usually come from research or print media backgrounds.

Yet, the podium does not require a stentorian approach to communication—far from it. Two centuries ago, Charles James Fox, an English orator, put this in perspective when he said, "A speech is not an essay standing on its hind legs."

Sometimes a speaker will deliberately write for the eye if it is more important that the speech get "on the record" for quotation rather than inspire the audience to which it is delivered. Usually, however, your first priority is to persuade the audience. Some of the best speeches do not have nearly the impact when read that they did when the tears or cheers welled up at the time they were delivered.

Still, there is no rule that says you cannot write a speech that both sounds good and reads well.

When writing for the ear, think of the sound patterns the speech will make. Be concise. If you can say it in 10 words, why take 25?

Remember that people do not usually speak in sentences and paragraphs, so don't worry about making every word fit the rules of grammar. Pauses, fragments, run-ons—all are part of our daily speech patterns and can be effective at the podium, provided they are used in a clear, purposeful manner.

WHILE consciously writing for the ear, you should avoid one of the worst elements of daily conversational speech: the cliché. Anytime you find yourself lapsing into phrases of the shoulder-to-the-wheel or eye-on-the-ball or nose-to-the-grindstone kind, you need either a stiff drink or a good night's sleep.

Clichés are substitutes for thought—they are the Muzak of speech. Worse, when you hear a speaker sprinkling clichés into his remarks, you know that badly mixed metaphors are not far behind. These make the speaker appear ridiculous, and they render the speech far less effective.

Toss out excess adjectives and adverbs along with clichés and shopworn metaphors. Colorful words that modify nouns and verbs and make them more vivid are fine, but most adjectives and adverbs dilute rather than sharpen the impact you want to make.

Once you or your writer has crafted a jewel of a speech, do not stick it in your pocket and expect to deliver it flawlessly without any practice.

If speaking is new to you, practice before a videotape camera so that you can critique your delivery and improve upon it. (Your writer or public relations director might be a good audience.) Even if you are a frequent speaker, you should always go through a new speech at least twice in rehearsal. Do it before a mirror, a friend or your spouse, or into thin air.

First, to get the right "feel" for its tone and cadence, make corrections to the text as you rehearse. Then go through the revised speech at least one more time.

Once at the lectern, you cannot escape. Everyone is waiting, looking at you. At that point, it is up to you to move things along. Many first-time speakers have a great urge to bolt and run. It helps to remember that even a frequent business speaker may be nervous for the first few moments on the platform.

IF THE EXPERIENCE is new for you, you can learn to relieve your anxiety by thinking of the audience as a group of individuals. Single out one person. Look him or her straight in the eye and talk right to that person for a few moments. Do it with another, then another.

Some of these individuals with whom you make eye contact will begin to nod at what you say. When they do, you will know you have connected. Your message is getting through. Your self-confidence will increase accordingly.

Some speakers hang on to the lectern as though it were a lifeboat from the *Titanic*. This is another sign of nervousness, and it distracts from the speech itself.

Rest your hand on the lectern or even grip it now and then for emphasis, but don't hang on to it for dear life. If you do, you will come across as nervous and dogmatic.

One way to avoid excessive lectern grip is to use your hands—not as a windmill, but for emphasis and change of pace.

For example, if you are going to underscore a point with, say, three examples, hold up three fingers when you mention this. Or, outstretched arms can indicate some broad subject. Two fingers held parallel to the floor and out in front of you can stand for a small quantity of something. The list of possibilities for useful gestures is nearly limitless.

For most speakers, frequent speaking makes for greater comfort and relaxation behind the lectern. NBC's Edwin Newman put it this way, "The only difference between the professionals and the novices is that the professionals have trained the butterflies to fly in formation." □

If a speaking date is important enough to accept, the speech is important enough to be properly prepared.

A Nation's Business Reprint

Facing an aggressive press corps at a news conference can be a chancy situation, with your company's image at stake.

How the Press Can Help Tell Your Firm's Story

Many business people cower when reporters come knocking. But experts say there's nothing to be afraid of—if you're ready.

THE PRESIDENT of a controversy-plagued corporation is arriving at the Washington office of Gray & Company for advice on press relations when a television crew ambushes him. He stammers, falters and grows angry under the attack.

Standing to one side, Robert Gray, head of the public relations firm, takes in the show with a knowing smile: He has set his own people, impersonating hostile reporters, on the client. The rest of the day will be spent showing the businessman how to protect himself in the clinches, how to see press encounters as opportunities and how to replace embarrassment with better credibility.

The media have been increasingly curious about business in recent years. Newspapers, magazines and television are devoting much more space to economic coverage.

Business people, say some of the nation's top public relations experts, must learn new skills as they adapt to greater media attention. The experts warn that the old adversarial relationship between business people and reporters can be dangerous to companies. Millions of dollars in image-building advertising can be undermined if a chief executive officer bungles a press conference or a television interview.

A major attitude change is necessary, says Gray, who urges his clients to view the media as a resource. Dealing with journalists can be a positive experience, he says, "if the business person looks at the press as one more means of communicating, if he looks at the opportunities—realizing there will be tradeoffs—and gets his point of view across."

Too often, a company attracts media attention only when something goes wrong that affects the general population: a product recall or an environmental hazard or a labor strike. Only then is it dramatically apparent that the firm must confront the press.

The experts counsel getting acquainted with the press long before any such crisis arises. "If the CEO is doing his job right in the first place, he has already developed a relationship with the press," says Paul Alvarez, chairman of Ketchum Public Relations in New York.

The CEO should invite area reporters to tour his facility, chat with them over lunch perhaps and acquaint them with the company's activities, its employes and its plans that could affect the community. Often, advises Alvarez, executives can make acquaintances in the media through community service and involvement in newsworthy projects.

Then, he says, if something goes wrong, company leaders are at least familiar with the reporters likely to cover the company's problems.

A company's executives invariably are able to see problems coming long before they are noticed by government agencies or the press. Too frequently, says Alvarez, executives nurture "a secret hope that they can work out a solution that will keep it quiet." But, he continues, the initiative is always with the party making an announcement, so if word of a problem comes from a government agency or an investigative reporter, "you are already backpedaling."

The worst thing a company can do then is stonewall, the experts agree. "'No comment' kills you," says Alvarez. "You'll never get as good a chance to tell your side of the story as right then. Be prepared to tell the whole truth from start to finish."

After a problem is revealed, and before company representatives respond to it, much hangs in the balance. It is still not too late to maintain the firm's image as a good corporate citizen.

Carole Jennings, a senior vice president at the public relations firm of Hill & Knowlton, offers these rules for a company's response: be prepared, make your main point first and be up to date on related topics.

ALVAREZ AGREES: "We counsel our clients that almost all questions can be anticipated. You can prepare yourself to answer questions forthrightly. For TV, less is more. Structure your comments in 15 words or less, crisp and quotable."

He explains that in the debate over nuclear power, foes of nuclear plants declare simply that nuclear power is bad. "Then, the nuclear power plant people want to give you 37 reasons why nuclear power is good for you. What

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PHOTO T. MICHAEL KEZA

Executives have to be totally candid and keep their cool—or "the press will sweep up the pieces," says Robert Gray, a Washington public relations expert.

they really need is to match the effect of the antinuke people."

Often a company will call a press conference to answer questions from many reporters. That is efficient, say the professionals, but it also has pitfalls.

To avoid them, company representatives "should be totally candid," says Gray. "Ultimately, they are going to have to face up to their culpability, if they are culpable. A hostile press will find the vulnerability. If the company representative says steps will be taken to make corrective changes, he builds credibility.

"If the questions are hostile, and the executive thinks the reporter is rude, sometimes he will match his rudeness. If he loses his temper, the press will sweep up the pieces. The last thing he wants is a photograph of himself screaming at the press. He should be in control, in charge, cool."

Most encounters between business people and the press are not so perilous, yet even they can be well or badly handled by the executive. In particular, the wariness many business people feel toward the press can make for an awkward interview, say Jennings and Alvarez. "People have trouble looking at an interviewer," Jennings says. "You must remember that you are having a conversation. Acknowledge introductions and greetings from the interviewer in kind. If he addresses you as 'Mister,' then address him as 'Mister.' "

She adds: "Don't be overly friendly when the interviewer is serious. It makes you look frivolous. Don't use buzzwords or insider language. People won't understand you. We have to remind our clients of that all the time. Be brief. Don't fall into the trap of giving more information than needed."

Television interviews, the professionals say, are the toughest. "You may think you'll have 15 minutes to tell your story, and the interview is over after 3 minutes," says Alvarez.

The interviewee "must be aggressive in an interview," he counsels. "Don't get into a wrestling match, but don't let the interviewer totally run the show."

The press, says Gray, "has an objective in the interview. That doesn't mean the person interviewed doesn't have a certain objective, too." Alvarez coaches his clients in the use of "conversation turners"—ways to keep an interview pointed toward the client's objective.

IT IS IMPORTANT, says Jennings, for business people to "try and look at themselves as the world looks at them." The more scientific public relations firms use videotape to give their clients a better understanding of how the world sees them.

"People can't believe that's the way they come across," notes Gray. "Even an eloquent speaker will see he is dropping his eyes to his script at the end of each point."

These independent public relations experts concede that larger companies often have effective public relations staffs, but they say that many companies do not assign enough importance to relations with the public and press.

"Too often public relations departments [within companies] work backwards," says Gray. "They take someone who is good at managing or bookkeeping and tell them to handle press. Too seldom do they hire someone with a press background."

In-house press advisers should, the experts say, be advocates for their companies, but they should also emphasize accessibility to the media. The reporter covering a company is going to describe what he sees to thousands of people who can affect the company's success.

Besides, says Gray, today's reporters are far better educated than those in the past and better able to understand an industry. Business is covered today "by writers who could run brokerage houses or plants," he says.

Businesses seek the advice of public relations firms when they need objectivity—a fresh look at their press program. They also hire them for such special services as videotaping and speech-coaching.

The bottom line is communication. People want more information about business, and the press is responding. The public relations industry is growing to meet business' need to get its message across. The end product promises to be, the experts say, a higher grade of information for the customer, employe and stockholder. □

—Henry Eason

Reprinted from Nation's Business

rather "What the Future Holds, and Why We Probably Can't Get There From Here."

Now all you have to do is compose and deliver the sucker. In putting it together, bear in mind that this is an oral, not a written, communication. This means you should use short, simple words, go long on personal pronouns—I, me, you, we—and repeat your main points, since the listener won't be able to go back and reread whatever puzzled him. To achieve the right effect, try composing initially with a Dictaphone or cassette recorder, says Fern Johnson, a professor of communication at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. If others write the talk for you, make sure that they too observe the basic principle. Dorothy Sarnoff, a Manhattanite who has taught public speaking to many a celebrity, tells of asking 20 or so U.S. State Department speechwriters whether they ever spoke aloud the remarks they prepared for senior diplomats. None ever did. And you wondered why we're in trouble around the globe.

IN THINKING ABOUT how to structure what you say, go back to the purpose you decided on. As Communispond's Windhorst observes, the standard tell-'em-what-you're-gonna-tell-'em, tell-'em, and tell-'em-what-you-told-'em works fine if your goal is to inform. If you're out to persuade, though, you're probably better off laying out the problem, marshaling the evidence for your view, then ending with a call to action.

At the beginning of your remarks, you want to get the audience on your side—and fast. Research suggests that they make up their minds on whether to like you, and to listen to you, within a minute or two after you start out. Audacious you can, of course, attempt to win them over with a joke. Be careful, though: Make sure that you can actually tell a funny story—not everyone can—and that the joke leads naturally into the body of your speech. The best openers, the experts advise, are probably tales from your own experience: sometimes self-deprecating, not necessarily thigh-slappers, but calculated to show the audience that you're pretty much like them. Or worse.

The standard wisdom says you probably can't hope to put across more than three main points. Listeners should get a sense of movement, of progression, from one part of the speech to the next. Consider using rhetorical questions to alert them to transitions. You needn't be highfalutin, though. Some of the hottest speakers on the corporate circuit—Tom Peters, Waterman's co-author, for example—seem to do nothing but string together story after story.

Some of the hottest speakers on the corporate circuit seem to do nothing but string together story after story.

In framing your conclusion, figure out precisely what you want your listeners to take away. An impulse to act? Lay out with gory specificity what they should do, whether it's writing their Congressman, selling more brake shoes, or razing Carthage. A better understanding of your subject? Summarize your main points. A warm, happy feeling? Leave 'em laughing. Time your remarks to run a bit shorter than the period allotted; besides surprising your listeners no end, this may cause them to want more, and to invite you back another time.

Once you know what you're going to say, put it into a form you can talk from. To keep you from reading, the Communispond firm recommends using your own miserably hand-drawn pictures, or ideographs, one for each major idea. If you simply must have the words in front of you, at least break down your text into natural five- of six-word phrases, one to a line, triple-spaced, with brackets to indicate the phrases that make up a single thought.

You can now attend to the truly mechanical. If you're going to use so-called visual aids—and you probably should if your audience is large—keep them simple, one phrase or idea per slide or overhead transparency. Determine in as much detail as possible how the room will be set up. Will there be a podium, for instance? How tall? If the answer is two inches below your height in stiletto heels, ask that other arrangements be made. Ensure that someone checks out the microphone before you go on.

Rehearse, but try to avoid getting it down so well that you're bored with it. A final prespeaking tip from Ohio University's Nelson: Write your own introduction. The audience is going to form an impression about you so quickly that if Mr. It-Gives-Me-Great-Pleasure stumbles through your entire potted bio—the four degrees, the military service, the time you spent heading the Thule office—you may lose them before you stand up. Furnish him instead with a brief, down-to-earth account of yourself that stresses what you have in common with your listeners.

With appropriate fanfare, you take the podium. Stand up straight, look out at your audience, smile if it's appropriate, and then launch right in, with no boring "Thank you" or "Madam President, Mr. First Vice President . . ." Put more energy into talking than you usually do; this isn't the time or place for the stuffy nonsense that says that a good manager never raises his voice or gestures with his hands. Indeed, if you can just forget about those appendages, you may free them to do their own helpful thing, whether it's the grand sweep of a big idea, a short jab for emphasis, or the clenched fist of intensity.

MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT with your audience. If you're a novice, and nervous, try to find two or three friendly faces, people who seem to be laughing at your stories and nodding along with your witty *aperçus*. When you look up from your text, look at them. As Dean Nelson notes, the nodders are more likely to be women, who aren't socialized like males to keep a poker face. As you grow more experienced, you'll be able to sweep the room with your gaze, exchanging glances with the neutrals and eventually even with the hostiles. What you're looking for is not just encouragement, but also any sense that you may be losing the crowd. When you see them beginning to stare at the floor, react: Rephrase your last point to make it clearer, tell them again how vital your subject is to them, trot out one of your punchier anecdotes. You may also want to hasten to the close, dropping the lesser points that stand in your way.

Finish strong, not trailing off or adding another feeble "thank you." Give 'em a great quote, a passionate, punctuated request, or a sure-fire gag line. Leave the vivid air signed with your honor, to borrow Stephen Spender's phrase. Then sit down and just wait for the applause. ■

Keep Cool but Do Not Freeze: Tips on Dealing With the Press

Many managers find their contact with the press to be frustrating and unrewarding. Indeed, some will avoid reporters and editors because they are fearful of having their comments misinterpreted or distorted.

These concerns are understandable.

It is a fact that members of the fourth estate are cynical and skeptical. What is difficult for many businessmen to accept is that those

Manager's Journal

by Jack Bernstein

characteristics go with the job. News people are paid to be disbelievers. And although some may harbor antibusiness attitudes, by and large reporters and editors tend to be quite objective.

Senior executives often compound the problem by treating a press interview as either a confrontation or a gabfest, mostly the latter. For some reason, usually astute and prudent executives, privy to corporate confidences of the highest order, tend to be indiscreet when talking to a reporter.

As a manager you can minimize misunderstandings and gain the benefits that accrue from clear and factual reporting of your company's views and policies by following some basic guidelines:

Don't try to get "buddy-buddy" with the press. A friendly and productive relationship can be developed without going overboard. In fact, many reporters will resist too chummy a relationship to avoid impairing their own objectivity.

Don't be too available. Businessmen are supposed to be busy running their businesses. You needn't drop everything because somebody from the press is trying to reach you.

If you have reason to believe it is urgent, by all means attend to it. More often than not, however, you'll be better served by having your public relations people handle the initial inquiry. This takes you out from under the gun of having to respond to a question without having had adequate time to frame your response.

While the media prefer dealing directly with the source, even they will concede that effective public relations people can be helpful in furnishing necessary background and gaining prompt access to the appropriate executive.

Be responsive and factual but don't give away the store. You are under no obligation to divulge confidential information or data that would aid and comfort the competition.

Stay cool. Some interviewers deliberately seek to provoke. Don't take it personally: it's just a technique to elicit more "colorful" or controversial quotes. Remain calm and unemotional.

Avoid the practice of "talking off the record." Sometimes it is helpful to "position" your observations by providing background on a not-for-publication basis. With few exceptions, however, perfectly productive interviews can be conducted by observing the dictum: "Say nothing that you do not wish to see in print."

Let the medium dictate the message. With print media, you have the luxury of time in order to carefully consider your response. A penetrating question deserves a thoughtful answer; don't feel pressured into replying without reflection. With electronic media, bear in mind that viewers react as much to one's air of decisiveness as to the substance of what is said. It's important to convey a feeling of authority by responding crisply.

Be prepared. Do a little homework, if necessary. That advice may sound too basic to be worth mentioning, but many executives go into an interview and try to "wing it." It's not vital that a manager know every detail of every facet of his operation, but he should be aware of the reporter's principal areas of interest and armed with the information to deal with them.

Recognize that the press, with rare exception, is not waiting with bated breath for pronouncements from the executive suite. Do not make the all-too-common mistake of equating your company's interests with those of the media.

Don't throw your advertising weight around; it'll only backfire. No reputable medium permits its editorial judgment to be influenced by advertising, and many have rigid procedures to eliminate contact between the two departments.

Tell it like it is. A key to earning and retaining credibility with the media is to take the bitter with the sweet. Understand that bad news is good news to editors; they know that bad news is more avidly read than good news.

Every company must on occasion deal with unfavorable situations. Generally the best policy is to respond forthrightly to questions from the press, with emphasis on plans for remedial action. The goal in handling bad news is to "get it out of the way" and prevent it from becoming a continuing news story.

Use the press conference sparingly. You run a press conference when other means of disseminating your news are inadequate. This almost always means you are dealing not only with a particularly newsworthy or complex topic, but that you anticipate the need for amplification via questions and answers.

Resist the ego trip. It's heady wine to be featured and quoted in influential media; but the best publicity is that which advances the company's cause. Personal gratification should be a pleasant by-product.

This article first appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*. It is printed here by permission of the author, head of Jack Bernstein Associates, a New York public relations firm.

BY WALTER KIECHEL III

HOW TO GIVE A SPEECH

You should come across like your own sweet self. This usually takes a lot of preparation.

■ Looking for an easy way to reduce even a strong, self-confident manager to a nail-biting mass of insecurities? Just ask him to give a speech to an unfamiliar audience. If he can't get out of accepting, he'll probably devote several sweaty hours to writing out his remarks or, if he is senior enough, delegate the awful task of composition to some underling. When the hour of execution arrives, he will stride manfully to the podium, assume a quasi-fetal stance, and proceed to read his text word by droning word. Not for nothing does pop research indicate that the average American fears speaking before a group more than he fears death. As Paul Nelson, dean of Ohio University's college of communication, observes, "Death is faster."

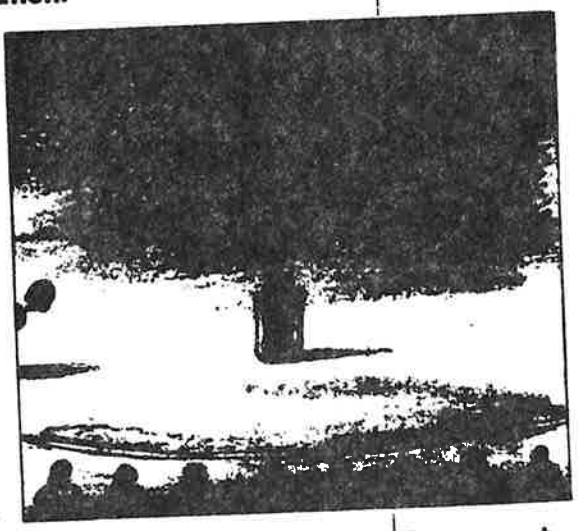
Choose life, even if it means working to become a better speaker. Why don't more managers take up the challenge? "Most businessmen are worried that they're going to come across like someone else," argues Charles Windhorst, co-founder of Communispond. It's a firm that teaches executives that the trick in fact is to have all the mechanical stuff down so pat that the authentic, worth-listening-to you comes through undistorted. Learn the basics and get out of your own way.

The basics begin when you're invited to speak. While the folks asking may have a foggy idea of what they want you to talk on, their none-too-clear guidelines probably leave you ample room to set your own topic. Don't be in a hurry here. First, the experts universally advise, you should find out as much as you can about your audience.

Who are these people—what age, sex, and line of work—and why will they be assembled? If they're mostly women, you will want to use more examples that feature you know whom. Are they coming to hear you more or less voluntarily, or is their attendance required? Captive audiences are harder to grab. When are you supposed to talk to them? If it's right after a meal or at the end of the day, expect Coma City; leading off in the morning often means that you'll lose 15 minutes to your hosts' unavailing attempts to start on time. Maybe most important, why do they want to hear from *you*, of all people?

Much of this dope you can get by grilling the person who had the temerity to invite you. For the ultimate in analysis, though, nothing beats spending a little time with your prospective audience. Robert Waterman Jr., whose co-authorship of *In Search of Excellence* propelled him into big-time speakerdom, finds that if he's to exhort some company's troops, for example, it helps a lot to poke around the corporation for a day or so beforehand talking to everybody he can. He can then address their specific concerns.

Once you have a feel for your audience, consult your mental inventory of what interests you these days. Not just what you know or can amass facts on, but what you care about. Dale Carnegie said it 70 years ago, and the experts are still saying it: If you're not excited about your subject, you won't be able to excite your audience about it either. To find your topic, look for where your concerns intersect with their wants and needs. Decide on your purpose—whether to inform, persuade, or entertain. Then give your impending address what Max Wortman, a management professor at the University of Tennessee and a popular speaker, calls a "schmaltzy" title. Not "Current Realities and Future Trends in the Brake Shoe Industry";



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