Lecture 44

Giving Speeches and Oral Presentations II

In the last lecture we learnt to

• Categorize speeches and presentations according to their purpose

• Analyze the audience for speeches and presentations

• Discuss the steps required in planning a speech or presentation

In this lecture we will learn to

• Develop a body, and a close for a long formal presentation.

• Select, design, and use visual aids that are appropriate for various types of speeches and presentations.

• Deliver your speech or presentation and handle audience questions effectively.

The body

• The bulk of your speech or presentation will be devoted to a discussion of the three or four main points in your outline.

• Use the same organizational patterns you’d use in a letter, memo, or report, but keep things simple.

• Your two goals are making sure the structure of your speech or presentation will be clear and making sure your organization will keep your audience’s attention.

Emphasizing structure

• To show how ideas are related in oral presentations, you rely more on words.

• For the small links between sentences and paragraphs, one or two transitional words will be enough: therefore, because, in addition, etc.

• To link major sections of the speech or presentation, you'll need to complete sentences such as “Now that we’ve reviewed the problem, let's take a look at some solutions.”

• Every time you shift topics, stress the connection between ideas.

• Summarize what's been said; preview what's to come.

• The longer the speech or presentation, the more important the transitions become.

• When you present many ideas, the audience has trouble absorbing them and seeing the relationship among them.
• Listeners need clear transitions to guide them to the most important points.
• They need transitions to pick up any ideas they may have missed.
• If you repeat key ideas in the transitions, you can compensate for lapses in the audience’s attention.
• You can also call attention to the transitions by using gestures, changing your tone of voice or introducing a visual aid.

**Holding the audience's attention**

• To communicate your points effectively, you have to maintain the audience’s attention.
• Here are a few helpful tips for creating memorable speeches:
  – *Relate your subject to the audience’s needs*
    People are interested in things that affect them personally. Present every point in light of the audience’s needs and values.
  – *Explain the relationship between your subject and familiar ideas*
    By showing how your subject related to ideas the audience already understands, you give people a way to categorize and remember your points.

• You can also hold the audience’s interest by introducing variety into your speech or presentation.

**The close**

• The close of a speech or presentation is almost as important as the beginning because audience attention peaks at this point.
• Plan to devote about 10 percent of the total time to the ending.
• Begin your conclusion by telling listeners that you’re about to finish so that they'll make one final effort to listen intently: Don’t be afraid to sound obvious.
• Plan to say something like “in conclusion” or “to sum it all up” to let the people know you’re in the home stretch.

**Restating the main points**

• Once you’ve planned how to get everyone’s attention, you’ll repeat your main idea.
• Be sure to emphasize what you want the audience to do or think.
• Then state the key motivating factor.
• Reinforce your theme by repeating the three or four main supporting points.
• A few sentences are generally enough to refresh people’s memories.
Outlining the next steps

- Some speeches and presentations require the audience to reach a decision or agree to take specific action.
- In such cases the close provides a clear wrap-up.
- If the audience has agreed on an issue covering the presentation, plan to review the consensus in a sentence or two.
- If not, make the lack of consensus clear by saying something like “We seem to have some fundamental disagreement on this question.”
- Then you’ll be ready to suggest a method of resolving the differences.
- If you expect any acting to occur, you must explain who is responsible for doing what.
- One effective technique is to list the action items, with an estimated completion date and the name of the person responsible.
- Plan to present this list in a visual aid that can be seen by the entire audience, and ask each person on the list to agree to accomplish his or her assigned task by the target date.
- This public commitment to action is the best insurance that something will happen.
- If the required action is likely to be difficult, make sure everyone understands the problems involved.
- You don’t want people to leave the presentation thinking that their tasks will be easy, only to discover later that the jobs are quite demanding.
- If that happens, they may become discouraged and fail to complete their assignments.
- You’ll want everyone to have a realistic attitude and to be prepared to handle whatever arises.
- So use the close to alert people to potential difficulties.

Ending on a positive note

- Make your final remarks enthusiastic and memorable.
- Even if parts of your speech will be downbeat, try to develop your ending on a positive note.
- You might stress the benefits of action or express confidence in the listener’s ability to accomplish the work ahead.
- An alternative is to end with a question or statement that will leave your audience thinking.
- Remember that your final words round out the presentation.
- You’ll want to leave the audience with a satisfied feeling, a feeling of completeness.
- The close is not the place to introduce new ideas or later the mood of the presentation.
- Although you’ll want to close on a positive note, avoid developing a staged finale (keep it natural).
The question and answer period

- Along with the introduction, body, and close, include in your speech or presentation an opportunity for questions and answers.
- Otherwise you might just as well write a report.
- If you aren’t planning to interact with the audience, you’re wasting the chief advantage of an oral format.
- The important thing to consider when you’re developing your speech is the nature and timing of that audience interaction.
- Responding to questions and comments during the presentation can interrupt the flow of your argument and reduce your control of the situation.
- If you’ll be addressing a large group, particularly a hostile or unknown group, questions can be dangerous.
- Your best bet in such a case would be to ask people to hold their questions until after you have concluded our remarks.
- On the other hand, if you’ll be working with a small group and will need to draw out their ideas, you’ll want to encourage comments from the audience throughout the presentation.

The visual aids

- Visual aids dramatically increase the audience’s ability to absorb and remember information.
- From a purely practical standpoint, they’re a convenience for the speaker, who can use them as a tool for remembering the details of the message (no small feat in a lengthy presentation).
- Novice speakers also like visual aids because they draw audience attention away from the speaker.

Designing and presenting visual aids

- Two types of visual aids are used to supplement speeches and presentations.
- Text visuals consist of words and help the audience follow the flow of ideas.
- Because text visuals are simplified outlines of your presentation, you can use them to summarize and preview the message and to signal major shifts in thought.
- On the other hand, graphic visual aids illustrate the main points.
- They help the audience grasp numerical data and other information that would be hard to follow if presented orally.
- Simplicity is the key to effectiveness when designing both types of visual aids.
- Because people can’t read and listen at the same time, the visual aids have to be simple enough that the audience can understand them within a moment or two.
• As a rule, text visuals are more effective when they consist of no more than six lines, with a maximum of six words per line.
• Produce them in large, clear type, using uppercase and lowercase letters, with extra white space between lines of text.
• Make sure the type is large enough to be seen from any place in the room.
• Phrase list items in parallel grammatical form.
• Use telegraphic wording (for example “Compensation Soars”) without being cryptic (“Compensation”).
• It is a good idea to include both a noun and a verb in each item.
• You can use any of the graphic visuals you might show in a formal report, like pie charts, and bar charts, flow charts etc.
• The graphic visuals used in oral presentations are simplified versions of those that appear in written documents.
• Eliminate anything that is not absolutely necessary to the message.
• To help the audience focus immediately on the point of each graphic visual, use headings that state the message in one clear phrase, like “Earnings have increased by 15 percent”.
• When you present visual aids, You’ll want people to have the chance to see what’s there, but you’ll also want them to listen to your explanation:
  – Be sure all members of the audience can see the visual aids
  – Allow the audience time to read a visual aid before beginning your explanation.
  – Limit each visual aid to one idea
  – Illustrate only the main points, not the entire presentation.
  – Use no visual aids that conflict with our verbal message.
  – Paraphrase the text of your visual aid; don’t read it word for word.
  – When you’ve finished discussing the point illustrated by the visual aid, remove it from the audience’s view.

Selecting the right medium
• Visual aids for documents are usually limited to paper.
• For speeches and presentations, however, you have a variety of media to choose from:
  – Handouts: even in a presentation you may chose to distribute sheets of paper bearing an agenda, an abstract, supplementary data etc.
  – Chalkboard and whiteboards: when you want to draw out ideas in a small group of people.
  – Flip charts: large sheets of paper attached at the top like a tablet can be propped on an easel so that you can flip the pages as you speak.
– **Overheads**
  - One of the most common visual aids in business is the overhead transparency, which can be projected on a screen in full daylight.
  - Transparencies are easy to make using a typed original on regular paper, a copying machine, and a page-size sheet of plastic.

– **Slides:**
  - The content of slides may be text, graphics, or pictures.
  - If you’re trying to create a polished, professional atmosphere, you might find this approach worthwhile, particularly if you’ll be addressing a crowd that doesn’t mind speaking in a darkened room.
  - Remember that you may need someone to operate the projector and that you’ll need to coordinate the slides with your speech.
  - Take a few minutes before your speech to verify that the equipment works correctly.

– **Computers**
  - With a special projector, a personal computer can be turned into a large-screen “intelligent chalkboard” that allows you to create and modify your visual aids as the presentation unfolds.
  - When the presentation is over, you can printout hard copies of the visual aids and distribute them to interested members of the audience.
  - You can also use a computer-generated slide show which gives you the opportunity to make changes right up to the minute you start speaking.

– **Other visual aids**
  - In technical or scientific presentations, a sample of a product or material allows the audience to experience your subject directly.
  - Models built to scale are convenient representations of an object.
  - Filmstrips and movies can capture the audience’s attention with color and movement.
  - Television and videotapes are good for showing demonstrations, interviews, and other events.

**Mastering the art of delivery**

- When you’ve planned all the parts of your presentation, and have your visual aids in hand, you’re ready to begin practicing your delivery.
- You have a variety of delivery methods to choose from, some of which are easier to handle than others.

**Memorizing**
- Unless you’re a trained actor, avoid memorizing an entire speech, particularly a long one.
- You’re likely to forget your lines.
- A memorized speech often sounds very stiff and stilted.
- On the other hand, memorizing a quotation, an opening paragraph, or a few concluding remarks can bolster your confidence and strengthen your delivery.
Reading
• If you’re delivering a technical or complex presentation, you may want to read it.
• Policy statements by government officials are sometimes read because the wording may be critical.
• If you choose to read your speech, practice long enough so that you can still maintain eye contact with the audience.

Speaking from notes
• Making a presentation with the help of an outline, note cards, or visual aids is probably the most effective and easiest delivery mode.
• You have something to refer to and can still have eye contact and interaction with the audience.
• If your listeners look puzzled, you can expand on a point or put it another way.
• Generally, note cards are preferable to sheets of paper; nervousness is more evident in shaking sheets of paper.

Impromptu speaking
• Avoid speaking unprepared unless you’ve spoken countless times on the same topic or are an extremely good public speaker.
• When you are asked to speak “off the cuff”, take a moment or two to think through what you’re going to say.
• Then avoid the temptation to ramble.

Mastering the art of delivery
• Regardless of which delivery mode you use, be sure that you’re thoroughly familiar with the subject.
• Knowing what you’re talking about is the best way to build your self-confidence.
• It’s also helpful to know how you’ll approach preparing for successful speaking, delivering the speech, and handling questions.

Preparing for successful speaking
• You can build self confidence by practicing, especially if you haven’t had much experience with public speaking.
• Even if you practice in front of a mirror, try to visualize the room filled with listeners.
• Put your talk on tape to check the sound of your voice and your timing, phrasing, and emphasis.
• If possible, rehearse on videotape to see yourself as your audience will.
• Go over your visual aids and coordinate them with the talk.
• Whenever you can, check the location for your presentation in advance, and locate the light switches and dimmers.
• Check for any small but crucial items that you might need, like chalk and eraser.
• If you’re addressing an audience that doesn’t speak your language, consider using an interpreter.
• Anytime you make a speech or presentation to people from other cultures, take into account cultural differences in appearance, mannerisms, and other customs, in addition to adapting the content of your speech.

**Delivering the speech**

• When it’s time to deliver the speech, you may feel a bit of stage fright.
• Most people do even professional actors.
• A good way to overcome your fears is to rehearse until you’re thoroughly familiar with your material.
• Communication professionals have suggested other tips, which we will now go over:
  • Prepare more material than necessary
    Extra knowledge, combined with a genuine interest in the topic, will boost your confidence.
  • Think positively about your audience, yourself, and what you have to say.
    See yourself as polished and professional, and your audience will too
  • Be realistic about stage fright.
    After all, even experienced speakers admit that they feel butterflies before they address an audience.
  • Tell yourself you’re ready
    Use the few minutes while you’re arranging your materials, before you actually begin speaking, to tell yourself you’re on and you’re ready.
• Before you begin speaking, take a few deep breaths.
  It will help you calm down and improve your delivery.
• Have your first sentence memorized
  Having your opening on the tip of your tongue helps you get started, and everything else starts falling into place.
• If your throat is dry, drink some water.
  Tension often causes your mouth to become dry. It is best to have a few sips of water before you begin.
• If you feel that you’re losing your audience.
  Don’t panic if at any time during the speech you feel like you’re losing your audience. Try to pull them back by involving them in the action.
• Use your visual aids to maintain and revive audience interest.
  Visual aids, especially those involving color and movement, are much better at getting back the audience’s attention than any words you may have for them.

• Keep going, and things usually get better.
  Things usually get better, and your audience will silently be wishing you success.

Handling questions

• The key to handling this segment effectively is preparation.
• Spend time before your speech thinking about the questions that might arise— including abrasive or difficult questions, and prepare accordingly.
• Some experts recommend that you hold back some dramatic statistics as ammunition for the question-and-answer session.
• However, bear in mind that circumstances may require some changes in the answers you prepare.
• When someone poses a question, focus your attention on that individual.
• If the question is vague or confusing ask for clarification.
• Then give a simple, direct answer.
• Don’t say more than you need to if you want to have enough time to cover all the questions.
• If giving an adequate answer would take too long, simply say “I’m sorry that we don’t have enough time to get into that issue right now, but if you’ll see me after the presentation, I’ll be happy to discuss it with you.”
• If you don’t know the answer don’t pretend that you do.
• Instead if pretending, say something like “I don’t have those figures. I’ll get them for you as quickly as possible.”
• Don’t allow one or two people to monopolize the question period.
• Try to give everyone a chance to participate; call on people from different parts of the room.
• If the same person keeps angling for attention, say something like “Several other people have questions; I’ll get back to you if time permits”.
• If audience members try to turn a question into an opportunity to mount their own soapboxes, it’s up to you to maintain control.
• You might admit that you and the questioner have a difference of opinion and offer to get back to the questioner after you’ve done more research.
• Don’t indulge in put-downs which may backfire and make the audience more sympathetic to the questioner.
• Prepare the audience for the close of session by saying “Our time is almost up, let’s have one more question”, even if more people want to talk.
• After your reply, summarize the main idea of the presentation and thank people for their attention.
• Conclude the same way you opened: by looking around the room and making eye contact.
• Then gather your notes and leave the podium, shoulders straight, head up.

**In this lecture we learnt to**

• Develop a body, and a close for a long formal presentation.
• Select, design, and use visual aids that are appropriate for various types of speeches and presentations.
• Deliver your speech or presentation and handle audience questions effectively.