



WHITE PAPER

THE FOUNDATIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL SPEECH

Your guide to creating and delivering more engaging and effective speeches.



Advancing Your Public Speaking Skills

You want to be a better public speaker. Maybe it's to help you provide clearer leadership to your team or to better engage with your customers. Or, maybe it's to take advantage of a moment in the spotlight to advance your career.

As experienced speech coaches, we know that great public speakers are the result of a lot of hard work. In most cases, engaging public speakers have learned and perfected their skills over time. In this guide, we've gathered the foundations of what it takes to prepare and deliver more successful audience-connecting speeches. We will discuss how to measure speech performance, the strategies for connecting with your audience, and tips for overcoming the fear or anxiety of public speaking.



10 Steps to Measure Speech Performance

We believe careful assessment, both self-assessment and what's provided by a professional speech coach, is necessary for speakers to change their perspective, change their expectations, and in the end, change the results achieved from every speaking opportunity.

At Kennedy Speech Communications, we've fine-tuned a set of 10 criteria to help our clients set realistic goals and then measure their progress. It begins with these five foundational criteria of public speaking:

1. Knowledge of key public speaking concepts

- How speeches are unique
- Definition of a successful speech
- The role of the audience

2. Writing of meaningful content

- Clarifying purpose and objectives
- Organizing messages and supporting data, arguments and stories
- Scripting or speaker notes

3. Proper use of media

- Making it meaningful
- Using imagery
- Aspiring to be art

4. Natural on-stage presence and movement

- Tempo and pace
- Rhythm and dynamics
- Working with teleprompters or confidence monitors

5. A commitment to continuous improvement

- Your responsibility as a speaker
- Choosing to improve your performance
- [The 5-Steps to Improved Speaking Performance](#)

Mastery of these criteria is attainable, especially with the help of a seasoned speech coach. But, this is only just the beginning. Consistently delivering great speeches and presentations requires much, much more. You have to raise your expectations. You have to dig deeper and take bigger chances.

This requires a different, more expansive set of criteria that helps you take your speeches and presentations to the next level. These are:

6. Building confidence

- In your beliefs, ideas and messages
- In your abilities
- In your audience

7. Striving for clarity

- Of your purpose and vision
- Of your messages and conclusions
- Efficient use of the right words

8. Engaging your audience

- Empathy and perspective
- Connecting intellectually and emotionally
- Making it a conversation

9. Creating experiences

- Being “present” and staying in the moment
- Using dramatic structure
- Speaking in pictures and sounds

10. Preparing effectively

- Constructive brainstorming
- Fearless editing
- Focused rehearsal

Use of these more advanced criteria provides an opportunity for top-level speech consulting to take place, during which a speech coach helps you push boundaries and differentiate yourself by creating unique and meaningful experiences.

It's important to remember that all 10 criteria apply to every type of speaking opportunity, from keynote speeches on a big stage to new business presentations in a conference room. They are both a guide and a means to assess performance going forward—by speakers and speech coaches alike.

Strategies for Connecting with Your Audience

Over the years, we hear clients say the same thing: “Delivering a natural speech is one of the most unnatural things in the world!” Unfortunately, many people think that in order to appear natural in front of an audience, they must control everything—from every word they speak to their physical actions on stage.

As speech coaches, our job is to help you perform at your best in the most natural way possible. And, after years of working with hundreds of speakers, we can safely say that the least effective way to achieve this is by trying to choreograph every accent and action of your performance.

“In all things that live there are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty. To banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality.”

- John Ruskin

Successful speeches and presentations require connection as much as content. And, real human-to-human connection can only happen if you are being yourself. This means that the most effective approach is to begin every speech and presentation with your natural delivery and then adjust only as needed.

This might sound counterintuitive, but as a speaker, it’s best to not be thinking a lot when you’re on stage; instead, be present, stay in the moment and focus on connecting with your audience.

Take an “inside-out” perspective:

- **Prepare.** Know your conclusions and supporting messages, as well as your audience’s needs and expectations.
- **Believe.** In your purpose and vision, in your audience and in yourself.
- **Share.** Your beliefs, true feelings and appreciation for the audience’s time and attention.

A speech coach can help you build upon your own natural strengths and style. By taking small steps and practicing what you’ve learned via the speech consulting process, you will soon realize that your newfound skills have become second nature—leading to more effective and satisfying speeches and presentations.

When the Fear of Public Speaking Limits Your Potential

For nearly all of us, regardless of how many times we've spoken in public, we still experience the same nervousness and anxiety before we address an audience. This is very common, and very normal. It's what all speakers experience to one degree or another.

However, if not addressed, a fear of public speaking will significantly impact your ability to perform at your very best and achieve the objectives of your speech or presentation.

Know What Matters

We challenge every client to: **Change your perspective. Change your expectations. Change your results.** This means to start by looking at your speech or presentation from your audience's perspective—versus your own. You will then see that many of the things you consider important (and thus stressful) are not important to your audience. It's true: The vast majority of the people in your audience really don't care if you stumble over a word or two, if you use your hands a lot or even if your socks don't match.

What they do care about is you, your purpose, your vision and your ideas. They want to be enlightened and inspired. They want to make a human connection.

As public speaking experts who have helped hundreds of clients deliver more powerful and effective speeches, we've learned that a fear of public speaking can be overcome by applying the proper techniques to address the fear where it starts—in your mind.



The first step in overcoming your fear is to look at every speech and presentation not as a difficult task to be completed, but rather as an incredible opportunity to connect with—and provide something of value to—your audience.

Focus on What You Can Control

Another technique we share with clients is called, **Confidence Through Control**. What often causes the greatest anxiety in speakers is the feeling of powerlessness over what is happening. But, the reality is that you control just about every aspect of your speech, including:

- What you say
- How you say it
- Your pace and dynamics
- Where you stand on stage
- When and how you move

And the things that are outside of your control? There is nothing you can do about them, so why let them affect your performance?

Bust Your Boundaries

“Practice makes perfect.” This might sound cliché, but in all our years of public speaking coaching, we’ve found there is no substitute for practice. Now here’s the twist: Whenever you rehearse, push the boundaries of your performance. Practice being louder, softer, more enthusiastic, more commanding, *more anything* than you think you can. It’s not about being over the top when you’re on stage; it’s about being in control. Just like an opera singer, you need to stretch and develop your “instrument” before taking the stage.

Make It a Strength

In the end, however, fear of public speaking is not something to be eliminated, but embraced. It’s a real emotion that has the power to both drive you to higher levels of performance and make a deeper, more honest connection with your audience.

A great speech is not just a well-written document, it’s an engaging performance. Learn more about how to improve your ability to connect with, motivate and inspire audiences in every speech you perform. Contact us today.



“Wherever we are, it is but a stage on the way to somewhere else, and whatever we do, however well we do it, it is only a preparation to do something else that shall be different. Such is change in life.”

- *Robert Louis Stevenson*



About Kennedy Speech Communications

Kennedy Speech Communications helps its clients create the audience-connecting experiences that are at the core of all great speeches and presentations. We guide them in using ideas to inspire and words to clarify and motivate. And, we provide the direction and support they need to execute under pressure and perform at their highest level.

We provide speech coaching and presentation skills training to individual executives as well as groups and teams of presenters from every area and level in an organization, from the C-Suite to the front lines.

Our comprehensive approach addresses both the mental and physical aspects of speaking performance. We work together with our clients — before, during and after their speeches — to perfect content and strengthen skills and confidence. They see an immediate improvement in their ability to connect with, motivate and inspire audiences.

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