

# HOW TO MAKE GREAT SPEECHES

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If you want to succeed as an evangelist and CEO, you must learn how to make speeches.

## Have something interesting to say.

This is 80 percent of the battle. It's much easier to give a great speech if you have something to communicate. End of discussion. If you don't have anything to say, decline the speech. If you don't want to decline, then do some research and get something interesting to say.

## Remove the sales pitch.

The purpose of most keynotes is to entertain and inform the audience. It is seldom intended to provide an opportunity to pitch your product. The worst speech you can give is one that people interpret as a sales pitch.

## Customize.

The technique that has helped me the most in public speaking is customizing the first three to five minutes of every speech. This demonstrates that you've your homework and have made an effort to craft a speech that is a valuable and special experience. I do this in two ways.

First, I try to find a personal link to the audience.

Second, when I travel to a foreign country, I typically get to the location the day before and sightsee.

Then I show my pictures of the sites that I visited and express my appreciation for local culture.

## Focus on entertaining.

Many speech coaches will disagree with this, but they don't speak fifty times a year like I do. My theory is that the goal of a speech is to entertain. If people are entertained, you can also slip in a few nuggets of information. But if your speech is dull, no amount of information will make it great.

## Overdress.

My father, who was a politician in Hawaii, was a good speaker. When I started speaking he gave me a piece of advice: never dress beneath the level of the audience. For example, if they're wearing suits, you wear a suit. To underdress is to communicate this message: "I'm smarter/richer/more powerful than you. I can insult you and not take you seriously, and there's nothing you can do about it." This is hardly the way to get an audience to like you.

## Don't denigrate the competition.

Don't criticize your competition in a speech because it indicates that you are taking undue advantage of the privilege of the audience's attention. You are not doing the audience a favor. The audience is doing you a favor, so do not lower yourself by using it as an opportunity to slander your competition.

## Tell stories.

The best way to relax when giving a speech is to tell stories. Stories about your youth. Stories about your kids. Stories about your customers. Stories about things that you read about. When you tell a story, you lose yourself in the storytelling. You're not "making a speech" anymore. You're making conversation. Good speakers are good storytellers; great speakers tell stories that support their message.

## Pre-circulate with the audience.

True or false: The audience wants your speech to go well. The answer is True. Audiences don't want to see you fail—why would people want to waste their time listening to you fail? The way to heighten your audience's concern for your success is to circulate with the audience before the speech. Talk to people. Let them make contact with you. Especially the ones in the first few rows; then, when you're on stage, you'll see these friendly faces. Your confidence will soar. You will relax. And you will be great.

## Speak at the start of an event.

If you have the choice, speak at the beginning of an event. The audience is fresher then, so they're more apt to listen to you, laugh at your jokes, and follow along with your stories. On the third day of a three-day conference, the audience is tired, smaller, and thinking about going home. It's hard enough to give a great speech—why increase the challenge by having to lift the audience out of the doldrums?

## Ask for a small room.

If you have a choice, use the smallest room possible. If you're in a large room, ask that it be set classroom style—that is, with tables and chairs—instead of theatre style. A packed room is a more emotional room. It is better to have 200 people in a 200-person room than 500 people in a 1,000-person room.

## Practice and speak all the time.

This is obvious but nonetheless relevant. You need to give a speech at least twenty times in order to get good at it. You can give it nineteen times to your dog if you like, but it takes practice and repetition.