



Business Communication



To Give a Great Presentation, Distill Your Message to Just 15 Words

A TEDx producer on how to connect with your audience.

by Tricia Brouk

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Fearless public speaking is about more than combating nerves. It's about knowing the technique, the art, and the business of public speaking.

In my two years working as a TEDx producer, and my 27 years working in film, television, theater, and events production, I have worked with hundreds of speakers, and with actors including Kate Winslet, Christopher Walken, Susan Sarandon, and the late James Gandolfini.

All of the speakers and actors I've worked with rely on technique when they walk on to a stage or a set. They don't simply *hope* they will connect with the scene or with their scene partner. The same applies to anyone who's public speaking. While you may not deliver a captivating talk every time, you *can* learn to apply technique, and in turn, become a fearless speaker every time. But your nerves are not the only thing you have to master. You must also:

Know how to pitch. When you understand and master the pitch, you'll get onto more stages, which in turn will give you the confidence to become fearless each time you pitch. Start with the idea and why you are the right person to take the stage and deliver this big idea. While it must be a big idea, you need to be able to communicate it in 15 words or less. Organizers are busy, and they don't have time to read through lengthy pitches. Share what the audience will take away, as well as the global impact of the talk. Don't save the most important part of your pitch for the end; people may stop reading before they ever get to it, landing you in the "no" pile. And don't try to sell your book or business in a pitch for a speaking gig. If you want to sell from the stage, that conversation happens after you book the gig. Seventy-five percent of the potential speakers who apply to my events, including [TEDxLincolnSquare](#), [The Speaker Salon](#), and currently [Speakers Who Dare](#), end up pitching their business. That's a lot of people who do not understand the art of a pitch, and who subsequently end up in the no pile.

Know your audience. When you do research on your audience ahead of time, it gives you the opportunity to craft your talk with the language that your audience speaks. For example, if you're speaking on a panel, you can speak more intimately to the audience. If you're at an event that's more high energy, your language can reflect that — you can entertain the audience a bit more. If you're at a conference that's for

professionals, you can speak in more technical terms. Speaking the same language as the audience increases the odds that they will hear you, understand you, and be inspired by you. You're more likely to connect with them emotionally. If you're walking into a speaking gig without knowing your audience, you're bound to fall flat and end up looking at the tops of their heads as they check their cell phones. You have to know who you're talking to.

Know your objective. In order to have an authentic scene, actors have to know what they want from their scene partner, and want to be believable when they are going about getting it. It's the same for public speaking. It's about being authentic. Even though the audience is probably not going to audibly respond to you when you're speaking on a stage, you are in a scene with them, and when you have a clear objective in terms of *what you want*, and *how to get it*, you will be more believable and captivating from the stage, therefore building your confidence as a speaker. Think about the objective you have going into your speech. Maybe your goal is to get the audience to donate to a worthy cause, or spread the word about your ideas. If you want your audience to accept your ideas, or change their opinion about something, how are you going to get them to do it? You can inspire, motivate, or even scare them into changing their minds. But you can't do any of those things until you know what you want the ultimate outcome to be.

Know the difference between a good talk and a bad talk. A good talk has content that is fresh and well-edited, with a clear arc that takes us on a journey. A good talk is one that is so well rehearsed that you are able to let go of the script and freely share the content in the moment. A good talk is one where your audience wants to adopt your idea at the end of the talk. A bad talk, on the other hand, is one that meanders, does not have a clear through-line, ends more than once, and is apologetic. A bad talk is so well rehearsed that you sound robotic and scripted,

or so unrehearsed that you stumble too often and lose your audience's attention.

Know yourself. Public speaking is hard work. It's time-consuming, and it's emotionally and physically draining — especially if you are an introvert. But introverts can become engaging public speakers by flexing the muscle of being in public. Practice by going to events and coming out of the corner. If you have a speaking engagement, take extra time that day to sit quietly, meditate, and refuel. If you are an extrovert, be sure to save your voice before you take the stage — you can always socialize after your talk.

Fearless speaking is the sum of many parts; it's not just about wrangling the butterflies in your stomach. When you approach public speaking as the sharing of ideas as well as a business, understanding what makes this a successful exchange, your confidence will improve in direct proportion to the number of times you nail it, on and off the stage.

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Tricia Brouk is an award-winning director, writer, and TEDx producer, and Executive Producer of [Speakers Who Dare](#). She has directed speakers on to 11 TEDx stages, and countless other mainstages. Her production company, The Big Talk, produces documentary films about people making a difference in the world.