

Rhett Laubach's Top 40 Speaking Tips

- 1. Presentation factor.** The ability to present effectively is one of the most powerful success skills you will ever acquire. It establishes credibility, opens doors and adds tremendous personal and professional value to you. Sharpening your skill in the following areas will put yourself in the best position for success.
- 2. The three great C's.** Every great presenter has great confidence, great content and makes a great connection with their audience. They also supercharge these C's by choosing a topic that allows them to be genuinely passionate. Be authentic and enthusiastic!
- 3. Your new best friend.** The most important ingredient in a good friendship is time spent together. Make your next presentation your new best friend and invest three hours of preparation time for every one-hour of presentation time. This is the most effective way to control your anxiety.
- 4. Statement of purpose.** This is the core of your presentation. The reason for the presentation. The question you are answering. The conflict you are resolving. It should be stated in one sentence. Also, if you have a Q&A session, bring everything back to your statement of purpose to stay on message.
- 5. Don't be nervous about being nervous.** Mark Twain said it best; "There are two types of speakers; those that are nervous and those that are lying." Learn to control your nervousness and the stress associated with it.
- 6. Practice to be natural.** Performance anxiety is common in all performance arts. Speaking is no different. Great presenters harness this energy and use it.
- 7. Practice to be natural.** When you are short on experience, you simply haven't had the time to train your body or your mind how to act when you speak. Therefore, your heart rate goes up, your palms turn into swimming pools and your legs into Jell-O. You must practice to train your body how to control its functions instead of your body functions controlling you.
- 8. Practice to be natural.** The more you practice, the more you will learn to do what Zig Ziglar teaches, "Don't get rid of the butterflies; get them to fly in formation." Therefore, the more you practice, the more natural you will be speaking in front of 10 or 10,000.
- 9. Repetition is the key.** Repeat your main points to increase retention.
- 10. Visualize.** Start controlling your anxiety days before your presentation by seeing yourself giving an incredible presentation from start to finish.

- 11. Chunk it down.** If you need to memorize exact content, which I recommend for quotes, stories, or poems, follow this recipe: read it from start to finish at least 20 times, write it (don't type it) word for word on index cards (each card is a chunk), memorize the content by chunk and outline the content on one index card. This final "outline" card is all you need presentation day.
- 12. Personalize.** Invest the time necessary to learn where you are speaking, to whom you are speaking and how that specific group can most benefit from your material.
- 13. The emotional connection.** Especially in a persuasive talk, you need to make an emotional connection with your audience in the first 10 minutes. Draw them in with laughter, a heart-felt story, etc. Your task at the first of this type of presentation is to capture their heart, as well as their imagination.
- 14. The picture box.** As a speaker, your task is to create images, not just words. Our memories are tied to smells first, pictures second and words third. To help your audience remember and act upon your presentation, put your words in picture boxes and help them see, not just hear, what you are saying. They will remember your illustrations, not your points.
- 15. "In closing."** The two most beautiful words to an audience member. Keep your message precise, your presentation brief and leave them wanting more. Only plan on using 80% of your allotted time.
- 16. Seven-minute rule.** Your audience members need a change of pace every seven minutes. Your presentation should be planned accordingly.
- 17. Give 'em the iceberg.** You should have a deep understanding of your topic area, but only present the most interesting and important elements. Prepare the glacier; give 'em the iceberg (see #4).
- 18. Visually speaking.** How you look visually is a powerful tool in determining your effectiveness. Regarding your attire, always dress just a notch better than your audience.
- 19. Zig knows.** Master motivator Zig Ziglar teaches that you should give the audience an action point, a real concept or something of tangible value every five minutes.
- 20. Entertainment is important.** People love to be entertained. Your audience will be no different. Regardless of the setting, use this powerful tool to leverage your success.
- 21. Arrive early and stay late.** If you have A/V needs, allow 90 minutes for set-up. After you set-up, get to know the audience. Take your mind off you and on them. Stay after your presentation if at all possible. The best way to ruin your presentation, even after your talk, is to leave while the program is still in progress.
- 22. Identify your style and maximize it.** Not good at humor? Don't use it. Not good at making a point with facts/figures? Don't use them. Capitalize on your strengths.

- 23. Show us what you mean.** If you are talking about the virtues of enthusiasm, be enthusiastic. When speaking on the value of sincerity, be sincere. Remember this phrase; "Always be sincere, even if you don't mean it." You owe it to your audience to be inspirational, excited, motivating, interesting, sincere, etc. – even when you don't feel like it. Sometimes you must fake it until you make it.
- 24. Absolutely know your room.** Being in control of the environment is vital to success. Get the room set-up just like you need it for your particular presentation.
- 25. Check-check everything.** Double check all elements that could effect the outcome of your presentation; microphone, lights, location of rest rooms, room temperature (keep it a little cooler to keep their attention), handouts, technology (all needed cords and adapters), room set-up, noise level just outside room, markers, props and of course, you.
- 26. Don't let PowerPoint be a crutch.** A recent study actually identified PowerPoint as a hindrance to content retention. Why? Because presenters who use PowerPoint often use it as a crutch. They just read the PowerPoint slides, which is code for, "I am not really needed since you could read these on your own." If you use PowerPoint, think of it as a roadmap for your presentation, not the vehicle itself.
- 27. Put a little variety in your mediums.** Use flip charts, PowerPoint, props, poems, personal stories, thought provoking facts/figures, group discussions, activities, and music to get your point across. Just don't go overboard; simple is better.
- 28. 10%-80%-10% rule.** 10% of the room will love you no matter what you say. 10% of the room would not pay attention even if you paid them. The remaining 80% are unaffiliated. If you do great, they are on your side. If you bore them to death, they will be, well, bored to death.
- 29. Put yourself in their shoes.** What is it like sitting in the back row? Is she going to give me a handout? Do I have something to write with? Is he going to ask me to move around? Can I see the screen? Etc.
- 30. Learn at least three names and use them.** While you are roaming the room meeting people before your presentation (see #21), internalize at least three names and use them during your presentation. This is a powerful way to personalize your message and it is a great little extra that will impress.
- 31. Demonstrative interaction.** When you are doing an activity, during the instructions portion remember to "walk them through the drive through." Think about the instructions not in terms of "go get some fast food," but rather like "get in your car, drive down to the fast food shop, order the food, pay the man, take the food, drive back home and eat it." In other words, help them to see precisely what you want them to do and where you want them to go.

- 32. First 30-seconds rule.** You have 30-seconds at the first of your presentation to make an impression on that 80% (see #28). Your task is to get their attention and make a genuine connection. You set the bar for the audience's overall impression during the first 30-seconds.
- 33. Penmanship.** Speaking mechanics are similar to penmanship in that it can be a barrier to understanding the message. If the penmanship is messy or unreadable, then the words lose all value and significance. So, be clear with your verbal and non-verbal communication style.
- 34. Five-second connections.** Think of your talk to a group as multiple one-on-one conversations with everyone in the room happening at the same time. Talk to one person for five-seconds, then another, then another, etc. A bonus of this strategy is that after a few minutes, you will find a few people that are always watching you and always listening to you. Keep going back to these people and they will help you control your anxiety.
- 35. Play in the box.** Your hand gestures can work for you or against you. "The Box" is a little higher and a little larger than the strike zone in baseball (waist to neck, arm to arm). This is where the majority of your gestures need to be happening in a random, but not "high on caffeine" manner. Move out of the box with longer, more aggressive gestures to make stronger points.
- 36. Quirks be gone.** You don't even notice most of the fillers (uhs, ums, you knows, like, etc.) and fidgeting-type behavior (leaning, playing with jewelry, playing with hair, etc.). So, have someone watch you talk and look specifically for these things. Remember, not all quirks are bad. Only the ones prominent enough to distract the audience from your core message.
- 37. Concrete boots.** Unless you are a hypnotist, swaying back and forth is not productive. Imagine you are wearing concrete boots and stand firm when you are not walking. Especially during your first words; start with your feet firmly planted.
- 38. Get off the interstate.** Great presenters "go through some towns" during their talk and slow their speech to place emphasis in strategic places. This is also effective if you have trouble talking too fast.
- 39. Do not ever apologize.** The rookie speaker reveals himself when he says, "I apologize in advance. This is my first time and I am not very good." What do you think just happened to that 80% (see #28)?
- 40. Your last words linger.** Your first words make an impression. Your last words make an impact. You can be a great presenter. You have what it takes. Find your voice, sharpen it and share it with others.