

***From Dull to Dynamic: Transforming
Your Presentations***

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I. Dealing with stagefright

“Luck is when preparation meets opportunity.”

–*Elmer Letterman*

- A. A little bit of stagefright is healthy—it keeps a person sharp and energetic.
- B. Tips for dealing with stagefright
 - 1. Relax—find relaxation exercises that keep your muscles loose.
 - 2. Prepare—the more prepared you are, the less there is to fear.
 - 3. Take care of your physical needs. Don’t skimp on eating or sleeping.
 - 4. Get to your speaking site in plenty of time.
 - a. Reduces your stress level
 - b. Allows you to make any necessary changes in the room
 - 5. Focus on positive outcomes, not potential disasters.
 - 6. Remember that your listeners want you to succeed.
 - 7. Look at friendly faces.
 - 8. Incorporate positive movement early in the presentation.
 - a. Smile
 - b. Plan a purposeful gesture
 - 9. Get off to a strong start and build on it.

II. Creating bookends for the presentation

“When a mouth is open for laughter, you may be able to shove in a little food for thought.”

–*Virginia Tooper*

- A. Introductions
 - 1. Audiences will decide in the first seconds of your introduction whether they want to listen.
 - 2. Components of an effective introduction:
 - a. Attention device
 - b. Reason to listen
 - c. Preview (doesn’t have to be explicit)
- B. Conclusions
 - 1. People remember best what you say last.
 - 2. Components of an effective conclusion:
 - a. Forewarning of the end
 - b. Summary: a reminder of what people should take away with them
 - c. Exit line: a statement that relates to your main point, puts closure on the presentation, and earns you the right to sit down.

III. Organizing your thoughts

“The way to become boring is to say everything.”

–*Voltaire*

- A. Like a good story, a presentation must have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- B. The basic unit of organization is the point and support.
 - 1. Make minor changes in length by adding or removing some support.
 - 2. Make major changes in length by adding or removing points.
- C. Make main points clear.
 - 1. Audiences respond well to 2-5 main points.
 - 2. Be consistent in your wording to help audiences remember.
- D. Respect time limits and expectations.

IV. Holding an audience’s attention

“To be human at all is to speak, however poorly, and to be human at best is to speak exceptionally well.”

–*Wendall Johnson*

- A. Pause
- B. Keep support relevant.
- C. Use statistics sparingly.
 - 1. Use too many and they all become a blur.
 - 2. Make statistics as understandable as possible—round to the nearest whole number or fraction or give examples.
- D. Engage or show emotion.
- E. Tell stories.
- F. Use visual aids.

V. Handling the question and answer session effectively

“It is better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers.”

–*James Thurber*

- A. Encourage questions.
 - 1. Let the audience know early in the speech that you want questions.
 - 2. Ask, “Who has the first question?”
 - 3. If no one asks a question right away, prime the pump: “A question I am often asked is...”
 - 4. Listen to the entire question before speaking.
 - 5. Keep answers as concise as possible.
 - 6. Be willing to say, “I don’t know.”

- B. Develop a technique that keeps you in charge of the situation.
1. Always maintain control—if you start to lose it, end the Q&A.
 2. Repeat the question before answering.
 3. Make eye contact with the questioner while that person is speaking.
 4. Make eye contact with everyone when you answer the question.
 5. Don't say more than the question requires.
 6. Defuse loaded questions. Good translation technique: "What you're really asking is..."
 7. Treat each question with respect.