

TO SPEAK AND TO  
SPEAK WELL ARE  
TWO THINGS.  
ANYONE CAN TALK,  
BUT A WISE MAN  
SPEAKS.

~ Ben Jonson

- Make It Persuasive: Public Speaking
- Facing Table Topics
- Outline for Your Next Table Topic
- Introducing a Speaker
- The Art of Thank You
- Networking—An Essential Part of Leadership
- Class Speech Evaluation

# Make It Persuasive: Public Speaking

The ability to persuade—to get other people to understand, accept, and act upon your ideas—is one of the essential qualities of leadership. Developing your skills as a persuasive communicator is one of the best investments in time and effort you can make.

The world has always needed and profited from persuasive speeches. It was persuasion, said the great orator Cicero, “which first bound men by the chains of right and law, formed the bonds of civil society, and made us quit a wild and savage life.” Throughout history, persuasive speeches have been the banners people have rallied around.

In today’s complicated, fast-paced society, effective persuasion performs a valuable service. It helps people recognize what is important to them. It gives them information they need in order to make key decisions. And it arouses the emotional reactions that move them to action. As a result, people will listen and give you opportunities to advance your causes.

## **LOGIC ON FIRE**

The famous 19<sup>th</sup>-century preacher Lyman Beecher called persuasion “logic on fire.” This description aptly illustrates the role of the persuasive speaker. In order to adopt new beliefs or change those they already hold, people need three things: First, they need a rational appeal that gives them logical justification for believing something. Second, they must become emotionally aroused. And third, they must have trust in the source of the message. These principles are not new. The Greek philosopher Aristotle referred to them as the three indispensable pillars of persuasion:

- **Fact** – As a persuasive communicator, you must present truthful information, along with the arguments that logically follow.
- **Emotion** – You must build an emotional arousal in your listeners, exciting them about your cause.
- **Credibility** – To be persuasive, you must be viewed by your audience as honest, believable, trustworthy, and knowledgeable.

## **AUDIENCE SELF-INTEREST**

When your goal as a speaker is to persuade others, it is vital that you phrase your appeal in terms of their self-interest—not yours. The old advertising adage, “Show them the benefits,” illustrates this key to effective persuasion. (Advertising, after all, is a familiar form of persuasion.) People do not buy a product because a seller wants them to. They buy it because it is useful, desirable, and beneficial to *them*. Your listeners are seeking to satisfy their own needs. To be persuasive, you must convince them that your interests coincide with theirs. Aristotle said, “The fool tells me his reasons; the wise man persuades me with my own.”

## **AUDIENCE SELF-INTEREST CONTINUED**

People need persuasive messages. Yet, at the same time, they are wary of them. This is why establishing your credibility is essential. There are two aspects to this credibility. First, you should be a person who deserves your audience's trust and respect. Your listeners should view you as someone with whom they can identify—someone with needs and interests similar to theirs. You cannot persuade people who dislike you, distrust you, or consider you a phony. Second, your listeners will be most receptive to persuasion if they feel you are qualified to discuss the subject you have chosen. To gain this receptivity and establish your credibility, you should be careful in selecting your topic, convinced of the validity and value of your viewpoint, and prepared to discuss it knowledgeably.

## **ANALYZE YOUR AUDIENCE**

Before preparing your speech, you will need to analyze your prospective audience very carefully. The way you present your persuasive message will depend on who your listeners are and what attitudes they hold toward your subject. What are their occupations, interests, and educational backgrounds? How much information do they already have on the subject? Do they care about the issue you will discuss? Are they favorable toward your viewpoint? Undecided? Opposed?

Only after you have analyzed your audience to the best of your ability can you begin to build your speech. Your analysis will determine your purpose: Are you reinforcing an attitude your audience already holds? Are you creating an attitude where none previously existed? Are you attempting to change beliefs that are different from your own? What results do you seek?

## **YOUR PERSUASIVE APPROACH**

Once you have decided on your speech objective, you can determine which persuasive approach you will use. No two persuasive situations are alike. However, you will find these general guidelines helpful in most cases:

1. If the audience agrees with your viewpoint, your goal will be to reinforce and strengthen this agreement. In many instances, it is not necessary to present both sides of an issue when you are sure the audience agrees with your viewpoint. However, if your listeners have been exposed to a differing view, it is wise to acknowledge the opposing argument and present evidence supporting your own. Whether or not you discuss both sides, you should review the reasons for the beliefs that you and your audience share, giving your listeners solid reasons for agreement. If you wish to lead your audience to action, your task is to bring a passive belief up to the level of an active commitment.
2. If the audience is neutral or apathetic, your primary objective is to convince your listeners that the issue directly affects them and is important to them. If you are confronting a problem, show how it relates to them and their lives. After establishing its relevance, present the possible solutions. Explain the impact of each solution and demonstrate why yours is the best alternative. It is usually more effective to present your side first, and then dispose of any major counter-arguments, concluding with a restatement of your position.

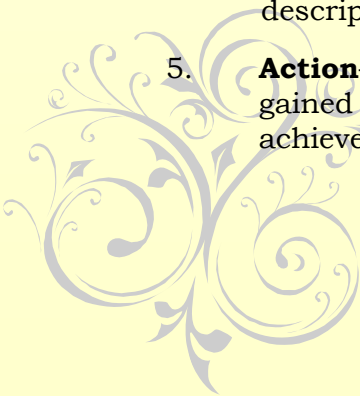
## YOUR PERSUASIVE APPROACH CONTINUED

3. If the audience opposes your view, do not expect to achieve wholesale attitudinal changes. Instead, simply strive to have your listeners recognize the merits of your position and reconsider their own views. This requires sensitivity and respect for the beliefs of others. The thrust of your presentation should be to reduce confrontation between your view and the audience's position. You should begin by establishing common ground, leading your listener back to basic principles and indisputable facts on which you and they agree. For example, if your subject is education, you might begin by saying, "All of us want the best possible education for our children." As you proceed, do not back down from your own beliefs, but take care not to let your listeners equate your argument with a personal attack on them. Present your message fairly, not trampling on other people's feelings.

## ORGANIZING AND PRESENTING YOUR PERSUASIVE MESSAGE

Once you have selected your topic and your basic approach, structure your message so it achieves the results you seek. The motivated sequence, developed by Professor Alan H. Monroe, is a five-step speech structure that follows people's normal thought patterns, thereby motivating an audience to respond to the speaker's purpose. This sequence can be adapted to almost any topic and persuasive approach you may choose.

1. **Attention**—Your opening should seize your audience's attention, direct that attention toward your topic, and make the audience want to listen to what follows. An excellent example is the physician who began a speech by saying, "Three out of five people in this room will die of heart disease."
2. **Need**—In this step, you state the need or problem that exists, explaining why it is important to your listeners. Depending on your topic and your approach, you may include facts, examples, and illustrations that describe the need and build a solid, logical foundation for the solution you will present.
3. **Satisfaction**—Here you present your solution to the need or problem. After stating your proposal and explaining it so that it is clearly understood, show how it meets the need. Support your position with evidence, and if necessary, overcome objections or opposing solutions.
4. **Visualization**—In this step, you draw a picture of future conditions, intensifying audience commitment to your position. You can be positive, showing how things will be once your proposal is adopted. You can be negative, showing what might happen if the audience rejects your solution or adopts an alternate viewpoint. Or, you can provide a dramatic contrast by presenting both pictures—the undesirable followed by the desirable. Use vivid descriptions and strong imagery.
5. **Action**—Your final step is to turn the agreement and commitment you have gained into positive action or a fixed attitude. This is where your speech should achieve its purpose—the final reaction you want from your audience.



## ORGANIZING AND PRESENTING YOUR PERSUASIVE MESSAGE CONTINUED

Here is a brief example that illustrates Monroe's motivated sequence:

1. **Attention:** "Our rapidly escalating property taxes are supporting a spending spree by our legislature."
2. **Need:** "Property taxes must be lowered and government spending brought under control."
3. **Satisfaction:** "Proposition X will reduce property taxes and limit government spending in California."
4. **Visualization:** "If this proposition fails, our taxes will continue to escalate, and many people will lose their homes."
5. **Action:** "Vote 'yes' on Proposition X."

## YOUR EMOTIONAL APPEAL

Up to this point, we have focused on the rational part of your persuasive speech. Do not forget the emotional component—few people are persuaded by logic alone. Throughout your speech, work to build a strong audience feeling toward your cause. Show your listeners that their self-interest (and your proposal) coincides with noble motives. Focus squarely on their needs, keeping in mind that the more basic the need, the stronger the emotional response.

The emotional aspect of your talk should reach its peak on the conclusion or the action phase of the motivated sequence. It is here that you should marshal the rational and emotional elements of your speech together into a powerfully persuasive appeal. With a favorable or neutral audience, it is best if you can motivate your listeners to do something. Take a vote, sign a petition, form a committee, etc. Persuading people to act requires emotional involvement. It is the feelings your speech generates that people will remember—not your dazzling logic.



**NOTE:** These procedures were adapted in part from the International Toastmasters organization. The Foundation recognizes Toastmasters International as an effective way to develop your speaking abilities.

# Facing Table Topics

Table topics can fill some people with fear; other people greatly enjoy participating in table topics.

Extemporaneous speaking: It happens all day long. Chat at the water cooler. Meet a friend while standing in line. Answer the boss's unexpected question about your project. All these are just practice for table topics and the beneficiaries of table topic practice. There is nothing to fear from the chance daily discussions and there is nothing to fear from table topics.

Table topics can be challenging, but there is a good deal of pleasure and satisfaction in rising to a challenge and succeeding.

## **SOME ADVICE ON GETTING STARTED:**

1. **Smile!** It will make you feel good, more confident, and more relaxed. It also pleases the audience.
2. If your mind is blank at the beginning of a table topic, then ask the topic master to repeat the question. Use this time to think of an answer or at least an opening line or two. This will let you appear careful and precise to your audience.
3. If you have nothing to say, then say nothing. If you are not done, then be silent and think. This will appear to be a dramatic pause. It appears sage as you let your audience digest what you have already said.

## **EMERGENCY TECHNIQUES**

- If you cannot talk about the topic, maybe you can talk about how hard it is to talk about the topic! It is better to address the topic, but if you cannot, then go off on a tangent—tell a story related to it, describe how it affects you, tell a joke that relates (if you know a clean one that is appropriate to the topic).
- Finally, if all else fails, talk about something else. This is to be avoided unless the topic is really impossible. You can just announce that you have decided that you really must address someone else's topic because it is so pertinent to you. Or say you have something important to you that you want to tell the group.

Do not fear the Leadership Class as an audience. Unlike most audiences, every member has been the speaker at sometime, and expects to be again. This is one of the most receptive audiences you can find. Any comments will be constructive advice on how to do better next time.



# The Perfect Outline for Your Next Table Topic

**FROM THE COMBINED BUSINESS EXPERIENCE OF  
DENISE AND CHRISTOPHER MAGYAR**

If you are in business, you need to make convincing appeals for a cause. When you are trying to convince someone of something, you need to organize your thoughts in order to satisfy the listener's need to understand you. In other words—you need to be able to master table topics in many different situations. Although created at the very moment of their presentation, impromptu speeches do need to be organized. In order to make an impact, you need to be able to give your mini-speeches a beginning, body, and conclusion.

Did you feel overwhelmed by this at times? Do not worry: Here is the tool to help!

1	Opening	I would like to begin by... (Saying, introducing, doing, etc.)
2	Ordering	Firstly...
3	Adding	In addition...
4	Giving Examples	For example...
5	Balancing	On the one hand...on the other hand...
6	Generalizing	In general...
7	Preferences	Personally, I'd prefer...
8	Conclusion	Let me conclude by... (Saying, summarizing, doing, etc.)

# Introducing a Speaker

## **PREPARE FOR THE INTRODUCTION**

- Do not call attention to yourself, but introduce yourself if the audience does not know you
- Never embarrass the speaker
- Know how to pronounce the speaker's name correctly
- Use background material, but select only key points
- Know the title of the presentation
- Know the occasion of the speech
- Confer with the speaker prior to the presentation if possible

## **PRESENT THE INTRODUCTION**

- Be brief (two minutes or less)
- Do not talk about yourself

## **TELL ABOUT THE SPEAKER**

- Who is he/she?
- What is the speaker's business?
- What are the speaker's qualifications to speak on the subject?
- Be familiar with what you have to say

## **EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SPEAKER'S SUBJECT UNLESS THE AUDIENCE REALIZES THE IMPORTANCE ALREADY.**

- Do not make the speech for the speaker

## **USE HUMOR IF IT FITS THE OCCASION.**

## **GIVE THE TITLE OF THE SPEECH AND THEN THE SPEAKER'S NAME**

- For example: .... Speaking on ".....," please welcome .....

## **USE TACT, BREVITY, SINCERITY, AND ENTHUSIASM**



# The Art of Thank You

Leaders understand the value of saying thank you. Peter Drucker and Steven Covey, widely respected leadership gurus, list writing thank you letters as one of the most important tips for management success. Successful organizations know that expressing appreciation in writing builds morale within an organization and goodwill beyond its doors.

Writing thank you letters on behalf of the AgForestry Leadership program is an opportunity for each participant to connect with the contributors of the program and share with them appreciation for their financial support. Thank you letters also show appreciation to the speakers and hosts of the AgForestry seminars. Most of the speakers who present at the AgForestry seminars do so without pay. A note of thanks is the speaker's tangible proof that our organization values his or her efforts.

Hand written notes are often the most appreciated; however, letters on company stationery or plain paper are also appropriate for business. Writing a business related thank you note is similar to writing a social thank you note. Either way, it is one person expressing gratitude to another person.

Letters of thanks do not need to be long or flowery. Simple, short letters that are personal, conversational and friendly that make use of correct spelling and grammar are the best. Think about what you would say to the person if you were having a conversation – then write it down. There are many good books and websites that provide suggestions for letter writing.

Contributor slips with names and addresses will be given out at the end of each seminar. Each participant will be asked to take two or three names and write thank you letters to the contributors. Copies of thank you letters or notes should be emailed or sent to the Foundation office for the files.

# Networking—An Essential Part of Leadership

Social networking is an opportunity to meet new people and engage in interesting and impromptu conversation. AgForestry networking receptions give participants practice “meeting and greeting” alumni, contributors, speakers and supporters of the Foundation in a social setting. Participating in social events is an important piece of leadership skill building.

Sticking to your usual crowd at a social gathering won't allow you to meet others, so seek out people who are unfamiliar to you. Although this may feel uncomfortable at times, the purpose of the event is to socialize, so do so.

Go up to someone, introduce yourself and initiate conversation. Showing genuine interest in another person is a guaranteed way to get to know them and strike up a conversation. Try to work the room and don't stay with one person too long. A good average is four to seven minutes, depending on the situation and the people involved.

Be prepared with ideas for conversation. Read newspapers and magazines to keep up on current events and observe the world around you for topics. Interesting stories, statistics and natural resource industry related issues will help start a conversation.

If you see someone who is hanging back, draw them into a conversation. Practice active listening skills, limit controversial topics and gossip and maintain a positive attitude. A smile, open posture and eye contact are ways to say, “I am interested in the conversation.” Even if the setting may be uncomfortable, have fun listening to others and see what you can learn.

Sending a note to people you meet at a networking reception thanking them for their support of the Foundation is an opportunity to show your appreciation. Thanking those who sponsored the reception is also appropriate and shows your gratitude.



# Individual Speech Evaluation Form

**SPEAKER:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBJECT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EVALUATOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TIME REQUESTED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME TAKEN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluator:** List your constructive comments under the appropriate headings. Emphasize the strong and weak points. In your oral comments stress the outstanding qualities and be specific in pointing out the weaknesses of the talk. Write details on this sheet and hand it to the speaker at the close of the meeting.

## **AS I SAW YOU**

(Approach, position, personal appearance, facial expression, gestures, distracting mannerisms)

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## **AS I HEARD YOU**

**MATERIAL:** (Content, introduction, body, conclusion, grammar)

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**VOICE:** (Variety, enthusiasm, sincerity, force, rate, pitch)

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## **AS I REACTED TO YOU**

What was the purpose of the talk? \_\_\_\_\_

Was the purpose achieved? \_\_\_\_\_

Was the talk interesting? \_\_\_\_\_

To improve your next speech, I suggest that you \_\_\_\_\_

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