

► 11 - Make It Interesting

Executive Summary:

Present a topic people will find fascinating.

Objectives:

- *Attract the audience's attention by speaking on an interesting topic.*
- *Ensure the audience understands the message.*
- *Support the speech with facts or examples presented in an interesting manner*
- *TIME: 5 to 7 minutes - or - 6 to 8 minutes.*

Speak on a topic that is interesting to the audience

Stimulate the audience with a message that provides insight into a topic. It could be new information, or provide an additional perspective.

Package the topic so the audience leaves with an understanding of the speech contents. All facts and logic could be informational. Humor could solidify them.

The following topics could arouse the audience's interest in the speech:

- **Values.** People care about value judgments, such as health, money, religion, and human relationships. When you speak on these subjects, your audience will always pay attention. Values are part of topics such as "The Decline of the Family," "Living the Good Life," "The Survival of Morals," "Plan for Eternity," "How Much Money Is Enough?"
- **Everyday Life.** We all want advice on how to get along in everyday matters. When you talk to listeners about their taxes, homes, children, or futures, they will be interested. Good topics include "Is the Single-Family Home Obsolete?" "Ten Ways to Reduce Your Taxes," and "The Cost of Free Education."
- **Drama.** Any subject can be made more interesting if there is dramatic tension in it. A topic such as "Political Demonstrations and the Police" could be developed into a very dramatic talk, as could "Population Growth and the Food Shortage" and "Nuclear Power Plants in Our Environment."
- **Current Information.** People like to learn new facts about subjects that have meaning to them. For example, if your audience is interested in automobiles, you might talk on "Safety Standards and Gas Mileage." If they are in business, you could tell them "How to Obtain a Small Business Loan."
- **Humor.** As long as your humor makes a point relevant to your topic, it is an excellent way to hold audience attention and help them remember what you have said.

Turn On the Light

After the speech has the audience's interest, hold that interest and present a message that is understood. A good way to do this is to "illuminate" the speech with illustrations, anecdotes, stories, and analogies.

In daily conversation, we often ask, "Do you see what I mean?" When addressing an audience, you don't have the chance for this type of feedback, so you must restate your point in different ways, to make sure there is no doubt about the audience's "seeing" what you mean. People usually do not comprehend the full impact of a general statement until you have applied it to at least one specific situation and shown how it works in that context. That is the function of the illustration.

The illustration or story is so powerful that it can often stand alone, without the necessity of your explicitly stating the general principle. This is the technique of the parables in the Gospels: "A certain man had two sons . . ."; "He may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. . . In such stories, the general principle is completely contained in the story and need not be stated separately. Study these brilliant word pictures as examples of illustrations that are among the most powerful in history.

Where Do You Find Them?

The best source of material for speech illustrations is your own experience. In your daily contacts with people, you will find incidents that fit perfectly into a speech situation. Learn to notice these incidents, such as a line of cars stopping to let a dog cross the street, while human pedestrians must take their chances. The fact that you were there will make the stories much more interesting to the audience and will enhance your ability to tell them effectively.

Another source of illustrations is the events in the world around you. which you pick up from television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. As you are watching the news on television, especially the human-interest stories common to local broadcasts, think about what you are seeing in terms of an illustration that will drive home a general principle of life.

Your public library is a treasury of speech material. There you can find stories on any subject imaginable, biographies, poems, striking quotations, and even books of anecdotes and stories arranged by topic, specifically for use by speakers. Ask the librarian for help in locating just what you need.

What Makes a Good Story?

If you apply illustrations or stories to your speech, be certain of three essentials:

- 1) The illustrations must fit the speech, not just dragged in for effect. They must truly illustrate the points you are trying to make.
- 2) The illustrations must be told well in order to be effective. You should re-hearse them, telling them to people and watching their reactions. Don't risk using an illustration in your speech until you have it down to the last word.

- 3) The illustrations must not overshadow the speech itself. The purpose of illustrations is to clarify the points of the speech, not to call attention to them-selves. Since a good illustration will be remembered long after the speech is forgotten, be careful about the memories you leave with your audience.

Any good illustration or story has certain characteristics that help make it an effective part of the speech. It is almost always short, and does not include so much detail that listeners become bored. A good story has an obvious point, so the audience isn't forced to guess at the story's application to the speech. Human interest is a vital part of any good illustration, making it something the average listener can readily identify with, and the speaker is always careful not to embarrass any part of the audience by telling a story that is in poor taste.

How Do You Organize Them?

Professional speakers regularly collect news clippings of human-interest stories and catalog them for a speech file. You may prefer to transfer the articles to small index cards which can be stored in a box by subject.

In addition to excerpts from your reading, it is a good idea to have blank cards, or perhaps a small notebook, with you at all times. You can then write down ideas that occur to you, along with jokes, odd facts, striking statements, bits of poetry, interesting experiences, and dramatic incidents.

You can never collect more interesting information than you will need. A good speech is full of illustrations, and the more speeches you give, the faster you will consume illustrative material. Start preparing a file now, and continue to add information to it regularly. Then, when you prepare a speech, the material you need will be right there for you to use.

Preparing Your Speech

For this project, choose a subject that will be of interest to your audience and that readily lends itself to the use of illustrations. If your subject or title is vague and remote to your listeners, you will have lost your best means of holding their attention.

Your introduction, which may be a story or humorous opening, should immediately involve your audience in what you are saying. You must give them a solid reason for listening to you—an illustration that ties their own interests and needs with what you have to say. For instance, "The other day I happened to meet my former accountant on the street. We agreed to have lunch together, and some of the things he told me about the new tax deductions allowed by the government made my ears sizzle. I'd like to tell you about a few of them. . .

In the body of the speech, illustrate each point you make with an anecdote, personal experience, analogy, or humorous story. You may be able to build the entire speech around a particular illustration; just be sure not to sacrifice the speech for the sake of the story. Your illustrations should add life to the speech, as well as making your meaning clear. In our example of the tax speech, you might set up a story for each of the tax deductions you plan to cover. For example, "John, you're a TV repairman. Suppose one of the sets you were working on burned up on the workbench and you wanted to deduct the loss from your income tax. Well, my tax man says. ..."

In your conclusion, re-emphasize the purpose of the speech with a vivid anecdote or incident. You might say, "Whenever I prepare my income tax forms, I think about the casino in Las Vegas that had problems with its 'We never close' sign. For several embarrassing hours, a letter was burned out, and it read, 'We never _lose.' It's up to us to make sure that, while the government never loses, it only wins its fair share."

Evaluation Guide for **Make it Interesting**

--- Evaluate the Speech, not the Speaker!

See last page for more evaluation guidelines.

Speech Title:

Speech Evaluator:

Date:

Note to the Speech Evaluator: The speech should be a topic that catches the audience's attention with appropriate facts and examples. The message could be stories, anecdotes, analogies, and humor. It is important for the Speech Evaluator to provide **many positive comments**, **one item** that could **strengthen the speech**, and **end with more positive comments!** In addition to the oral evaluation, provide answers to the questions below.

The purpose of the evaluation is to Encourage, Encourage, and Encourage!
Strive to have the Speaker look forward to giving another speech.

- How well did the speaker seem to hold the audience's interest?
- What was the message of the speech, as it came through to you?
- Were the comments to the point, or did they seem to ramble?
- What could strengthen the speech?
- What seemed to show variety and originality?
- Did you get the impression that the speech was carefully chosen and well-rehearsed?

Handy Dandy Speech Evaluation Guidelines

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- Strive to start with **four or more positive** comments, **one constructive** comment, end with **more positive** comments. A constructive comment example, *"The speech could be strengthened by"*
- Focus on the **Speech**. Avoid: *"you could improve"*- better: *"the speech could be strengthened by"*.
- Avoid commenting on the Speaker's point of view or facts. Focus on the **presentation**.
- Use specifics. Avoid: *"opening was weak"*- better: *"starting with a question would strengthen the speech"*.
- Use a lot of **"I"** phrases **instead of "you"** phrases. Avoid: *"you did this"*- better: *"it appeared to me"*.
- Avoid judging. Avoid: *"the speech was good"*- better: *"I liked the speech"*.
- If it is difficult to identify something that could be strengthened, ask yourself the question, **"Is this the best speech I've ever heard?"** If it is not, try to determine what could make it the best.

Evaluator:

Speech Title:

Date:

C Opening: Address Audience? Get Attention?

O Lead Into Body?

N Body: Organized?

T Help Remember? Persuasive?

E Interesting? Support Material?

N Relevant? Appropriate?

T Effective? Clear? Inspirational?

Closing: Climax? Produce Results?

Tie It Together? What to Do?

D Physical Appearance: Appropriate? Posture?

E Professional? Shirt (men) with collar?

L Zoom: Hands visible? Eyes include webcam?

I Body Language: Eye Contact? Hands? Face?

V Natural? Spontaneous?

E Overuse / Underuse? Detracting / Adding?

R Deliberate? Precise? Appropriate?

Y Vocal Variety: Volume? Pitch? Rate? Quality?

Manner: Enthusiastic? Direct? Assured?

Presentation: Visuals? Humor?

L Word Use: Clear? Accurate/Correct?

A Colorful? Vivid? Appropriate?

N Precise? Simple/Complex?

G Dull/Exciting? Jargon? Slang?

U Always/Never/Everyone Knows?

A Grammar: Proper?

G Pronunciation / Enunciation?

E Vowel Sounds?
