

► 12 - Inspire the Audience

Executive Summary:

Construct a speech that inspires the audience..

Objectives:

- *To present a speech that inspires the audience to consider your perception.*
- *To deliver an uplifting or inspirational message that puts those thoughts into words.*
- *TIME: 5 to 7 minutes - or - 6 to 8 minutes.*

The Value of Inspiration

We tend to get into routines, often forgetting what motivated us in the first place. We need a periodic “shot in the arm” that boosts our thoughts toward significant events or people.

The purpose in this type of speech is to clarify the importance of what your audience may already know but may have forgotten. Personal events can make it relevant to the audience, which can stimulate their memories.

The Great Speech

Many times, in many countries, great crises have been met and overcome because a leader was able to inspire people with the right words spoken in the right way. One such time was during the United States Constitutional Convention in 1789. The delegates were attempting to create a constitution for the new country, but they were torn apart by their deep disagreements into angry factions. They became so disheartened that many delegates wanted to patch together an easy compromise and go home.

Then their chairman, George Washington, rose and delivered one of the briefest speeches in the history of statesmanship. “If we offer to the people something of which we ourselves do not approve,” he said, “how can we afterwards defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest may gladly repair. The event is in the hands of God.”

There was silence when he finished. The members looked at one another, first in shame, then with determination. They resumed their work and produced the United States Constitution, one of the greatest documents in history.

Who Are You?

George Washington’s short talk illustrates the two foundations of a speech to inspire: who you are, and what you say. He didn’t find those stirring words in a book. They grew out of his character, out of what his work meant to him.

Similarly, search to find the material for an inspirational speech. To be effective, such a speech cannot be superficial. You are the leader in this situation, and you must exhibit the qualities of leadership, such as being basically the same type of person as your listeners, but with sufficient insight to show them a better way. This type of talk is most demanding, requiring dignity, excellence of style, and an emotional rapport with your audience.

As you speak, you should display at least these four qualities of leadership:

- 1) Be confident. Since you are giving expression to something your audience already feels and believes, this is not the place to raise questions or express doubts.
- 2) Be forceful. Show enthusiasm and vitality. Use body language to demonstrate your conviction. Paint vivid word pictures to bring the audience “up the mountain” with you.
- 3) Be positive. Bold statements telling the audience what they should do will stir them to action; criticizing them or making excuses for what they have failed to do will not inspire them at all.
- 4) Be definite. Give clear and specific illustrations and conclusions. Present enough information to make sure your audience is with you all the way.

What Will You Say?

Since you are putting into words the common aspirations, feelings, and beliefs of your audience, you are not expected to present earth-shaking new ideas. Rather, you should accurately sense the mood of the occasion and express that mood with originality and depth. This is not the time to be trivial in your thoughts; the challenge of an inspirational speech is to greatness.

The word “inspire” means “to breathe into.” Your speech should contain illustrations and thoughts that captivate the imagination of your audience and breathe life into the talk. The words will vary with the occasion—a football rally, a political meeting, a religious service—but the goal is the same: You are there to lift your audience up by means of the mental images your words convey.

This uplifting can occur in a serious context, such as a eulogy or other formal address, and it can occur just as strongly in a context of enthusiasm, such as a sales meeting or a “booster” luncheon. In each instance, the inspirational speech meets the audience where they are at the moment, expresses their mood and feelings in stirring words, and moves them up to a higher plane.

Presenting Your Speech

Just as the content of your talk is determined by the occasion, the delivery must be appropriate to the mood of the audience, such as thoughtful, enthusiastic, mournful, exalted. You should display those aspects of your personality that conform most closely to the feelings of the group. Emphasize your agreement with the audience, using phrases that include “we” and “us.”

This type of speech — more than any other — depends on the quality and style of your delivery. Your presentation should be a powerful expression of what you really are. It should be direct and urgent, showing that you really care how your listeners react. Your speaking should be controlled and confident, while showing sincerity and enthusiasm. Give your audience the reason to respect your balanced judgment and deep understanding.

Rely heavily on illustrations and examples to make your audience feel what you feel. Choose your words carefully, and aim them for the heart, not the head.

Your Evaluation

Use the skills acquired from previous speeches. This includes a combination of directness, conviction, body language, vocal variety, and sincerity with very little use of notes. This combination of skills should strive to persuade the audience to consider your perspective as valid.

Evaluation Guide for Inspire The Audience

See last page for more evaluation guidelines.

--- Evaluate the Speech, not the Speaker!

Speech Title:

Speech Evaluator:

Date:

Note to the Speech Evaluator: This speech strives to present a speech that inspires the audience to consider the perspective. The speech should provide a clear and concise message that increases the audience's interest. 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.

- What made the talk “uplifting”?
- What did the speaker reveal about his or her personal motivations and beliefs?
- How did the speaker exercise leadership?
- Comment on the speaker's use of illustrations and / or examples?
- What could strengthen the speech?
- What did you like about this speech?

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?
