



PUBLIC SPEAKING TECHNIQUES

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION OF A SPEAKER.....Page 1
NOTES ON SPEAKING TECHNIQUES.....Page 2
APPROACHING THE PODIUM OR PLATFORM.....Page 2
SPEAKER'S POSITION ON THE PLATFORMPage 2
GESTURESPage 2
EYE CONTACT.....Page 2
SPEAKING VOICE.....Page 3
ENTHUSIASM.....Page 3
PAUSES.....Page 3
CHANGE OF TONE OR PITCHPage 3
RATE OF SPEAKINGPage 4

)

)

)

INTRODUCTION OF A SPEAKER

The introduction of a speaker is a duty which is not as simple as it may seem if it is to be done correctly. Too often the introduction is long and rambling, serving only to bore the audience. Remember that your main objective is to welcome the speaker, inform the audience about the speaker's credentials and to arouse interest in the topic. Do not air your own views on the subject.

To effectively introduce a speaker you must:

- (a) arouse interest in the speaker and their subject and provide the attention of the audience.
- (b) make the audience aware of any human interest aspect of the speaker.

The following rules should be followed in making an introductory speech:

Rule 1. Make your comments brief. It can be as brief and condensed as a telegram — sixty to ninety seconds is often enough. Audiences appreciate short speeches of introduction.

Rule 2. Announce the speaker's name clearly and correctly. Say it so that it cannot be misunderstood.

Rule 3. Announce briefly the speaker's subject and comment again briefly why the subject is of interest to the listeners. Point out the value of the information to be given.

Rule 4. Give correct facts about the speaker and their background. Do not use vague meaningless generalities, which to the audience are dull and unconvincing. If a biographical sketch has been circulated, refer to it but do not repeat the information verbatim.

NOTES ON SPEAKING TECHNIQUES**APPROACHING THE PODIUM OR PLATFORM**

An audience very often forms a first impression opinion on a speaker when they are on the way to the platform. Are they neat and appropriately dressed, eager and prepared, are all questions that an audience evaluates in the brief trip to the front. In the case of a short talk, it is particularly desirable that the speaker start with the audience having a favourable first impression. It is hard to overcome completely a poor first impression, even if the talk is brilliant. Walk to the platform in a positive manner. Do not arrange clothing, or be looking in a folder for notes, speak to people on the sidelines or do anything to detract from a favourable impression.

SPEAKER'S POSITION ON THE PLATFORM

A speaker may use any position or stance, however, they must be very careful that the position or stance is not one that will distract the audience. The best position is one that is easy and erect. Set both feet on the floor, not too far apart, and avoid rocking and rising on the toes, leaning on anything, or weaving or twisting the body. Do not worry about your hands. If they are a problem to you, put them straight down at your sides until you wish to gesture.

GESTURES

The hands are an important part of your presentation skills. You must learn to use them to your advantage. Gestures with the hands, the head and the whole body serve to illustrate and clarify the verbal message. The more deeply involved you become in the body of the speech, the more you will need to use gestures. The gestures must be controlled. Too many movements, or awkward uncoordinated or inappropriate gestures are a real hindrance and have a negative impact.

EYE CONTACT

An effective speaker will look at their audience and this means all of the audience. The eyes should rove the room in order to cover both corners of the front row to the corners of the back rows. This should be done slowly enough to give each listener the impression that the speaker is talking directly to them as an individual. The talk should be friendly, relaxed, almost conversational, as if the speaker was answering a question. Imagine a conversation between two people in which one person does not look at the other. Obviously it would not be a very inspiring conversation and this same aspect can kill a speech.

SECTION 11

PUBLIC SPEAKING TECHNIQUES

SPEAKING VOICE

A good speaking voice has certain characteristics, most of which can be developed by practice and listening to other effective speakers. The voice should be capable of reflecting various shades of meaning, it should be pleasant, carry a sense of friendliness, be natural and reflect some of the personality of the speaker. It must sound honest and sincere, yet give the impression of strength and vitality even though the voice may not be a "big" voice. It must be easily heard and speakers must use a microphone correctly if the room is large. There is nothing worse than hearing half of what is being said. The speech must be easily heard with clear enunciation and proper grammar. Speakers should listen to tape recordings of their presentations to improve their skills.

ENTHUSIASM

This is one of the valuable assets of an accomplished speaker. Enthusiasm generates sparkle which will have an electrifying effect on the audience. No audience denies attention to an enthusiastic speaker. Do not confuse enthusiasm with noise or volume. Speakers should watch for this quality in other speakers and they will notice the difference enthusiasm has in the total effect of a speech.

PAUSES

The pause is an extremely effective method for emphasis and most accomplished speakers make common use of it. If the speaker has a point that they wish to impress deeply on the minds of the listeners, a complete stop is in order. The sudden silence or break has the same effect as a sudden burst of noise. It attracts notice and attention. The audience will be immediately attentive and alert to what is coming next. A second pause immediately following the point(s) will have a further effect of allowing the point to be considered or digested.

CHANGE OF TONE OR PITCH

The pitch of our voices in normal conversation flows up and down the scale from high to low and back again, never resting, but always shifting. The effect is pleasing, and it is the way of nature. However, when we stand up and face an audience, our voices often become dull, flat and monotonous. If the speaker is aware of such a thing happening, it is a simple matter to correct it, but often the speaker is not aware that they have keyed their voice to a monotonous pitch. An accomplished speaker also can make any phrase or word stand out by either suddenly lowering or raising his voice pitch. The people that do radio or TV commercials are usually masters in the change of voice pitch.

RATE OF SPEAKING

When giving a talk or speech the speaker should talk slightly slower than in normal conversation. This is a point which must be watched carefully, because too slow a rate can cause a talk to become dull and monotonous. The slightly slower than normal rate, however, gives the speaker a better opportunity to emphasize words and a better opportunity to vary their rate of speaking. When we talk in normal conversation, we constantly change our rate of speaking. It is obviously more pleasing, natural and emphatic.