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Patricia Fripp on Creating a Speech

Meetings and Conventions magazine named Patricia Fripp "One of the 10 most electrifying speakers in North America." Fripp is a prolific professional speaker, and the author or co-author of four books, including ***Get What You Want!***, ***Make It So You Don't Have to Fake It!***, ***Insights Into Excellence*** and ***Speaking Secrets of the Masters***.

In addition to speaking over 100 times a year to ***Fortune*** 500 companies and associations worldwide, she is an executive speech coach and magazine columnist. Fripp has won every award and designation given by the National Speakers Association, including CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) and CPAE (the Speaker Hall of Fame award). She was also the first woman President of the National Speakers Association.

The article by Fripp below, "So You're Going to Make a Speech," provides a nuts and bolts approach that consultants can use to develop and deliver effective speeches and presentations.

So You're Going to Make a Speech, by Patricia Fripp

Congratulations! You've been chosen (or drafted) to deliver a speech. Don't panic—Fripp is here!

What Do I Talk About?

Start by asking yourself three questions:

1. Who is my audience? (What do I know about the corporate culture or collective personality of the group?)
2. What do they want or need to know from me?
3. How long can or should I talk?

Where Do I Get Material?

If you're going to be addressing a particular group a few weeks from now, keep a small notebook handy to jot down ideas and situations related to your topic and audience. Make a list of what you

know that can benefit your audience, all the experiences and situations that could serve as good (or bad) examples for others, high points and low points, failures and successes.

Keep adding those sudden and stunning bits of insight that come to you in the shower or car. Or maybe you said something on the subject to a friend that was particularly funny or memorable. Some of these experiences may become the original stories you use to illustrate a key point in your speech. When you actually sit down to write, you'll have plenty of material.

How Do I Outline My Talk?

There are two basic outlines that work well for both beginning and advanced speakers alike.

1. The Past-Present Journey Formula

Tell your audience a three-part story:

This is where I was.
This is where I am.
This is how I got here.

It's a simple format that helps you tell the audience who you are and why you are qualified to speak on the topic you've chosen.

Here's an example of how effective the outline can be. A successful realtor was asked to deliver a 25-minute presentation for the local Board of Realtors. I coached her to open like this: "Twelve years ago, before I went into the real estate business, I had never sold anything but Girl Scout cookies, and I hadn't done that well. Last year, I sold \$13 million in a slow market, selling homes that averaged \$100,000 each. Today, I'll tell you how I built my business." Right away, the audience knew exactly what she was going to talk about, and they were eager to hear her story!

2. The Q&A Outline

The members of your audience probably want to know the answers to the same kinds of business questions you're asked at parties or professional functions. You can start with, "The five questions I'm most frequently asked about investments (or whatever your product or service is) are..."

Pose the first question to the audience and answer it for them in a conversational manner, just as you would with a potential customer or at a party. Even though you've never made a speech before, you've certainly had a lot of experience answering questions in your field.

How Do I Start to Write My Speech?

That's easy. To begin with, don't. Gather and organize your ideas, plan and polish, but don't write it down word for word. For now, just jot an outline with key points and ideas on a note pad.

The Speech Itself

1. Open with a bang.

The first and last thirty seconds of your speech have the most impact, so give them extra thought, time, and effort. If you haven't hooked your audience's interest, their minds are going to wander off. Whatever you do, don't waste any of your precious seconds with "Ladies and Gentlemen, it is

a pleasure to be here tonight." Open with an intriguing or startling statement: "Half the people in this room are going to," "As a young man, my father gave me this valuable advice...", "Of all the questions I am most frequently asked..."

I helped a neighbor, Mike Powell, with a speech he was putting together for the Continental Breakfast Club in San Francisco. Mike was a senior scientist with Genentech at the time. I suggested that since most of us don't know what scientists are like or what they do, he should tell the audience. Mike captured everyone's attention by saying, "Being a scientist is like doing a jigsaw puzzle in a snowstorm at night...you don't have all the pieces...and you don't have the picture you are trying to create."

2. Develop strong supporting stories.

If you're using the Past-Present outline format, the middle of your talk is where you expand on your key points, and develop personal stories that support where you were and where you are now. In the Q&A format, develop one or two strong anecdotes to support each answer. Personal anecdotes are best, but you can also insert some of the ideas and examples you've been gathering in your journal or computer.

3. Close on a high note.

Your close should be the high point of your speech. First, summarize the key elements of the investment process (or whatever your topic is). If you're planning to take questions from the audience, say, "Before my closing remarks, are there any questions." Answer them then.

The last thirty seconds of your speech must send people out energized and fulfilled. Finish your talk with something inspirational that supports your theme. My scientist friend Mike talked of the frustrations of being a scientist. He closed by saying, "People often ask, why should anyone want to be a scientist?" Then Mike told them about a particularly information-intensive medical conference he had attended. The final speaker rose and said, "I am a thirty-two-year-old wife and mother of two. I have AIDS. Please work fast."

Mike got a standing ovation for his speech. He was telling his audience what they needed to know.

How Do I Polish My Speech?

Your next step is to make a written draft of your speech. You can assemble your notes, or you may prefer to talk your ideas into a tape recorder and transcribe the words. Then read your draft to confirm that it is:

- Interesting: After every point you make, ask yourself, "Who cares?" If no one does, edit it out.
- Concise: Delete redundancies and clichés.
- Effective: Are your supporting examples strong and on target? If not, replace them.
- Personal: Does it have a high I-You Factor? Be sure you've connected yourself with your audience by putting them into your speech.
- Politically correct: "PC" is sometimes overdone, but it is essential. You lose listeners if you unintentionally offend them.

Vigorous polishing makes your talk tighter, more powerful, and less likely to bore or irritate your audience.

How Do I Rehearse?

You've edited and fine-tuned a written version of your talk. Now you're going to practice it. (You may think this is too much trouble, but you'll be glad you did.)

1. Tape yourself reading your talk out loud to check on timing and emphasis.
2. Prepare outline notes. Even though you've just gone to a great deal of trouble to prepare a written speech, you're NOT going to read it! Nothing puts an audience to sleep faster. Instead, you're going to speak directly and spontaneously to the audience, maintaining essential eye contact. The secret is to prepare easy-to-read notes. Write your key points on a pad or card that you'll keep on the lectern or table. Use a bold felt-tip pen or a large typeface on your printer. As you speak, you'll follow your road map with quick glances. An easy-to-read wristwatch or small clock on the lectern lets you keep track of the time so you can speed up or slow down, cut or add material, so you finish on time.
3. Tape your "impromptu" talk. Again, check for timing. As you play it back, notice repetitive phrases and non-words like "er" and "ah." Try again, minus these distracting irritants, until you are speaking smoothly and confidently.
4. Practice in front of an audience. Ask one or two perceptive people for their feedback. Make it clear that you want constructive criticism, not just praise. Did they understand the points you were making? Was there a lack of logic or continuity? Did they think you spoke too quickly or slowly? Use their feedback to polish your presentation.
5. Write your own introduction, and bring a printed copy! Even if you're speaking for free, you want the emcee to pronounce your name right, mention your company's name, and tell people how to get in touch with you.

The Big Day

If you're speaking from a stage, explain to the introducer that you'll come on stage from the wings before they leave the lectern after introducing you. They need to get off the stage before the audience stops applauding. This way, the audience looks at you instead of the emcee.

You've taken center stage -- now take it away!

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Find out more about Patricia Fripp and her services at www.Fripp.com. You can contact her at Pfripp@Fripp.com or 1-800 634-3035.