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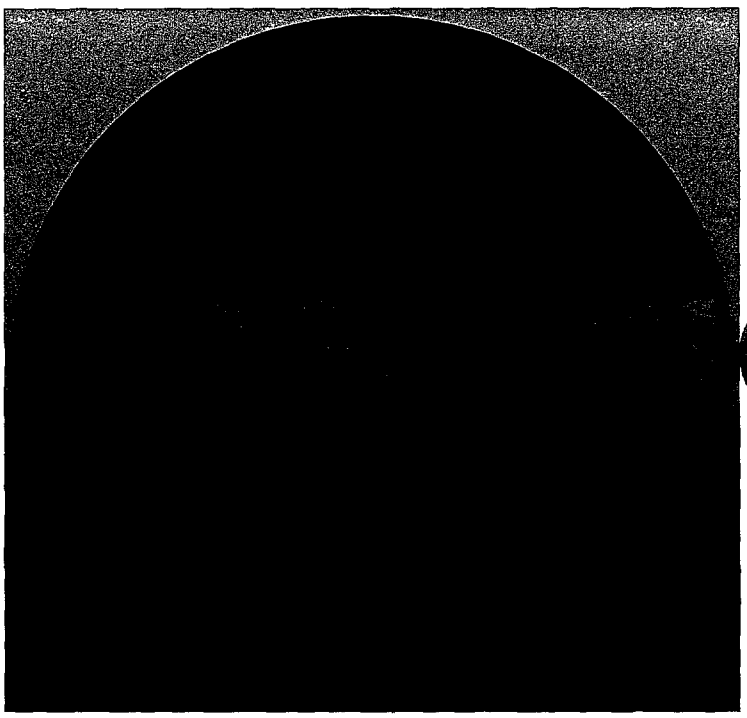
SOMARC's Practical Guide Series



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Public Speaking

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Practical PR

Public Speaking

Published by
The Futures Group International

Social Marketing for Change
U.S. Agency for International Development
Contract # CCP-3051-C-00-2016-00

1995

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Practical PR: Public Speaking

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Be Prepared

Introduction

"I've got to give a welcoming speech to the physicians at the Contraceptive Technology training What can I say and do to attract their interest?"

"I'm speaking at the SOMARC project launch What can I say that will make everybody feel good about what we are trying to accomplish with the program?"

"I have a brief presentation to give to the Ministry of Health about the project It doesn't need to be long, but I must be effective "

As a SOMARC marketing manager, your job continually requires you to speak about the program Good public speaking skills are needed to help you represent the program -- whether you are meeting with a few professionals or speaking in front of a large audience This booklet was written to give you some techniques to make you even more effective It will help you consistently convey the important messages about your program, feel more confident, be more effective speaking before large and small groups and manage question and answer sessions calmly, even in the face of antagonistic questions

Even the most seasoned speakers always seem to benefit from more practice We hope you will use this book to improve the public speaking skills of you and your staff

Some Quick Basics

It's not uncommon to be afraid or apprehensive about speaking before a group of people It is common that unprepared speakers can let their nerves get the best of them, while prepared speakers will use their apprehension to their advantage This reference guide will give you information to help you set your best foot forward and overcome some basic fears of public speaking

In brief, you should

- Be prepared -- know your material well
- Practice -- use video equipment if it's available, or rehearse in front of a mirror, a friend or family member
- Prepare an outline -- use notes
- Learn about your audience (i e , are they for or against your position, what is the median age of the group, do they have any special interests, why did they invite you to speak?)
- Visit the location where you will speak and pre-check the facilities (e g , lights, podium, microphones, air conditioning, audio/video equipment, size of room, etc)

The day of the event

- Arrive early, check the facilities again
- Dress appropriately -- find out in advance if it's a formal or informal occasion, lunch or dinner, etc
- Make friends -- try to put your audience at ease
- Maintain eye contact
- Be rested
- Be yourself -- don't imitate someone else's style
- Use your own words
- Give it your all in the first few minutes while you have everyone's attention -- clearly state your objectives up front

- Accept some of your anxiety as good -- it "gets the adrenaline flowing"

- Try not to be distracted when/if members of the audience appear disinterested (yawn or move around) You'll find a few of those in every crowd

- Imagine yourself as a good speaker

Anticipate some tough questions and be prepared to answer them

Key Message Points

Key message points are the main ideas you want to convey when addressing an audience or participating in an interview or presentation They are clear, concise statements that sum up the key facts you want your listeners to take away with them Keep your key messages to three, if at all possible More than that are difficult to communicate effectively You should meld the key message points into the context of your discussions with the public or media as much as possible or appropriate Many programs and print formats will also offer opportunities to provide more detailed discussion of the points you want to make

Elements of Preparation

The prepared speaker is best able to control his speaking forum and effectively deliver key message points

Therefore, you should

- Know your audience Try to find out

  -- How much they know about your program and products

  -- What opinions they already have

  -- What you have in common

  -- Why they have asked you to speak

AUDIENCE PROFILE

Since knowing your audience and being able to anticipate their needs is a major ingredient in your public-speaking effectiveness, it may help to sit down and write out the key characteristics of your audience You may want to use the following outline to develop a profile of your audience

- My objective in making this presentation (underline action)
- Who is in the audience?
- How much does the audience know about the materials?
- How does the audience view the situation?
- How will the audience react to the material?
- What use will the audience make of the material?

Organize your material in terms of your speech objectives -- include it if it relates to your objectives, eliminate it if it doesn't

After determining the order of the content, transfer this material to notes Content should include the following

-- A statement of your objective (e g "I'm here to tell you about Jamaica's new private sector initiative to provide contraceptive choices to couples who want to space their children or prevent unwanted pregnancies and to enlist your support ")

-- A benefit statement summing up how this information will serve the audience, e g , "When you leave here today, I hope you'll have a better idea of how the 'Personal Choice' seal of quality works, as well as how it can benefit you and your family"

-- Key Message Points incorporated as supporting information -- these are the main ideas you want your audience to carry away,

-- A periodic recap of main points covered as appropriate,

-- Supporting points, relevant details and pertinent factual information, and

-- Time for questions and answers

- Your notes should serve as thought-starters -- the fewest number of words that will trigger an idea you can talk about for a few minutes Your notes should fill only one or two pages or a dozen or so note cards -- use whatever is best for you The extent of your notes will depend on your familiarity with the material

- Determine the most appropriate audio/visual aids, allowing plenty of time for production of slides, overheads, videotape, etc Along with prepared speeches, the program will provide you with certain audio/visual aids

- Rehearse This can't be stressed enough -- and it s the area most speakers resist the most, because they feel silly talking to themselves in front of a mirror or video camera and are too embarrassed to ask a friend, associate or family member to observe their rehearsals As a rule, rehearse at least three times, but not more than six times so that you sound enthusiastic and organized

rather than memorized Adequate rehearsal can mean the difference between a successful or unsuccessful presentation

Please note If possible, you should try to have one practice run-through in the actual room where your presentation will take place That way you can get a feel for the room and make sure everything (e g podium light, A/V equipment, microphone, etc) is operating properly and to your specifications

WHAT TO ASK WHEN YOU'RE INVITED TO SPEAK

1 What is the purpose of the gathering?

2 How much does the audience already know?

3 Will the group primarily be "friendly" or "adversary"?

4 How large is the group?

5 When and where will the event occur?

6 Who else will be on the agenda and what function will they serve?

7 What is the order of speakers?

8 What is the format (e g , panel discussion, individual speakers, question-and-answer session, etc)?

9 Who will introduce me? (Do you need my bio?)

10 Will audio/visual equipment be available?

Lead Your Audience

Your Style

How you act or present yourself is almost as important as the content of your speech, so try to be conscious of your actions at all times

The following are some characteristics you should be aware of during your presentation

Visual
- Nervousness
- Posture
- Stance
- Hands
- Eye Contact

Vocal
- Volume
- Pitch
- Inflection (color)
- Speed

Assuring Impact

Your ability to get the audience "to sit up and take notice" determines your success as a speaker Eye contact, posture and hand gestures all contribute to your ability to impact the audience Learn to use them to your advantage and you'll be a much more effective speaker

Eye Contact

Eye contact is key to audience impact because it establishes your rapport with the audience Your ability to make eye contact with members of the audience will help put them at ease and give you more credibility

One good technique for using eye contact to your advantage is to lock in on one person in the audience before you begin to speak Maintain eye contact for the duration of one thought -- at least 5 seconds This will make you seem more calm and will make the audience feel they are personally included in your delivery

Pause

Use the "creative pause" -- stopping to take a full breath -- to regain your thoughts Avoid looking up at the ceiling, to the side, or down at the floor Rather, focus on one person s eyes -- you ll be surprised how easily the next thought will come!

Posture And Stance

Remember, you are the expert The optimum stance for confidence and power is with feet shoulder width apart Avoid putting weight all on one leg or swaying back and forth Weight should be slightly to the front -- on the balls of your feet Never lock your knees because this sends messages of stress and tightness throughout your body Keep knees slightly bent so that you will be ready to move

Your posture will be optimum if you can image a string pulling up vertically from your sternum (breastbone) Avoid the "military stance" -- with shoulders drawn stiffly back or sagging shoulders and chest Stand tall and feel confident When using a lectern avoid leaning on it or even touching it Those actions make you look less powerful and are distracting Particularly when behind a podium, you need to use your hands to paint a picture for your audience -- since much of your body is hidden your visual communications are more restricted

Hands And Arms

Your hands either should be used expressively to help paint a visual picture, or down at your sides in a neutral position Avoid the "broken arm" where one hand and arm is in front of you (Napoleon style), the "fig leaf" -- hands folded in front of you, the "pocket thruster" -- hands in your pockets, the "dreaded jangler" -- one hand playing with coins, the "stern father" -- arms folded across chest, or the "Prince Philip" -- arms folded behind your back

Remember that an open body position -- uncrossed arms and legs -- engenders maximum trust and relaxation in your audience

Hand and arm motions must be dynamic and large to be seen at the back of an auditorium However, just use them if they feel right Planned motions will look contrived

Voice

Your voice is your strongest asset for getting and holding the audience's attention, therefore, it is important to be aware of the sounds that come out of your mouth

If you notice that your rate, volume or pitch have increased, that is a warning sign of stress Remember to take several deep breaths

"Think down" to your diaphragm for normal speaking to improve your tonal quality Think down to your toes for maximum resonance, personal presence and relaxation

Relax your jaw with massage and/or stretchers each morning, before important speeches or negotiations, or whenever you become aware of stress in your voice

To improve the tonal quality of your voice, open your mouth long -- as if you have an egg in it Avoid grinning and spreading your mouth wide when you talk, because this causes a flat or nasal tone There always should be at least one finger's width of space between your upper and lower front teeth when you speak for the sound to resonate and the tongue to articulate

Remember to think of your voice as being on the tip of your tongue and at the front of your face for maximum resonation and articulation

Openings And Closings

The success or failure of your presentation often is determined in the first few opening minutes or at its conclusion Since first and last impressions seem to be the ones that last, it s important to make the most of your opening comments and your concluding remarks

The following are some suggestions on how to make sure you "grab" your audience at the beginning of your presentation

- First, construct your opening comments so that they set the tone for the remainder of the presentation

- Develop a rapport (using eye contact and the other techniques previously described) and attempt to dissolve any resistance that may be evident

- Establish a common ground with your audience -- let them know that there is mutual benefit in your speaking and their listening

- Effective openings require considerable work, but it's usually worth the extra effort -- even if it's just a simple or routine occasion

  Some kinds of openings you may want to start with are

  -- A dramatic statement
  -- A comment or question that requires an audience response
  -- A comment on today's headlines or a noteworthy current event
  -- A "slice of life" story or personal anecdote
  -- A famous quotation

  Other commonly used and successful opening statements include

  -- Dictionary definitions
  -- Reference to the previous speaker's remarks
  -- A visual aid or prop
  -- A statement of the main idea
  -- A comment to establish common ground
  -- An analogy

-- Jokes
-- A remark that "lays your cards on the table" (primarily used in adversary situations)
-- Or, a combination of two or more of the above

- Although your audience's attention may have drifted at times during your presentation, you want to make sure they are "with you" at the conclusion Therefore, it is as important to "grab" your audience with your closing remarks as it was in the beginning Hence, it is not surprising that many of the techniques that are successful for presentation openings also can be effective for closing Some of the closing techniques include

  -- A dramatic statement
  -- A famous quotation
  -- Personal anecdote
  -- "Slice of Life"
  -- Analogy

  You also may want to close your presentation by

  -- Restating the central idea -- or your key message points
  -- Reestablishing common ground
  -- Summarizing the main points
  -- Requesting that your listeners take some action
  -- Volunteering a "prophecy"
  -- Offering a pledge or a promise
  -- Appealing to your audience's emotions

Using Humor

Most experienced speakers agree that the use of humor can turn a resistant audience into an agreeable one, make a routine speech into a colorful one, and make the difference between being a great success or falling on your face

Some speech consultants say that humor should be inserted into a talk at least once every seven minutes to break up the monotony of regular lecturing By reading your audience,

and depending on the topic and your own frame of mind, you may find that more or less frequently is appropriate for your style

The key in using humor is to find what is natural for you If you are talented at telling jokes, then it may work for you to begin a presentation with a joke to "break the ice" or sprinkle good jokes throughout your talk However, if your jokes sound forced, look for things such as a play on words (e g getting the butterflies in your stomach to "fly in formation") or spontaneous events, comments about the organization, etc to warm up your audience Humor really helps to keep people listening and involved!

A very important rule is to avoid sarcasm and put-downs, even at yourself Put-downs toward yourself hint of low self-esteem, which does nothing to help your professional image The cutting edge of sarcasm toward others can leave hidden hostility

Having an ability to laugh at yourself is very important when giving a presentation, but laughing at yourself can be done in such a way as not to belittle yourself

Remember, you don't have to be able to tell jokes to use humor Begin looking for the little laughs in your daily life and you'll see how entertaining it can be!

Some Pointers on Audience Control

You'll come across all types of audiences Here are a few tips on how to deal with some of the people you will encounter

- If you are challenged or for some reason greeted with a hostile question or remark, you may want to deflect the negativity by asking other group members what their opinions are or what they think about it Not only does it promote good ideas and lively discussion, it also diffuses latent hostility in the advocate very quickly

- If a person begins to tell a long, drawn-out story before getting to the actual question or point, politely interrupt and tactfully ask the person if he has a specific question

- Similarly, if a person begins "story-telling" during a question-and-answer session or is obviously off-track, or if the audience is getting bored and inattentive, you might ask "Is there a question in that?" or "How does that apply to our topic?"

- Be sensitive to how the other audience members respond to your questioning when you use this technique You, the presenter, are responsible for monitoring the dynamics of the situation

- Another suggestion is to use "ownership language " For example, say "Whenever I get before an audience I get nervous," rather than "Whenever You get before an audience, well, you know, you always get nervous " This refers to people in general rather than speaking from personal experience

CONTROLLING YOUR AUDIENCE

Remember to:

- Speak with authority, assure your audience that you are informed -- an expert on the subject
- Make sure your comments are focused and logical
- Use as many specific examples, anecdotes and facts as possible and appropriate
- Be early
- Be warm, "relate" to the audience
- Show enthusiasm -- if you're glad to be there, chances are your audience will be too!
- Be entertaining -- but don't go overboard Don t use the occasion to try out all your latest jokes
- Show that you are comfortable, which will put your audience at ease as well

Don't...

- Show up at the presentation obviously unprepared and disorganized
- Jump from topic to topic Focus your comments on a few key ideas, making sure to incorporate your key message points at every appropriate opportunity
- Generalize Use specific examples, anecdotes and facts pertinent to the points you are making
- Be late
- Don't be cold or aloof
- Don't be dull or boring
- Don't alienate your audience by being unresponsive to their questions and comments

Techniques For Meeting Audience Resistance

Using a strong, well-modulated voice is the best control technique Remember that when we become stressed, the pitch of our voice tends to rise, which suggests tension and lack of control Repeat "May I have your attention, please?" two or three times if necessary, in the same strong, calm voice Then wait, look directly at the talkers, keep calm and pleasant, not stern and demanding

As you know, family planning and contraceptive social marketing are not supported by everyone You will encounter skeptical and hostile audiences They may or may not be outwardly antagonistic or hostile, but they probably will try to discredit you whenever possible

To assure that your credibility as a speaker remains intact and that you successfully deliver your message, you must maintain the upper hand when confronted with resistance in your audience The following pointers should help you effectively and tactfully respond to resistance

- Use energy, authority, and audience awareness in your presentation style

- Use active listening to detect underlying reasons for resistance

  -- use open questions to draw your audience out

  -- use physical proximity to a particular resister to get him/her involved, maintain eye contact

  -- focus on the concerns of the audience and listen without making judgments

  -- relax, pause, maintain eye contact

- Confront it "You know, I feel some resistance in this room Let's talk about what's causing it"

- Lay your cards on the table For example, tell the audience that you are not trying to get anyone to use the Pill who hasn't already decided they want to space their children but a new program to educate women about the Pill and increase access by promotion through pharmacies and lower prices

- Terminate the speaking situation as soon as you can tell it's a "no win" one

MANAGING RESISTANCE

Don't	Do
Fight back	Remain slow, steady, direct
Take it personally	Maintain your focus
Criticize	Listen to yourself
View it as a win/lose situation	

Techniques For Successful Question-and-Answer Sessions

- Each time a question is asked, before answering it rephrase and enrich the question to the entire audience for clarification Then direct your answer to the audience, not the individual questioner In this way, you will maintain the interest of the entire group because everyone is fully aware of the question and thus is interested in the answer Your job as speaker is to hold the interest of the group

- Be honest and forthright with your responses

- Keep your answers direct and to the point

- Move around the audience when accepting questions so that the entire audience, not just one section of it, is involved

- If a question is personal in nature, depersonalize it when you rephrase it to the group

- Turn hostile or accusatory statements into questions

- Diffuse emotional questions by politely asking for clarification of non-specific words like "pussy-footing, hedging, etc "

- Think only of the question (not the answer) when it is being asked Decide on your answer while you are in the process of rephrasing it Rephrasing the questions gives the speaker "thinking time" and thus reduces the pressure on the speaker

- Be willing to admit you don't have the answer, especially if the question is outside your area of responsibility or expertise

- Always keep your key message points foremost in mind so that you are not trapped into a related topic area winning individual points but clouding your original objective

- Don't ask for approval of your question rephrasing (e g , "Is that the question you asked?") If the questioner is not satisfied, he probably will let you know

- Don't go back to the questioner and ask for approval of your answer This gives control back over to the questioner and, if he is not completely satisfied with your answer, you will end up in a one-on-one dialogue with that person, thus losing control of the group

- Don't end your answer in visual eye contact with the questioner This could invite him to ask another question or disagree with your response

- Don't get into a one-on-one discussion with a member of the audience You may, however, want to offer to entertain individual questions and answers following the formal presentation

- Don't say, "Your question isn't clear " If you don't understand the question, ask the person to repeat or rephrase it, or ask for an example of what he or she means

- Don't lose your cool If an audience member is irritating you, accept his question, but as you rephrase it, avoid eye contact with that person and direct your answer to the entire group Remember, the more visual eye contact you have with this person, the more irritated you will become

In Conclusion

This booklet was designed to help you more confidently tackle some of the challenges in public speaking We hope it has provided you with a better understanding of the techniques you can use to improve your skills Remember practice makes perfect The more you speak about your SOMARC program and practice your presentation style, the more effective you'll be Good luck!