THE ART AND BUSINESS OF SPEAKING

SEPTEMBER 2015

SPEAKER



BODY LANGUAGE
TIPS FROM THE COURTROOM

4 WAYS TO SELL FROM THE STAGE

FRONT AND CENTER
BECOME A SPOKESPERSON!

The SPEAKER'S CODE for SUCCESS

GO FOR THE GOLD!

KEYNOTE 2.0:
SPEAKING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

HOW TO USE SLIDESHARE
PAGE 36

ROCK THE PLATFORM

THE PRESENTATION ISSUE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL SPEAKERS ASSOCIATION • WWW.NSASPEAKER.ORG

THE COURT OF AUDIENCE OPINION

How to use body language to ensure your audience will render the right verdict on your speech

BY JOSEPH CURCILLO, ESQ.





You pause in quiet reflection: In your head, you review everything you are about to do. All you have studied and rehearsed will soon see the light of day; your innermost self will be splayed before the public. You will be judged for your efforts.

The crowd seems attentive as you begin to speak, but can you hold their attention for the duration? Will they find it in their hearts and minds to observe and listen?

You have spoken. Each word flowed as evidence of your ample preparation. But you know that in the end, it is you alone who will be judged. The reaction is now in the hands of the people you worked so hard to impress. Did they feel involved? Did they understand the message? You are done, and there is no second chance. The moment has arrived.

Will they find your client guilty of first-degree murder? Will the innocent man who is looking to you for his freedom instead be sentenced to death?

Such is the life of a trial lawyer.

I trust that the next speech you give from the platform will not be a matter of life and death, but I know it feels like that every time. As a speaker, I know that the final applause, or lack thereof, can feel either like an acquittal or a death sentence. Here are a few ways to get the positive response you're seeking.





Messaging Musts

The message must be clear to the speaker, and only then will it be clear to the audience. As you script each and every word in detail, the message will become refined. Focus on the story you have to tell, and allow the speech to become a part of you. Then, you will be able to deliver it with feeling and meaning. Internalize it by seeing it in your head before it reaches your lips. Then, you will know your message the way you can visualize the roads you travel each day from your office to home.

As your confidence grows, the journey will become second nature. Then, prepare yourself for delivery.

What Message Are You Sending?

Think about the last time you asked for directions from a bystander. I trust you instinctively concluded whether the individual was a good or bad source of guidance based upon the certainty with which they spoke and how they acted while speaking to you. So, you ask yourself: What message am I subconsciously sending as the words fall from my lips?

Some suggestions to improve what the audience hears based on your actions include:

SPEECH

- Your **tone** should be comforting and say: "Jump on in. The water is fine." The more you internalize your content, the closer you will come to a balanced, trustworthy tone. Speak as you would to a trusted friend.
- **Use emphasis** when you are making a point that is at the heart of your message. It will focus the listeners' attention and allow them to recognize the diamonds and emeralds you are sharing.
- **The pause** is the greatest weapon we have to reinforce the importance of a passage we just delivered. It allows people to absorb the point and prepare for what is to come. It also allows you, as a speaker, to think about your next words.

> "Focus on the story you have to tell, and allow the speech to become a part of you."

- **Clarity** seems obvious, but it cannot be overlooked. It includes articulation and word choice. Speak using a vocabulary to which your audience can relate. If your topic includes technical words or industry jargon, take a moment to define the words you use. It shows your understanding and keeps the whole audience with you.
- **Volume** is important if you want to be heard, but it also can be used in conjunction with tone to create emphasis and melody that ensure the audience stays with you as you lead them on your journey. Also, it keeps you from sounding monotonous and boring.

BODY

- **Leaning** on the podium is bad, unless you want to lean on the podium. Yes, there are moments when you lean on the podium as you lower your voice that can make the audience feel like they are in on a secret, but accidentally leaning can look too casual.
- **Firmly grasping the podium** as you speak sends the message that the podium is your security blanket, and you are hiding behind it.
- **Drooping posture** (dropping your shoulders or slouching) signals the audience that there's just too much responsibility resting upon your shoulders. They may not trust you because they believe the burden of your message is weighing too heavily upon you.
- **Holding your arms behind your back** could indicate that you are not in touch with others or that you're hiding something.

ARMS

- **Folding your arms** across your chest can create the image that you are self-protective. Avoid the ill-timed crossing of your arms that would convey the message "I am closed off" or "I am hiding something."
- **Open arms** will send the impression that you are open and inviting. People will feel the comfort of a hug associated with open arms.

EYES

- **Make eye contact.** Even the people in the back of the room need love. Divide the room into sections in your mind, and randomly look into the eyes of people everywhere in the room rather than just the front row.
- **Looking down** at notes gives the impression that you do not know what you are doing. Keep your notes—if you use notes—in a position where an occasional glance will put you back on track.

How Well Do You Listen?

If you allow audience interaction or you take questions from the floor, be aware of *how* you are listening. Some ways to show interest, or avoid showing a lack thereof, include:

- **Holding your chin** is a common posture that signals curiosity or that one is thinking. Unfortunately,

holding your chin might also send a message that you're feeling insecure or inferior.

- **Relaxed arms** show you are comfortable with the speaker, as well as the question being asked. Much like keeping open arms during delivery, you are showing you are comfortable being the listener.
- **Scratching the top your head** will definitely send a message that you are confused.
- **Placing your fingertips together** as if in prayer is a gesture that people use when they are in a position of power. Interestingly enough, this position is used frequently to show power, but is often read as: "This person is not as confident as they want you to believe."
- **Holding your thumb** in the middle of your clenched fist can convey that you are in distress. A better solution is to keep your hand relaxed and open. Do not keep the fingers closed tightly.
- **Stiff, flat hands** send a message that you are not budging on your position; you're saying that you are going to dominate. You may recognize this gesture as it is often used by politicians during speechmaking.

The more comfortable you become with your talk, and the more entrenched in your soul the speech becomes, the more your body will naturally show the mannerisms that fit with the words you use.

Be Authentic and Fresh

In 1993, my longtime friend and mentor, Charlie "Tremendous" Jones, CPAE, hired me for my first speaking engagement. A few days before the engagement, Charlie asked me to stop by his house. As we were walking across his yard, he looked at me and asked, "Are you ready?"

I assured him I was almost there, but I would review the presentation one more time before the event. He looked at me, hit me rather hard and said, "There is no need to review. Either the message is in your heart, or you are not ready."

Whether it was Charlie's punch or his words that jarred me more is irrelevant. The result was that I recognized the value of speaking from the heart and being original and authentic.

Ideas for staying fresh and original are as unique as the person implementing the method. I have seen some great ideas, but to name a few:

- **Real-life experiences** should be incorporated into your talk. Think about stories you have told offstage that define who you are. Maybe it is a story you told on a first date to win over your spouse, or maybe the story you told during a job interview. Think about those stories that are personal to you, and adapt them for the stage.
- **Focus on your life** and the events that make you original and different from every other person in the world. Mentors and teachers have helped each of us become who we are in life. Make your teachers proud by being true to yourself—not by copying the teacher.
- **Lucky charms?** No, not for luck, but to remind yourself of your past, of a moment in your life that makes you smile. The lucky charm will anchor you in reality by reminding you of the story associated with the childhood trinket.
- **Play a game.** Personally, I have always played a a game to keep myself anchored in reality. I randomly select a word from the dictionary before each gig and challenge myself to work that word into my speech. By challenging myself, there is always something different and new in what I have to say.





I invite you to find your own challenge to keep it real. Refresh your talk with thoughts and challenges that remind you of the *inner* you. Allow your words to flow from your mind, heart and soul in harmony.

At least you know that no one will go to prison if you fail.



Joseph Curcillo, Esq., is an attorney, speaker and entertainer. He is a National Top 100 Trial Lawyer, a Pennsylvania SuperLawyer, and recipient of the 2015 Annemann and 2014 Christopher Awards for Mentalism. He educates attorneys and corporate audiences in persuasive presentation skills. Visit www.TheMindShark.com.