

Public Speaking for the Public Servant

FGFOA – Palm Beach Chapter

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Today's Goals

- Discuss important aspects of public speaking
- Discuss proven success methods
- Ask questions



Public Speaking Basics

- Workplace Presentations:
 - Phone-based public speaking: so essential in the workplace
 - Group Speaking: informal and formal
 - Formal Presentations: Keynote Address, Memorial Service



Basics

- The public-sector nature of our work makes this more nerve-wracking
- Knowing our work is often a public record increases that nervousness
- Most of public speaking know-how comes down to: *preparation, practice and breathing*



Some “Why’s”

- Why is public speaking so feared? *Vulnerability and being outside our comfort zones; feeling judged*
- Chanel the fear into energy: a mix of adrenaline and physical strength
- Katharine Hepburn: *“Every actor is nervous and gets butterflies; when you are good, the butterflies fly in formation.”*



Phone-based Speaking

- You have to convey EVERYTHING in your voice when not present...takes practice!
- Breathe! We all hold our breath on the phone
- Lower voice timbre and be clear
- Ask questions; practice inquiry ('how may I help you with this?' 'what would make the situation better?' 'when is a good time to get back with you on my research/findings?')
- Be sure to *listen effectively* (take notes if needed)
- Close with a summary; confirm next steps



Phone Exercise

- Talk to a person next to you: share a pet peeve you have with phone conversations, or an example of talking to an angry, confused or upset colleague, citizen or vendor – what worked and what didn't?



Speaking to a Group

- Informal – your turn to update your work team
- Formal – more structured; usually standing up and often a larger group – your department’s presentation to the city council, for example



What Your Audience Wants

- To hear you – volume; amplification; clarity
- To understand you – does your message make sense
- To gain from your experience/expertise
- To feel your energy
- To leave your talk wanting more (of the subject, of the outcome)



Group Speaking - Informal

- You know the audience – use their energy
- Organize your thoughts ahead of time; select key words to keep you on track
- Seek feedback when appropriate
- Watch their body language: will help you in the future (posture, eye contact)
- Can be a great training ground – use the opportunity



Best Practices for Informal Speeches

- Build your confidence with practice, breathing and with preparation
- Use humor appropriately: imagine you are the audience; how will it be received (opening with a joke doesn't always work!)
- Warmth and wit can be better than obvious humor
- Put your audience first: remember WHY they are there to listen to you
- Practice – the key to getting better!



Group Speaking - Formal

- Have an outline; keep notes organized
- Be sure to state a goal/objective (“I’m pleased to be sharing this (project, new development) with you, and hope you’ll ask me all about it.”)
- Using AV? See tips later in talk
- Giving a hand-out? Before, During or After (decide ahead of time)
- Do you know the audience: if yes, harness their energy and focus on their needs
- Don’t know audience: start with eye contact and make your own energy level is high; establishes you as confident



The Formal Group Presentation

- **Why are you there?** Educate, persuade, update – know this before you start your notes (and use it in your open/close)
- *“Tell me what you’re going to tell me, then tell me, then end by telling me why again.”*
- **Stick to rule of 3:** best speeches have a beginning a middle & end; one, two, three - three is an ideal number. More points can be confusing and less sets up an ‘either/or’ situation



More on 'Rule of Three'

- Rule of Three: works for all public speaking!
- What I need to convey, the message itself & why it matters: beginning, middle, end...yesterday, today, tomorrow; what it was, why change is needed and what it will be – you can find three points upon which to build your speech
- Works for phone calls, informal and formal talks and any presentation



Your Actual Speech

- Start at the beginning and remember your goal: why are speaking?
- **Inform:** fact based; share knowledge; point toward resources
- **Persuade:** opinions; some facts are essential – know how much emotion is appropriate; how do you shape the beliefs of another?
- **Update:** like informative, but more time-sensitive (quick; staccato bursts) and time can be the tool to outline your talk



Group Speaking Exercise: Design

- Select a topic from this list and come up with 3 points for it:
 - A short summary of your favorite movie
 - Describe your job within your department to someone from another country
 - Explain City and County Home Rule to someone from another state where it doesn't exist
 - Explain baseball to someone who is vision-impaired
 - Tell an alien how you walk your dog



Common Mistakes

- Reading to audience – avoid this!
- Getting lost in own notes – have to know what works for you
- Ummm, uh, repeating yourself: can break this with practice, recording, video of self
- Voice goes up at end of sentence: conveys uncertainty; practice to eliminate it (generational; geographic vocal tics)
- Playing with something while talking
- Lack of eye contact; lack of ‘presence’; low energy
- When the audience is looking at their phones: biggest current complaint of speakers



Best Practices

- Lower the register and timbre of your voice – most effective tone
- Listen to yourself; practice
- Breathe often and deeply; belly not shoulders (use diaphragm)
- Get closer to audience: come close if you are standing
- Move for purpose: to make a point; change subjects; get closer to question



Physical Tips

- Your posture: comfortable; hands at side or by waist unless gesture is needed
- Your stance: not rigid; don't pace (stand-up comic); don't grip the podium
- Microphone – takes practice...clip on is best so you can move
- Watch out for Knee Lock!
- Playing with things: change in pockets; pen; remote control; jewelry are big culprits
- Practice breathing so it becomes natural



Trouble-shooting

- Can't get nervousness down: get a 'perfect place' in your head – imagine giving the talk there; breathe a rhythm (15 seconds; count backwards from 60)
- Don't apologize, except for broken AV: don't give audience a verbal 'I'm sorry' – try instead: "we are having technical difficulties and I do apologize. While we wait – may I answer some questions?"



Beginning and Ending: So Essential

- **Start Strong** – makes the first impression and let's your audience know what they'll receive
- **Finish Strong** – hard to do if you are taking Q and A, but you can still make a strong closing point after the last question...combine it with your audience appreciation and a final thought, and be sure to be gracious and thank the audience for their time and attention
- Don't 'wing' the opening and ending – plan ahead ('let me leave you with this thought...')



Because We Are Public Servants:

- Your comments may be in the minutes – forever
- You want to give context to whatever you address: government is different from the private sector. Be sure you have conveyed why this is happening at this point in time; what will occur if action is/isn't taken
- Remember your audience may be new to the city/county/region; unfamiliar with your government's structure
- If your topic is going to raise questions/concerns: practice your answers (come up with 5 questions you anticipate receiving and practice your answers to determine thoroughness)
- It is okay to say 'I don't know' when you then promise to follow-up and do so



Formal Tips and Other Resources

- Practice with a group you trust
- Videotape yourself; use a mirror – especially for quirks and physical concerns
- Write your outline a few times – it makes your brain practice and you begin to memorize better
- Say your opening and closing in the shower – best place to practice the physical side and to hear your voice



Resources

- Toastmasters – if you are willing to commit the time
- TED talks – wonderful examples and inspiration! TED also produces a simple guide: www.publicwords.com/ - Chris Anderson



The Best Closing

- Sincere, brief and appreciative!

