

## 5 Ways to Improve Your Presentation

Written by Aaron Southard

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Of all of the phobias in the world, I found that the #2 most feared thing in life is Death and the #1 most feared thing is Public Speaking.

I just began another [Building Confidence in Our Communication](#) class with one of our clients. I am amazed at how little people know about how to present and speak publicly. Not like a formal speech to a room full of paying spectators, but to a group of colleagues at work, to a board room with a few clients or in a meeting amongst your peers.

Presenting well is a major skill that you will need to learn and use as you refine your leadership pursuits. A great presenter can make or break a deal, motivate the group to action or put everyone to sleep and make them resent you for wasting their time.

Here are **5** practical steps to delivering a powerful report:

**1. Make brief notes of things you want to mention. DO NOT WRITE OUT YOUR TALK!!!** Do not memorize a presentation. At the end

of my freshman year of college I found myself in the National Finals of a speech tournament in Concord, California.

The tournament was held in a hotel and we competed in hotel rooms.

There were typically 6 to 8 competitors per round plus a judge.

All of us were crammed onto the bed as we watched each other deliver our speech to the judge at the end of the bed.

It was my turn.

I got up and began my speech that I had written word for word and had memorized over the past three months.

I got distracted by one of my competitors as he was imitating picking his nose with his finger hidden up his flaring nostril.

I froze, lost my place and turned all shades of red with embarrassment as I tried frantically to remember my place in my speech.

It is more than just the ease of losing your place. It is not connecting with your audience that is the direct out come of memorizing a rote speech, report, presentation or story.

Always prepare your presentation with brief notes, you will be able to connect with your audience and not worry about the memorization of each and every word.

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**2. Fill your talk with illustrations and examples.** Our minds are influenced greatly by what we can visualize.

In a presentation or speech, it is a challenge to show visualization so we must create the visualization for our listeners by sharing stories and examples that illustrate our point.

People can remember and relate to a story that teaches a concept better than they can remember the concept alone.

**3. Know more on the subject than you can use.** Knowing more about the subject you are talking about will provide you with more material in case you have more time to speak than originally planned.

It will also help you in case there is an opportunity for questions.

The most important piece of knowing more than you can use on the subject is simply the confidence it will give you as you go into the presentation.

Confidence provides comfort to you and in turn to your listeners.

You will be less worried about what you are going to say and they will be less worried about how you are saying it and listen.

**4. Instead of worrying about your delivery, find ways of improving your message.** Think of the benefits here.

If we spend our time refining our message and thinking of ways to relate to our audience, making appropriate adjustments for our listeners and finding proper examples and illustrations for our major points instead of worrying about our delivery, we will have spent our time wisely. Focusing on the message is a better use of your time than worrying about something you have limited control over.

**5. Be yourself; do not try to imitate others.** There are many wonderful role models out there that speak well, are charismatic and well liked speakers.

Let them be them.

You be you!

I learned this the hard way.

I had just started my career in speaking when I met Tyler Smith.

He was a senior in my high school when I was a snot nosed freshman.

He was tall, good looking and seemed to have the whole world looking at him.

He spoke very mechanically with his patented left hand slightly in his front pants pocket and his right arm bent at the elbow in a perfect V as he used his hand as emphasis of major points by giving it a slight flick forward.

I was captivated.

My first several tournaments, I tried so hard to be like Tyler Smith.

No matter how hard I tried, I never had the success as Tyler had, so I eventually gave up and just tried to be me.

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To my surprise, people reacted to the "real" me better than the "fake" me. I discovered I could focus my attention on my audience and the message rather than on mimicking Tyler Smith's moves and posture.

The fear of speaking and presenting can become a thing of the past. As you look for ways to improve your leadership skills, look for courses that will help you refine your presentation skills and speaking styles. It will catapult your career to a whole new level.

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