Public Speaking Success for Candidates



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Welcome

Consider the power of the spoken word and its ability to move men and women.

There's not enough time and space to recount all the moments when speeches have so motivated people that those words have literally changed history. From William Wilberforce and his oratory that drove and inspired the abolition movement in 19th century England, to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and 2nd Inaugural speech, to even Robert "Fighting Bob" La Follette and the nascent days of the Progressive movement, the spoken word, if used correctly, can inspire people into dramatic, world changing action.

Yet how many of those reading this have ever truly worked on their speaking skills? Most people are terrified to even stand up in front of a handful of people and say a few words. But that pounding of the pulse and even terror often happen simply because there hasn't been any work or preparation put into public speaking.

The ideas of limited government and free enterprise are powerful ideas—ideas that when implemented in their truest form, have empowered people and given them the ability to pursue their dreams within the freest, and safest political space. And yet many times those who believe in these principles do a terrible job of communicating them in a real way that inspires people.

We want to change that. This manual is not an all inclusive, one-stop shop to make you the next Lincoln. But it is a very good starting point for those considering running for office. It will help you organize your ideas while laying out the basic principles for communicating well with the spoken word. We hope that it helps you be successful, not only with your ability to communicate, but your run for office as well.

Keep America Free,

Ned Ryun President

American Majority







We've all been there—waiting for a speaker to step on stage, anticipating a solid, energizing presentation. Then the speech begins and we cringe inwardly, avoiding eye contact with the speaker. The longer it runs, the more strongly we feel that we should have stayed home and read the transcripts the next morning. What could have been a rousing evening became a flat,

You know the pain of sitting through a poorly executed speech. And now that you've decided to run for office, you're on the other side—

clichéd waste of time.

you're the candidate behind the lectern. You've done your homework and launched a campaign that's running smoothly. Don't allow your campaign to crumble around your public speaking abilities. *What you say as a candidate and how you say it matters*. Public speaking is one vital factor that can cause an energetic, efficient campaign to gain momentum or grind to a painful halt.

We all love a great speech. It can make us laugh or cry, or move us to action. Though it would be nice to say that members of an audience base opinions of a speaker on content and pure logic, gut reactions and general impressions play the most important role. At the end of the day, your voters and the media don't recognize how well your campaign was run—although that's a vital part of winning. At the end of the day, they remember what you say and the impression you make as you say it.

Your success as a candidate depends in many ways on your ability to communicate. Study after study reveals that while values, experience, and motivation are important they fall behind your ability to effectively communicate who you are and what you want to do. You will stand out to the folks in your community because of your ability to communicate to them.



Two Sides of the Same Coin: Content and Delivery

A textbook definition of public speaking will give you something along the lines of "the art of speaking to a group with the intent to inform, persuade, or entertain." Every campaign speech is primarily a persuasive speech—you want to move your audience to vote for you.

As such, it's not enough to simply know what you want to say. You need to know how and when to deliver it appropriately and most effectively. Successful public speaking involves more than perfect prose. While content gives a speech form and meaning, delivery captures the attention of the audience and gives life to your words. Content is important but solid delivery is essential to drive home your message while establishing a rapport and relationship with your audience.



Let's get practical. A short stump speech will be one of the most important components of your campaign. It functions as your core theme or central philosophical message. The need for a dynamic stump speech exists for every candidate no matter what political office they seek. Refining its content is critical, not only for the sake of every upcoming speech, but also to ensure that your entire campaign stays on message.

Shrinking Sound bite

Voters lack patience for a lengthy address and so do the media. According to an academic study, in the 1968 presidential election the average candidate sound bite hit 43 seconds in length. By 2000, the length had shrunk to 8 seconds.* If candidates couldn't say what they had to say in

00:00:08

less than ten seconds, it was not heard because it was not aired. Over ten years later, you can imagine that the amount is still shrinking. Develop a concise speech that will give your voters what they need—and have the patience—to hear. Your main goal in communication is not to simply present your information, but to ensure that your audience absorbs that information. This includes keeping it short.

The Stump Speech: Sell Yourself

You're no longer your seventh-grade self who won class president by hanging "Vote for Me" posters over school drinking fountains. You now answer the same question from your voters, but this time around it takes more than a plea and a grinning face. Remember, you're selling a product—yourself.

An authentic answer to the question, "Why should we vote for you?" should communicate your personal story, goals, and a grasp of local issues... and should be able to do it in 30 seconds or less! It's surprising how many candidates are unable to provide a cogent rationale for why they are running, but in essence, this is what your voters need from you.

THE UNFORGIVEABLE



An audience may look past a poorly executed speech, but nobody, *nobody*, forgives the pain of a speech that goes overtime! If you want to be remembered for the right reasons, don't ramble. Communicate your main points clearly and succinctly.

Woodrow Wilson once said, "If I am to speak for ten minutes, I need a week for preparation; if fifteen minutes, three days; if half an hour, two days; if an hour, I am ready now," thus emphasizing the fact that short speeches are often the most difficult. As you craft your speeches or tailor your stump speech to fit an upcoming speaking engagement, keep length in mind: 25 to 30 minutes is a long speech, 15

to 20 minutes is a mediumlong speech, and five to 10 minutes is a short speech.

If your audience expects a speech of a certain length, give them a speech that fits their time constraints. Ask yourself if the speech you're preparing will contain more information than your audience needs and then, in Picasso's words, "eliminate the unnecessary." Always remember: the mind can only absorb as much as the seat can endure.

Art is the elimination of the unnecessary



We've broken down writing your stump speech into three steps:

1. First, determine your reason for running. Don't attempt to be clever here initially. Instead, take a few moments with the following exercises—a personal inventory of sorts—to create the core of an answer first.

	ou?
elected offi	ur individual and professional history? That is, what path led you to decide to run force? Take some time to write down a brief history of your life. These data points are a you <i>you</i> . They offer the most compelling and translatable parts of your identity.
Why are y	ou running?
contributio	ou hope to achieve in the office you are running for? You're asking for support, ons, and votes—so what do you want to accomplish if elected? The key is to think out also come up with realistic solutions.
	What three issues are you concerned about?
	List local issues that are bound to be at the forefront of voters' minds. This is a functional list of issues that normal people talk about in your community. Think "watercooler"- type talk, or issues highlighted frequently in local media. Taxes, traffic, and crime are good places to start.
	What are your solutions?
	Simply put, what will fix the problems facing your local community? How will you address the issues you just identified? Write down the most effective means for producing desired change and spend some time comparing your proposals to the
	status quo or your opponent's platform.
	status quo or your opponent's platform



2. Once you've articulated your core rationale, determine where your personal background and goals meet the issues most folks care about. This will determine which issues—or themes—need to be addressed every time you speak, and consequently establish your core identity as a candidate.

By reviewing the written results of the short exercises above, you should be able to draw a connection, or multiple connections, between your story, and aspirations, and what everyday citizens most want addressed by their representatives. (If a clear theme doesn't quickly emerge, you may need to reconsider whether you're a "fit" for the seat you've targeted.)

3. Sit down and actually write the darn thing. Be brief but provide context. Write for the ear, not the eye—read it aloud to yourself and others. Make it personal but audience focused. Communicate your thoughts in an organized manner and keep the actual organization simple: intro, body, and conclusion.



Once you write your core speech, pass it on to your closest friends and advisers. Polish accordingly. This stump speech will hold as your point of reference for upcoming speeches—develop it for lengthy dinners and ceremonies, use "as is" for other occasions, or simplify for all campaign messaging. There should be a consistent message across all platforms, from phone bank scripts and fundraising letters, to website content.

Telling Your Story

More Than Head Knowledge

For too long, the Left has been better at appealing to the heart and emotions to motivate people to action. *Many times, conservatives appeal only to the head by using facts, but facts rarely cause people to act*. How many times have you seen someone stand up and start rattling off statistics, only to have their audience tune them out like the teacher in Charlie Brown?

Action is often related to emotions, and it is time that conservatives began appealing to the heart and the head so that people's hands will go into action. Let's face it: stories work better than straight facts. We can *connect to the heart and emotions* by telling our story; our individual stories that show how we connect as a whole. We are confident that by using stories in your speeches to communicate your message, you can change the hearts and minds of those around you and bring about meaningful change, not just in your community, but the country as well.

So how can you convince others to act? Quite frankly, direct conflict is the least effective approach. We all know from experience that getting up into someone's face and yelling at them is rarely, if ever, successful. It's human nature to recoil from such behavior and become defensive. Instead, use personal stories to teach underlying values, much like Aesop's fables or the parables of Christ taught morals through story telling. To

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conservatives
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do this effectively, learn how to communicate who you are and what you believe as a story.

What You Have in Common

A personal story connects you to your audience; it helps people understand what you have in common. For example, "I've lived in this community for years. I've raised my children here, and I'm deeply concerned about what is taking place in our country right now." Let people know what you share together.

When people's emotions are engaged, they are inspired to take action. But note that once someone is inspired to act, the facts should be there. Know your statistics. Or, to put it in Classical Rhetoric terms, ethical speakers always back their emotional appeals with logical appeals. Logic is important. However, introducing facts first leaves people disengaged, even bored. Take into account that when you meet someone, or talk with members of your community over the phone or at their door, you often have little time to convince them to listen. You must chose whether you want to first appeal to their heads... or their hearts.

Me. Together. Do.

Appeal to their hearts and tell your story. As you are telling your story, be yourself. It's a simple pattern: **Me. Together. Do.** First, talk about why you care about an issue. That's the me. Then talk about why you and your listener are alike. That's the together. Then talk about what you can do together right now. That's the do.

Let's face it: people care about what is real to them and what impacts them close to home. Your personal story, right in front of them, is real, and far more compelling than statistics. Again, draw people to your side by telling them who you are—the me. Let your story show them how you are alike, how you are together, and then let your story tell them how together you can make a change right now.

When telling your story, it's important to keep it genuine, to keep it real. But to be successful at telling your story, make sure you practice telling it with your friends and advisers. And then go into action. It's that simple. And it's that powerful. Me. Together. Do. The formula for real change. Now go out and change the world.



^{*} Mills-Brown, Lisa. "Sound Bite." Encyclopedia of Political Communication. Ed. Lynda Lee Kaid and Christina Holtz-Bacha. Vol. 2. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 2008. 752. Gale Virtual Reference Library.

Once you establish a primary message that matches your goals and the needs of your political base, connect everything you say to the voter "universe" you are targeting. Your "universe" is the sum total of every individual voter (or household full of voters) your campaign hopes to contact, create a tie with, and turn out on Election Day.

"Zoom out" initially and research the demographics of your community as a whole. Then take time before every speech to "zoom in" and understand the individuals who will make up the audience at any given speech. It is important to know and adapt every speech to your audience's interests, expectations, attitudes, and beliefs. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the nature of the event? Is it a rally? A fundraiser? How many people and what time of day?
- What type of audience is it? Will it consist of parents? Students? Elderly?
- What does the group expect to hear from you?
- Do they have any special interests? For example, does your audience care about fiscal or social issues?
- What is their level of familiarity with you, your platform, and the issues?

Jot down your thoughts: How can you demonstrate in a speech that you understand and identify with your audience's needs and concerns?

Keep in mind that adapting a speech to a particular audience does not mean that you must compromise your beliefs or positions. While political candidates are often accused of pandering to an audience (and as we all know, many do), adapting a message to your audience

guides your content and delivery choices. Approach a speech with a particular goal and use audience analysis to discover the best available means to reach that goal.

Avoiding a Flat

And just like any other aspect of life, you can't prepare for everything. Despite conducting even the most thorough audience analysis, you will not always get it right. The key is to have an audience-centered mentality. Read your audience as you speak. Know when to give yourself the freedom to give a speech that is more freewheeling than scripted. For instance, if you notice that several people look confused in a speech, you could have overestimated their knowledge of you and your platform. Give the needed context, clarify terms, and move on.



Make the Connection





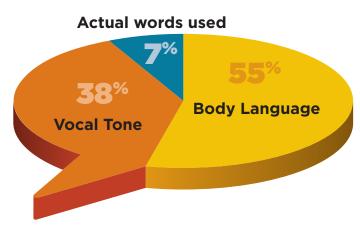
I Gotta Feeling...

Ever heard the maxim that many people forget what you say, but never forget how you make them feel? Your voters may not remember the exact words you speak, but will have a keen sense of the impression you made as you delivered those words. This is because delivery provides emotional cues that back up your verbal arguments.

If asked why they view you as a confident, competent, sincere, relational candidate for the local school board, your voters will never base 100% of their opinion on your platform alone. Actually, quite the opposite is true. Many communication specialists cite a study conducted by a UCLA professor, Dr. Albert Mehrabian, that found that most of the message an audience receives comes from nonverbal cues:

While these figures come from one specific study and cannot strictly apply to all public speaking situations, it is unarguable that the percentage of your message communicated through *delivery* is significant.

This has powerful implications on your position as a political candidate. While many politicians spend hours concentrating on their platforms, talking points, and messaging, they don't spend any comparable amount of time on the way they *deliver* that content. According to studies like Mehrabian's this means they could be ignoring up to 93 percent of their audience's perception of them!



They're Always Watching You...



Delivery at its very core involves acute self-awareness, which honestly doesn't come naturally to many of us. Since we send and interpret most delivery signals almost entirely subconsciously, it's imperative that we take the time to know what signals we're sending. Seeing ourselves as others see us is no easy task. But we can't emphasize enough how important it is to try to do this as you

learn, internalize, and master an effective delivery style.

You don't want your voters to listen to you and wonder if you've ever taken a moment to think through how you come across. For instance, what you call passion, they may see as aggression. Are you yelling? Are you pointing fingers? Is your face turning red? (Case in point. Watch this candidate for a county treasurer give a speech that doesn't get the response he's looking for: http://youtu.be/UhV5RgcNJjE).





Delivery Self Assessment

Know yourself. Understand your nonverbal and verbal strengths and weaknesses. Take a moment to fill out your top five strengths and five areas in need of improvement. We all come to the stage with natural personalities and acquired habits that can either enhance or deter our effectiveness as speakers. Do you possess strong vocal projection, straight posture, or clear articulation? Do you shift weight too often, keep a hand in your pocket, speak quickly, refer heavily on notes, or clear your throat repeatedly? (In addition to exploring your own perception of yourself, pose the question to your closest friends and advisors.)

Once you're at the point where you think you have adequately assessed your current delivery characteristics, take steps to understand the qualities of an effective speaker and work to apply them to every upcoming public appearance. We divide these qualities into three simple categories: body language, vocal tone, and words.

Body Language

Smile and the World Smiles with You

Whether President of the United States or county commissioner, politicians are often perceived as dishonest, unapproachable, deceptive, disconnected... you get the idea. Voters will give you a combination of reasons as to how they form these perceptions, many that they've adopted by viewing (note the emphasis on watching and not listening) debates and speeches.

In fact, reactions to the first televised presidential debate changed politics forever. It took place in 1960 between Kennedy and Nixon, and throughout the debate, Nixon sweated profusely while Kennedy maintained composure and good posture. Radio listeners thought Nixon came out ahead, but those watching perceived Kennedy as "more presidential" and thus, the winner. This was the first time that the power of the physical

became known as a true game changer in American politics. As a political candidate, your body language and physical appearance will enhance your message and give you the ability to connect with your audience and ultimately, win votes.

Body Language Checklist

Movement

- ✓ Do: Move with purpose. Stand and take steps deliberately. Lean forward or step forward to emphasize a point.
- Don't: Keep yourself from pacing back and forth, swaying, or shifting your weight from one foot to the other.

Gestures

Do: Use them. Use gestures to emphasize your message, transition between points, or describe what you're saying. Use open palm gestures when possible, which many believe signals authenticity. Always recognize that what may feel like a large, unnatural gesture to you, often looks much smaller and more natural to your audience. Return your hands to your sides once you've gestured.



Don't: Avoid keeping your hands within an imaginary box in front of your torso, or letting them drop below your waste. Don't repeat the same gesture over and over and over again. (If you do, the gesture loses its meaning and may, in fact, become the star of the show and steal the audience's attention.) Keep from using confidence-robbing gestures such as hands in pocket, crossed arms, or hands on hips. And lastly, refrain from grasping the lectern (if there is one) in a death grip.

Posture/Appearance

- ✓ Do: Balance your stance and keep your body erect but relaxed, with your arms to the side when not using gestures. Dress to impress: wear appropriate clothing. Remember: this is your opportunity to make a great first impression in your effort to sell your product—yourself!
- ➤ Don't: Avoid standing stiffly, but also avoid its opposite—bending forward, slouching shoulders, or leaning on lectern. Don't wear inappropriate, sloppy, or uncomfortable clothing.

Eye Contact

- ✓ Do: Actually look individuals in the eyes and speak to them *peer-to-peer*. Look at the woman in the front and speak to her, then look at the gentleman on her right and speak to him... *Public speaking is simply a continuation on the theme of your campaign as a whole—connecting with people*. Eye contact is the best way to show that you understand this as it allows the people in your audience to feel involved.
- Don't: Refrain from constantly skimming the audience, talking to the back wall (it doesn't care what you have to say), or looking down at your notes. If notes are needed, make sure to have them organized, printed large enough to read, and on a lectern set at the right height.

Facial Expression

- Do: Be expressive. Your face will get almost all of the attention and it's often the most difficult to control. Allow your face to reflect your content. Are you expressing concern over the actions of distant bureaucrats and current elected leaders in Washington? Are you hopeful about the change to your local community if your voters elect you? Let your emotions show on your face. And overall, know that a smile conveys authenticity and shows that you are relaxed and comfortable. But remember: you can't fake a genuine smile. Smile and mean it.
- Don't: Don't maintain a stoic face, a fake smile, or fail to respond to your audience.

Vocal Tone

Listen to Michelangelo

Controlling the sound and quality of your voice is your opportunity to let your passion show. Vocal tone greatly affects how people respond to you. It can add or painfully detract from your message. The fact is, even if you're unaware of it, you use tone at all times to communicate. Expressive tone will make any public

speech more interesting and engaging. It will reinforce the message you want to get across and make a favorable impression on the folks in

As Michelangelo Once Said...

If you knew how much work went into it, you wouldn't call it genius.

your audience. As with all aspects of delivery, it is absolutely vital that you pay attention to your pitch, volume, and pace ahead of time. Plan it out and practice, practice, practice. Your success as a candidate may very well depend on such things. As Michelangelo wisely stated, "If you knew how much work went into it, you wouldn't call it genius."

Vocal Tone Checklist

Pitch

- ✓ Do: Keep it natural. Hitting a home run with your pitch necessitates that you understand your natural pitch (high? low?) and work with it to produce something that sounds pleasing to the ear and matches your message. Vary your pitch from passionate to more conversational and allow it to rise and fall throughout your sentences. For example, use an upward inflection to emphasize key words.
- Don't: Refrain from speaking with a monotone voice. Your goal is not to hypnotize or put your audience to sleep. Don't let your voice rise or fall at the end of sentences. Doing so can convey either a question or hint at insecurity.

Volume

- ✓ Do: Project your voice, but as you do, relax your vocal cords. And even though it is absolutely necessary for your audience to hear you in order to understand you, think about varying your projection to add interest and emphasize your points.
- Don't: Don't let your voice trail off into a soft mumble ("What's that? Speak up, Johnny!") Then again, don't yell. Or scream. This isn't the place to call down fire and brimstone on your audience.

Pace

- ✓ Do: Vary your pace. Remember: contrast is attention getting. Utilize pauses for emphasis. Keep a natural pace that allows for each word to fall crisply and clearly on the ears of your listeners.
- Don't: At risk of putting your audience to sleep, don't speak too slowly or fall into an unnatural rhythm. And along the same lines, if you speak too quickly, your audience will be unable to follow your train of thought.

Words

"I am a verb."

Ulysses S. Grant is known for saying and doing many things, but perhaps this is his most surprising and illuminating statement. Shortly before his death, Grant used these four words to describe himself as a man of action—a man who moves a story along. In a way, his life story was captured in a single phrase.

At a very basic level, words have that unique ability to convey what we're thinking and feeling to another person. The speakers who use words wisely are seen as masters of their subject matter. You have set out to prove that you are the most *trustworthy*, *competent candidate with real solutions* in the race. Spend some time thinking through which words and phraseology will help mobilize

your campaign. We all know Ronald Reagan as "The Great Communicator"—a man with the skills of a gifted speaker. As a radio broadcaster before he even became an actor, Reagan mastered the use of metaphors and descriptive words to capture the imagination. As president, he built on that foundation. From "morning in America" to "shining city on the hill," Reagan painted word pictures that gripped the country.

Words Checklist

Vocabulary

- ✓ Do:: Use vocabulary that is descriptive and accurate, engaging your audience through vivid imagery. A variation of sentence structure and word choice works to convey your thoughts and keep your audience interested.
- Don't: Remove verbal clutter—those extra words that hamper meaning. This includes all "ums," "you knows," etc. Ask yourself this question: do the words you use help develop your argument or do they create extra work for those listening?

Touchstones

- ✓ Do: Communicate on a personal level and choose words and phrases that are natural for you to say *and* for your audience to understand. Know the words and phrases that are appropriate and reassuring for your audience and use them.
- **Don't:** Keep from using phrases that you are comfortable with but are out of place in your speaking context. Many politicians—albeit, many conservative candidates—make this mistake. For example, groups that gather to hear a public speech often exist in a "subculture" with words and phrases created and defined within that culture that only make sense to their particular sphere. An obvious example is what we call "Christianese." Always take into account the location of a speech and relevant demographics, such as religion and age. The goal of every speech is communication, which means if you're using terms that are unfamiliar with your audience, *do your research*.





Know your Speaking Style

Your goal as a candidate is to learn, internalize, and master messaging and a dynamic delivery style. While taking steps toward mastering effective public speaking, you need to keep in mind that you are communicating with the express goal of... what? Simply put, you're working to convince your audience to vote for you. To do this, they must connect with you.

How do you let your unique personality shine through without compromising the characteristics of an effective speech? The content and delivery tips in this manual have been designed to help you do just that, but here are a few additional insights that will help enhance your potency as a public figure:



Use humor. Of course, keep it tasteful, but develop your sense of humor in the public platform. After all, humor is one of the most bonding emotional experiences. If you make your audience laugh, you generate a connection (and show that you're having a pretty good time yourself).

Make it personal. We can't emphasize enough how important it is that you share your unique personal experiences and let people in on your life. This gives insight into who you are and not just what you do or want to do. During a speech (or think Sunday morning sermon when you were a kid), everyone wakes up when the speaker says, "Now, let me tell you a story..." If you begin a speech with "Let me tell you about my campaign..." this just doesn't evoke the same interest. Know the difference.

The Killer Stump Speech

And now that you've grasped the content and delivery elements of a dynamic political speech, you are well on your way to becoming a successful public speaker! Put it all together to create the stump speech that will bring focus and positive energy to your campaign.

As a note, this manual is not meant to be a comprehensive guide for public speaking, but rather an overview of the subject as it applies to political candidates. Begin to implement the principles shown here, but continue to seek other resources to enrich yourself as a person, a candidate, and a public speaker.

Here's a sample guideline we've created. It gives you an idea of how content and delivery can come together to form a killer stump speech that will help propel you to victory!

The Stump Speech

BEGINNING: Your opportunity to evoke instant interest

Message: Begin with a hook/attention getter

Delivery: physical (smile, great posture), tone (energetic, fast paced), words (imagery)

BODY:

Your opportunity to crystalize your message

Message: Pointed, audience focused, brief

Delivery: Physical (gestures for emphasis), tone (strong, varied—utilize pauses), words (touchstones)

CLOSING:

Your opportunity to mobilize your audience

Message: Can summarize, but end with a call to action

Delivery: Physical (eye contact), tone (emphasis, slower pace), words (strong, memorable words)



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