

Author Directions: Navigating your success with Public Speaking

The Keys for Public Speaking



Introduction

Public speaking, such as giving lectures or talks, is a great way to promote both you and your book. It gives you the opportunity to share and discuss the ideas in your book through a different medium. Terrell L. Strayhorn in *Academics Going Public* (2016) describes public speaking as: "a process – that is, part "science" it has form, structure, facts, and can be learned to adequate proficiency. But, to me, public speaking, especially academic public speaking, also is part "art" and thus requires degrees of freedom, experimentation, planned performance and creative, yet deeply informed, improvisation."

However, it can be difficult to know where to begin or how to give your speech. In *Public Speaking* (2017) author Jerald Goldstein explains the key aspects of public speaking: "Three components are essential to effective speech-making: a command of language, a command of logic and knowledge of audience" (p. 24). If you make sure to incorporate these three features, then your speech will be successful!

5 Key Tips for Public Speaking:

1. Plan ahead
2. Don't let your nerves get the better of you
3. Don't forget your body language
4. After the talk is just as important
5. Promote your book

Planning Your Speech

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Before you give your speech, you're going to want to plan and rehearse. Below are some tips from our authors on how they prepare for a speech, as well as the question on every speaker's mind, to use visual aids or to not use visual aids?

How Much Do You Plan?

Everyone works in different ways, and it is the same for planning speeches. Some people feel more comfortable having written out their speeches in full and others prefer brief bullet points. There is no correct way to plan for your speech, but Deirdre Breakenridge author of *Answers for Modern Communicators* (2018) typically plans her speech over a period of a few weeks: "First, I focus on the outline and the personal anecdotes. Then, I'll find helpful statistics to support stories, and great sound bites that I want the audience to remember. Once I'm past the brief outline phase, I do an extended outline that really fleshes out the full presentation. When I'm happy with the completed outline, I'll move it to the visual mode and find complimentary visuals". Terrell L. Strayhorn in



Academics Going Public (2016) encourages speakers to “create multiple brainstorming sessions to think through what to say, how to say it, and ways of organizing key elements of the lecture.” You will want to give yourself plenty of time to plan your speech, giving you the opportunity to revise it with fresh eyes.



Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse!

You’ve planned your speech and now you need to prepare to present, but how much time do you dedicate to rehearsing your speech, and do you use notes?

Deirdre Breakenridge says: “I rehearse the speech or presentation so that I don’t need notes. Instead, I can look at a single visual in my presentation and know exactly what to say about that visual or know the story I need to tell at that precise time”. However, if you would feel more comfortable having something physical in front of you to follow, a couple of bullet points to keep you on track are useful, without the danger of simply reading from the script and not connecting with your audience.

Spontaneity

Being spontaneous might be a possibility for you, even if you prefer a rigid structure. Terrell L. Strayhorn discusses spontaneity in his book, *Academics Going Public* (2016) “In previous talks, I have used spontaneity as a way of keeping the speech alive, rescuing it from a would-be dry start, or interjecting energy in the middle of a longer-than-usual lecture”. Spontaneity can be a great way of rescuing a speech or livening it up. If you are confident on your key points, it doesn’t matter the path you take to make them. Don’t focus too much on following your notes, if you have a sudden realisation of a better way to say them, then follow your instinct. Whilst it may seem scary, it can save a speech!

Visual Aids

Whether you wish to use visual aids or not is up to you, but they can be great way to keep an audience engaged and take some of the pressure off. Visual aids can also be an effective tool in reaching the key points in your speech in a timely manner. In *Academics Going Public* (2016), Terrence L. Strayhorn suggests speakers “think beyond traditional approaches (e.g. PowerPoint and a lectern) to more creative ways of sharing your content: videos, music, dance, or images”. If your speech lends itself to different types of visual aids and you feel comfortable utilising them, these could be great ways of bringing a new energy to your speech and making it stand out from other talks. However, people work in different ways and Leo Bottary author of *What Anyone Can Do* (2018) warns that visual aids are there “to augment the talk – not compete with it!” you don’t want your message to be lost behind the visuals.

How to Deal with Nerves

It is normal to be nervous before speaking publicly, however the key is to not let your nerves have a negative impact on all your hard work. Kevin Hylton author of *Contesting 'Race' and Sport* (2018) shares that “*nerves are good. Nerves suggest you are excited and that you have not taken the task lightly*”. Don't be put off if you do feel nervous, they just show you care about the event and it being successful; finding a way to channel those nerves into energy to help you deliver your speech will take your feelings from anxious to productive.

How to Shake Them Off Beforehand

If before you go onstage you're filled with nerves, there are some steps you can do to help. Deirdre Breakenridge shares her pre-speech ritual to help get rid of any last-minute nerves: “*I do some deep breathing beforehand. I also sing a song in my head (a nursery rhyme) that immediately calms me down. I also do big stretches and positive self-talk prior to all of my presentations. By the time I'm done with these little tricks, I'm not nervous anymore. I don't really think the nerves go away. Instead, I shift my mindset to recognize what I call a “surge of energy” or adrenalin that powers you up before your presentation*”. Simple things like breathing exercises or singing a song can help reprogram your brain and stop you being nervous and instead you will become motivated and calm, distracting you from the impending speech.

What If Something Goes Wrong?

This fear might be keeping you up at night, however our authors have shared examples of when something has gone wrong and how they overcame it; which will help you keep the nightmares at bay. Even if something does go wrong, it can be rectified. Deirdre Breakenridge recollects on when her audience was not engaged during a speech: “*Most of the people sitting in the room were disengaged and had their arms folded across their chests. Their body language told me that they were a tough crowd*”. To counteract this and turn her speech around, she “*fast forwarded [the] presentation to give them data insights about their competitors. I revealed data they had never seen before but need to know*”. By thinking on her feet and not letting the nerves get a hold of her, Deirdre was able to turn something negative into a positive, gaining back her audience.

Another potential problem can be technology, for example your visual aids may not work. Leo Bottary advises that if you have a technical glitch, “*don't get flustered. Roll with it and get on the audience's side of the table. If you do that they'll be on your side every time*”. When something goes wrong, your first thought is to panic, but if you remain calm and think of how to solve it, you'll be able to overcome it. The hurdle may even help make the speech better!

Top Tips for During your Speech

You've planned and rehearsed your speech, now you know how to control your nerves, but what happens when you're on the stage? You know what you want to say, but how do you say it? Considering your body language is the key to taking a good speech to an engaging speech.

Leo Bottary advises that you should *"talk to your audience the way you would over a coffee or a beer, rather than orate to them. Be real and conversational"*. Even though you are speaking to your audience and sharing new information with them, you still want to be engaging and relatable. Depending on the event, you want to keep it conversational and inviting.

Deirdre Breakenridge recommends when on stage *"stand[ing] tall with my head up and I always try to command the room from the moment I step onto the stage. My hand gestures are big and my palms are up. I learned that a firm stance and a big smile on my face are welcoming and make an audience feel like you're approachable. Body language can be inviting, or it can close you off to your audiences. I also make sure that I walk around the stage and share the "love" with every end of the room. I also make eye contact with different audience members. You want people to feel included in your presentation."* It is important to make sure that you convey what you are saying through movements and body language. It can help an audience feel connected to you and show your passion for the subject matter. Moving around and being animated will also keep your audience engaged and focused on you.

In *Public Speaking* (2017), Jerald Goldstein shares his top tips for during your speech:

 <p>Use vocal variety such as changes in pitch, tone and rate</p>	 <p>Use pauses during speech</p>
 <p>Use facial expressions appropriate to topic</p>	 <p>Use reinforcing gestures to make your points</p>
 <p>Be animated and interested in your topic</p>	 <p>Make meaningful connections with your eye contact</p>
 <p>Scan the audiences for signs of interest</p>	 <p>Move and interact with your audience</p>
 <p>Don't be monotone. The audience won't make an effort to listen to your message</p>	 <p>Don't be bland and disinterested The audience will tune you out</p>
 <p>Don't keep a straight face – It's dull</p>	 <p>Avoid the eye dart</p>
 <p>Don't overuse gestures They can distract from the message</p>	 <p>Avoid constant movements, but don't stand still</p>

The Speech is Done, Now What?

Now that you have finished your speech, you may think the hard work is done, but now you need to network with your audience and answer any questions. Leo Bottary explains that: *"I like to leave plenty of time for Q&A, and I don't always wait until the talk is over to do it"*. Whilst it is most common to do the Q&A at the end of the talk, if you feel there is a better moment to answer questions, you can change your order to suit the speech you are doing. There is no rigid structure, whatever works best for the flow of your speech is the right way to do it.

You may be wondering how much time of your speech to devote to answering any questions, Deirdre Breakenridge divulges how much time she usually devotes: *"I usually set aside 10 to 15 minutes for a Q&A. If we run out of time, I let the audience know they can take my business card and email their questions. I'm always happy to do a video blog post answering questions that were not addressed during the presentation"*. Having a follow up video blog post or email Q&A is a great way to ensure that all the questions have been answered and your audience can touch base once more.

However, when the speech and Q&A are done, that doesn't necessarily mean your work is over. You will want to network and socialise with your audience in a more informal manner. If there are refreshments afterwards, this can be a great time to get to know your audience more intimately. Deirdre Breakenridge believes that *"the follow up can lead to building a relationship, great networking, business opportunities, interviews and more speaking at events"*. It can be just as important as the actual speech!

Don't Forget to Promote Your Book!

You've planned your speech, overcome your nerves, completed your speech and answered any questions. But you may have forgotten one key element, promoting your book! Public speaking can be a great way to advertise your book to potential customers. But be careful you are not just reiterating information they already know. Leo Bottary advises that you *"have books available and be generous in delivering content outside what is in the pages of your book. If your audience has read the book, they want more. They don't want you to simply regurgitate the book"*. Make sure you are giving your audience new information or insights, something they can take away from the speech. Thus, making attending the speech more rewarding and a necessity. Having books at your event, allows people who have enjoyed your speech to be able to learn more and buy the book there and then.

Deirdre Breakenridge explains that her *"presentation is always branded with graphic elements from my book. I brand myself (including my talking points) as a communications strategist who always answers questions, which supports my book, that's in a Q&A format. I have a large standing banner of the book that gets attention when I'm on stage. I also hand out book flyers and I have PayPal on my phone and along with copies of my book for people who want make a purchase (with a discount)"*. Even if your speech is not directly linked to your book, you can still have marketing materials



displayed around the room, if people are interested in your speech there is a high chance they will be potential buyers of your book. A discount for buying books on the day is a great incentive to entice your audience, instead of buying it at a later date or forgetting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, public speaking may initially seem daunting. If you plan ahead of time, and rehearse your speech, it can be a rewarding experience. As well as a great way to promote your book to new customers who may not have been reached beforehand. You may be out of your comfort zone, but by channelling your nerves into positive energy and showing your audience how passionate you are about both your topic and your book, you can achieve an engaging and informative speech!

Acknowledgements

While researching this snapshot's topic, we turned to Leo Bottary author of *What Anyone Can Do* and *Powers of Peers*, Deirdre Breakenridge author of *Answers for Modern Communicators*, and Kevin Hylton author of *Contesting 'Race' and Sport*, for advice and guidance based on their professional experience. We are grateful to these contributors for taking the time to be interviewed and for sharing their knowledge with our audience.

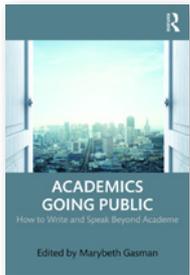
Interviews

Leo Bottary (8th August 2018), Email Interview

Deirdre Breakenridge (17th September 2018), Email Interview

Kevin Hylton (2nd August 2018), Email Interview

Reference



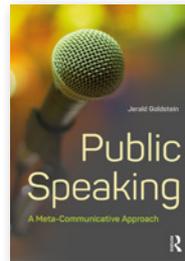
Academics Going Public

Edited by Marybeth Gasman

Chapter Four: The Art and Science of Sharing
BIG IDEAS in Academic Public Speaking
by Terrell L. Strayhorn

ISBN 9781138671652

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Public Speaking

Jerald Goldstein

ISBN 9781138931572

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