

# **12 WAYS**

## **TO BECOME A POISED AND PERSUASIVE PRESENTER**

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Business Book By

**Bill Lampton, Ph.D.**



# 12 Ways to Become a Poised and Persuasive Presenter

By Bill Lampton, Ph.D., the “Biz Communication Guy”

Daniel Webster said, "If I were to lose all of my possession except one, I would save the power of communication, for by it I would soon regain all of the rest."

As a business leader, you also recognize the importance of being able to share your ideas clearly and persuasively. Quite often, that means speaking to a group. The audience could be your

- staff meeting,
- board of directors
- civic club
- professional conference
- corporate annual meeting
- prospective clients
- new employees
- chamber of commerce

In every case, it's vital that you become a **poised and persuasive presenter**.

As a professional Speech Coach, I'm delighted to share 12 ways you can achieve that.

## #1 CONTROL YOUR STAGE FRIGHT

Notice that I said *control* your stage fright. I didn't say get rid of it. Why? Because stage fright--in spite of the fact that it makes us somewhat uncomfortable--has its advantages.

Fear of speaking heightens our energy for the occasion. Think for a minute of how you would feel if you went to a football game and saw the players come into the stadium, sit down on the bench, yawn and begin to take a nap. You would get up and leave the stadium because in athletic terms these players are not "up for the game."

Likewise, the anticipation of facing an audience elevates our awareness—which can become a big advantage if we channel that extra energy.

Sometimes I tell my speech coaching clients I had rather have to calm down a raging stallion than wake up a sleeping mule!

Another down-to-earth saying: "It's OK to feel the butterflies in your stomach, just get them to fly in formation."

Next, recognize that audiences are *not your critics, they're your cheerleaders*. Why do I say that? Because when you stand to speak your listeners have one major thought in mind: "I'm glad he or she is the speaker and not me." They do not want you to fail, because when a speaker fails the situation becomes just as uncomfortable for the audience as it is for the speaker. I'm sure you've been in

audiences where the speaker flops, and you've felt the discomfort that spreads instantly throughout the audience.

Also, you'll reduce your fear when you *prepare adequately*. Early in my career I taught Speech Communication at the University of Georgia. Often the students who gave their assigned speeches were excessively nervous because they hadn't prepared thoroughly. So thorough preparation helps you control your stage fright. You gain confidence, even eagerness to share your thoughts.

I teach: "*the more preparation, the less perspiration.*"

Consider too that *you have a secret advantage*. The audience does not know what you intend to say. So if you omit something or if you say something differently than you had planned, you're the only one who knows that departure from your material.

For other proven ways to control your stage fright, I invite you to purchase my book, *25 Ways to Control Your Stage Fright—and Become a Highly Confident Speaker*. It's a brief book, packed with strategies that will elevate your presentation poise. You can order your copy now from Amazon:

<http://tinyurl.com/25wayscontrolstagefright>

## **#2 ANALYZE YOUR AUDIENCE**

Know your audience ahead of time. One of the worst impressions a speaker can make is to indicate that he or she is speaking to "to whom it may concern." On the contrary, you will want your content to reflect that *your message is custom designed* for an audience that you know quite well.

There are several ways to learn information about your audience before you speak to them.

One way of course, is to check the organization's *Website*. Let's say that you are speaking to your Industry's Association. You can be sure the association has a website where you'll learn about the origin and the mission. Additionally, you can get very familiar with the names of the staff members and officers you will meet.

Beyond the website exploration, *speaking to members of the group* well ahead of time gives you extra insight. In my case as a professional speaker, four weeks before my keynote speech, I ask the president of the organization to help me get connected with four members. My request is that the conference chair will email each one of these, introducing me and saying that I will be in touch with them. Shortly after that email goes out, I send each individual four questions that I want to discuss with them. And I offer options. They can provide their answers either by email or by a telephone conversation, whichever they prefer. Or we can have an online discussion.

This has several advantages. For one thing, I get a deeper sense of what this group is all about. For another, I have four people who I know already and who know me, so I will not be a stranger when I get to the meeting. Also, I get very good ideas during these conversations.

I will always ask the individual after our conversation if it's okay for me to quote in my presentation some of what was said, giving them credit for it. I've never had anybody deny that request. Additionally, I go past that request sometimes and say, "I could quote you, yes, but having you share your thoughts during my speech will have far more essential Impact. Could you do that?"

And the great majority of them agree to interact when I call for discussion. Their participation means that others in the audience will be more likely to share their ideas, comments and questions—because somebody else "broke the ice."

One more suggestion that has worked very well for me in getting to know your audience is to arrive at the event at least a half hour early. This way you greet and chat with people as they enter the room, and you have increased your connections before you speak.

These and other steps that you take to know your audience will establish rapport quickly and turn the event into two-way conversation.

### **#3 USE THE MOST EFFECTIVE PREPARATION METHOD.**

The *impromptu method* has the speaker giving a talk with no formal structured preparation. The speaker relies on prior knowledge of the subject and speaks "off the cuff," as we say.

I can't recommend impromptu speaking. Too many things can go wrong, such as: excessive fear, rambling with no apparent direction, fumbling over simple statements, confusing the facts.

I'm sure you are aware of the *manuscript method*. The speaker writes this speech, then relies on the text verbatim. Especially for novice speakers, manuscript speaking seems comforting. With every word chosen already, how can you miss? Yet the tendency is for the speaker to rely too heavily on the script. Rather than speaking, we read the material and sound like a reader. We use minimal eye contact, and miss opportunities to observe audience reaction. Manuscript users often border on monotone delivery. Consider the manuscript method one that establishes a paper barrier between you and your audience.

A few speakers use the *memorization method*. Yet only a few people in 1000 succeed with this method. The pressure to memorize every word turns the speaker into an actor.

Sure, stage actors can deliver the exact lines with remarkable spontaneity. But the rest of us resemble mannequins that lip sync someone else's words.

These methods I've mentioned have their limitations. Instead, I recommend what I call the *key word method*. The speaker researches the topic, then outlines thoroughly, relying on key words and phrases. Maybe the speaker writes two or three sections, such as an introduction, a long quotation or a conclusion. But for the most part, the key word method has the speaker concentrating on conveying the *key thoughts*, not the exact words.

So, what does the key word speaker take to the stage our podium? You certainly don't take a full manuscript. You take only a brief outline. You glance down at that outline only occasionally to stay on track. You address your audience with the cordial tone of a neighbor who dropped by to chat.

For a minute, envision a car salesman you're visiting for the third time. How many pages will the seller turn in making a closing appeal? Enough said.

By now, I imagine you are picturing some of the most dynamic speakers you have heard. They had mastered their material so thoroughly that --to use a phrase I often share with my speech coaching students—they come across as *planned, but not canned*.

Remember, if someone relies very heavily on notes or a manuscript while they're facing an audience, that's ineffective. Listeners now want a presenter who talks *with them*, as though he or she were having a lively conversation.”

Leave delivery to the post office, UPS, FedEx and Amazon.

My video refers to the points I've made above:

<http://tinyurl.com/speechpreparationmethods>

Once you have abandoned the time-honored ways of preparation and delivery and you've moved on to where your notes consist of just a few key words to remind you of your major points, you will love the freedom this gives you. And your audiences will love your up close and personal style.

#### **#4. DON'T START YOUR SPEECH WITH A JOKE**

In the age of the Internet, it's very likely that somebody will have heard your joke already. They've got the punch line in mind before you even get to it. As a result, you've lost attention at the outset.

A second reason not to start with a joke is that it's such an outworn practice. There's nothing novel about it.

Here's another consideration. There are people in your audience who could easily be offended by the joke. Most jokes have what we call a fall guy. Well, you're thinking that fall guy--the victim of this joke--is not in this audience. You're sure of that. Yet while that butt of the joke may not be there, some people in the audience will have sympathy for the fall guy and will become offended.

It's also the case that very few of us are skilled joke tellers in a public situation, even though we're entertaining on the golf course, or with friends at a bridge party or a business after hours gathering. However, the skill of telling a joke before an audience is quite different.

Of course, the major reason not to start with a joke is you run the risk of the joke flopping--and you and I have seen this happen. The speaker sometimes may even hear the audience groan, and if they're not moaning audibly, they are internally. The speaker then will have an almost impossible task. of recovering poise and connecting.

I'm not against some tasteful witty remarks at the start, which might be something we happen to think of spontaneously. But no jokes, please.

## **#5 HOLD A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR AUDIENCE**

This approach calls for a tone of voice that you would use in a one-on-one chat with a friend. You do not have to sound like a broadcaster. You do not have to stay stilted and remote.

When you start speaking, use the same style of language that you used when you were greeting people before the meeting started. I like to remind clients, "Big words belong only in the dictionary."

Consider what seems like a contradiction: The most effective speakers that you have heard didn't come across as a speaker. They came across as a well- informed authority who shared information with you. For comparison, note that the greatest actors make you forget they are acting. You concentrate on their words and the plot, not their elocution.

## **# 6 TELL COMPELLING STORIES**

One of the best book titles that I ever saw was this one: *Wake Me Up When the Statistics Are Over*. Your listeners don't want data, they want words that make their minds soar.

When you were a child, the phrase *Once upon a Time* made you stop everything you were doing because you knew a story was coming. Really, we never outgrow our love of stories.

Possibly the best- known storyteller I could mention would be broadcaster Paul Harvey, who became beloved internationally through his fascinating stories, which were often about ordinary people who did unusual things. His phrase "The Rest of the Story" has stuck with us.

Check my brief video about Paul Harvey as a role model for communicators:

<http://tinyurl.com/paulharveyasrolemodel>

You will benefit from watching Larry King interviewing Paul Harvey:

<http://tinyurl.com/paulharveylarryking>

It's okay to tell personal stories, but not so many that you sound egotistical. You can gather other interesting stories from biographies, the media and from unusual experiences of people you know.

Again, we never outgrow our love of good stories. Novelists know that we don't. Movie producers are aware they must include more than action and scenery. An intriguing plot is required for maintaining attention.

Audiences can endure some statistics, quotations and complicated material, but not indefinitely. Break up those passages with a spellbinding story. Listeners will stay with you wanting to know the outcome.

You don't hear the phrase much now, but we used to refer to master storytellers as *raconteurs*. Though the name has faded, the skill remains prominent.

Our stories need to be credible, ethically acceptable and fresh enough not to be too familiar. The best stories make a point and sometimes underscore a moral standard. Our senses and imaginations become ultra-active.

Note these tips from professional storyteller Karen Chace.

<http://tinyurl.com/chacestorytelling>

## **#7. ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE MEANINGFULLY**

I say meaningfully in contrast to what many of us would consider silly little exercises that make audiences feel uncomfortable. Use your creativity and imagination. There are many ways to get the audience involved creatively. The more actively they engage, the more they will pay attention, enjoy the presentation and learn something.

Let's say you're giving a 30-minute presentation. You have four or five times ideally when you can get the audience to participate.

The room arrangement can contribute to engagement. If people are sitting at tables hosting six or eight, you can give them a question to discuss at each table. Tell them that in five to ten minutes you will want a report from them. When the question relates to their needs, talents and interests, then certainly the room will start buzzing with lively discussion.

Hear renowned author Joseph Michelli discuss audience participation:

<http://tinyurl.com/michelliinteractivespeaking>

## **#8. SUPPORT YOUR WORDS NONVERBALLY**

Years ago, somebody coined the phrase "Death by PowerPoint." I'm sure you have seen PowerPoint overdone. The presenter uses PowerPoint as his or her notes, and then reads the lines verbatim laboriously.

Skillfully used, PowerPoint can become a visual aid that clarifies and reinforces your message. Just keep it a supporting actor and not the star. You've heard the guidelines—only three or four points per



slide, which you introduce separately in sequence. Every slide needs a related photo or cartoon.

To illustrate your points in other ways, *surprising your audience* captures attention. In a two-day seminar I directed, one of the participants startled and amused us when her turn to speak came. She took off a layer of clothing. Then another layer. When the third layer hit the floor, I became concerned. After one more layer dropped, she said: “Today I’m going to describe my weight loss method which was so successful that those clothes I discarded no longer fit me.” Catchy and vivid!

Consider how *brief videos will reinforce your message*. Fortunately, video production has become far simpler and more cost effective in recent years. With training from the right coach, you can become adept at producing short videos you can use to illustrate and reinforce your messages.

### **#9. GESTURE SPONTANEOUSLY**

Let’s imagine that you see a friend while you’re walking around your neighborhood. When you start talking, you are very likely to make gestures spontaneously. You haven’t planned them, of course. You aren’t even aware of them. Your movements will coincide with what you’re saying, and they will reflect emotions and meaning consistent with your message.

It’s amusing to think back to some of the pioneer teachers of rhetoric, who believed that every movement should be practiced, memorized and repeated flawlessly. In essence, they were training *robots*. Today’s audiences would consider those rigid rehearsals and repetitions phony and annoying.

So if you don’t plan your gestures, how will you know whether they are graceful and varied? That’s simple. *Watch video replays of your presentations*.

Saying that reminds of of the client who asked me if it would be OK for the host to visually record my four hour-long seminars. I said yes, under the condition that I’d get copies to take home. When they agreed, that gave me the opportunity to watch the videos the next week. Quickly I noticed two or three gestures that seemed either awkward or used too frequently. Without making radical changes consciously, I adjusted to reducing those gestures.

Here’s the key. Don’t think about gestures in advance or during a presentation. Critique them afterwards only, and then learn from what you see.

You can enhance the impact of your gestures by moving closer to the attendees and even mingling among them—as long as you don’t have your back to any audience members very long. Far too many presenters stand rigidly at a lectern. Some grasp the lectern as though the Titanic was sinking and that was their life preserver!

Moving into the audience, even briefly, tells the group you’re there for everybody. I’ve enjoyed starting a keynote speech to a large audience by walking to the back of the room and making my opening remarks to the people on the last row. You can bet they didn’t expect to be that close to the speaker!

Mobility demonstrates that you're not tied to a lectern, your notes or a limited space. Rather, you have absorbed your information to the extent you're free to roam.

## #10 ACHIEVE VIDEO CHARISMA

Prior to the Pandemic prompted by Covid, relatively few presentations were made without the audience being physically present. A new term became familiar. We "pivoted." Because we could no longer bring groups together, we learned the technology that made meetings, coaching, speeches, seminars and Webinars possible. A new form of presenting became prominent, and in many instances exclusive.

In sharing messages, reports, instructions, plans and more, we need what I call *video charisma*. This means we become as comfortable with the camera as we have been with the board room.

If you haven't done so already, you will want to learn software programs that enable you to visually speak with and see colleagues, customers and prospects across national and international boundaries. Your goal will be to come across as winsomely and engagingly as you do in person.

I confess: During my two decades in management, I feared technology. Because I didn't think I could learn it, I delegated computer-related tasks to team members. When I became an entrepreneur, there was no one to delegate to. I started attending training sessions, and hired coaches who helped me overcome my reluctance. Amazingly, today remaining active in the social media, producing videos and podcasts and learning new "techie stuff" have become practically second nature to me.

*Definitely, if I can achieve video charisma, so can you.*

More about video charisma in this video:

<http://tinyurl.com/createvideocharisma>

## #11 REMAIN YOUR ORIGINAL SELF

You and I have heard the word *authenticity* repeatedly in recent years. I hope we don't get tired of hearing it. Being your authentic self is especially important when you're speaking to an audience.

When I started my professional speaking career in 1996 and associated with other speakers at conferences, I could easily spot some novice speakers who were imitating the most popular speakers they had seen on TV or in some cases in person. Within a few seconds, these imitators had illustrated that they were actors, not speakers.

One speech coach advised: *Be yourself, everybody else is already taken.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of my favorite thinkers, said: "Imitation is suicide." He added: "Trust thyself, every heart vibrates to that iron string." Once more: "I must be myself."

Let's consider an example from athletics. For half a century, professional golfer Sam Snead remained the model for perfection. Amateurs and fellow professionals marveled at his long, smooth flowing

swing, whose grace produced seemingly effortless power. Admiring “Slamming Sam” did no harm. The problem came when golfers tried to adopt Snead’s swing. To their dismay, they not only fell short of Snead’s style, but they also forgot the fundamentals and natural ability that had given them good results. They recaptured the game when they went back to their own unique stances and swings.

Like you, I enjoy watching experts in action. Instead of trying to become them or their duplicate, I determine whether they have *one or two strategies that I could apply, not copy*.

Watch this video about keeping our individuality:

<http://tinyurl.com/nobodyelseslikeyou>

### **#12 WORK WITH A SPEECH COACH**

*Acclaimed author Malcolm Gladwell, in his book Outliers, observed that “no one--not rock stars, not professional athletes, not software billionaires and not even geniuses—ever makes it alone.”*

The right speech coach:

- observes you objectively
- identifies habits you need to eliminate
- helps you capitalize on your natural ability
- gives candid, constructive recommendations
- builds your confidence and your competence
- gives you videos of the coaching sessions

I might be the right speech coach for you. I invite you to visit my Speech Coaching Website:

[Biz Speech Coach Website](#)

Call me, with no obligation—to discuss your communication challenges--and also what you want to achieve through coaching.

**Call 678-316-4300**

Hear how I have benefited from professional coaches:

<http://tinyurl.com/learningfromgreatcoaches>

### **OTHER COMMUNICATION RESOURCES**

1. My **YouTube** channel has more than 450 communication free training videos available for you.

My channel:

<http://tinyurl.com/billlamptonyoutubechannel>

When you reach my channel, hit the SUBSCRIBE button. Then you'll have access to all current and future videos, including interviews I host on my "Biz Communication Show."

## 2. My **Website**

<https://bizcommunicationguy.com>

You'll get a thorough look at my services, and you can subscribe to my podcast.

## 3. **LinkedIn**

I remain very active on LinkedIn, and I welcome connections with serious professionals who want to increase their communication skills.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/billlampton/>

## **CONCLUSION**

You can become a poised presenter with the ability to persuade listeners. Implement the 12 ways I've described. Simply put,

**Change your communication, change your life!**



Glad you have read the book. Call me today to discuss how my speech coaching plan will benefit you! 678-316-4300

All the best,  
Bill

