

How To Present Without Notes

One of the questions that I always get asked is, “how can I present a speech without notes”?

This is usually achieved by doing lots of preparation, using a few simple strategies and trusting in yourself and in your ability to get your message across. It is in fact recommended that you do present without notes and speak more from the heart with authenticity and spontaneity. This enables you to build rapport and connect with your audience and focus on attending to their needs as you speak.

I train people to memorise their opening, memorise their conclusion and then have 3 or 4 points which illustrate and connect with your main core message. Having learnt your beginning and your closing statement, the main body of your presentation revolves around the 3 or 4 key points and your core message. How do you remember this information? There are several simple systems that you can use that will enhance your ability to speak without the need for a script or notes. These include:

1. Use personal stories

Around each of your key points tell personal stories, examples, anecdotes or case studies that you are very familiar with and have been directly involved with. This then means that you do not have to learn a script, or read from notes, as you are telling a story, your story, that you know well and can recount without notes. And if the order of the story, the exact details change each time you tell it, that does not matter as the crux of the story, the essence remains the same and illustrates the point that you are trying to emphasise.

Build your bank of stories around each point that you speak on. And as you build you these you have more to call upon when you are speaking. You will have both sides of the story with a positive example and a negative example. If your mind goes blank and you forget that particular story which you usually tell to illustrate that point, then you calmly call upon the other example that you have in your story bank.

2. Use some props or visual items

Props can be used to remind you of the point that you are going to talk about. As plan your speech, choose what props will remind you of what you are going to talk about. Each prop will trigger your memory and you will be able to relate the importance and the meaning of the item you are holding up. And once again the story around the prop relates directly to your point and your core message.

When I speak on the importance of feedback, as you try to improve your public speaking, I talk about 3 ways to gain good feedback. Each of these ways can be demonstrated by a prop. For example

- I. Watch yourself in a mirror and see what your gestures look like. Prop – I hold up a small mirror
- II. Vide record your presentation or your practise session and view that to look for opportunities to improve. Prop – hold up a small video camera
- III. Have a friend or colleague in the audience give you verbal feedback at the end of your presentation. Prop – a small figurine or photo of a colleague

3. Use the most common questions to remind and guide your presentation

Regardless of what you speak on, or your area of expertise, there will always be 3 or 4 common questions that are frequently asked. And of course as an expert or knowledgeable person in that

area, you know the answers, solutions and ways to overcome these problems. Use these common questions as the 3 or 4 anchor points for your speech and then give the answers and the information needed around each question.

For example, if I was going to give a speech on the 4 most important things that you can do to increase your effectiveness as a presenter, I would say.

- Learn to speak with confidence and reduce any nerves
- Use a simple and effective structure
- Design your core message to meet the needs of your audience
- Build rapport and connect with your audience

I know these 4 questions off by heart and I know the answers, as I have been teaching them for many years. There is speech structure all organised and simple to remember.

4. Use mind mapping

Mind mapping is using a template or framework that you can easily map your speech to. For example, I often use the Capital cities on mainland Australia to remind me of points. Once again if I was speaking on public speaking, I may use the mind map and the points I want to make as follows:

- Perth – Passion – speak with passion
- Adelaide – Authenticity – speak with authenticity
- Melbourne – Message – make sure you are clear on your core message
- Sydney – Simplicity – use the Keep It Simple principal
- Brisbane – Big finale – make sure you conclude strong with a call to action

If you need extra points, then add Hobart, or Canberra. If you need less points, then drop one of the cities. Just use an object or map, with anchor points that each mean something to you.

5. Use acronyms or mnemonics

I use acronyms or mnemonics all the time as a tool to remember my points. There are those standard acronyms such as:

- FEAR – False Expectations Appearing Real
- TEAM – Together Everyone Achieves More

And there are those that you can make up yourself that will help you remember your key points and lead you through your speech point by point.

And while these simple systems will help you to remember your content and speak without notes, I still recommend having some notes as a backup. Have your presentation condensed down to 1 A4 page of notes or dot points that just capture the key points that will trigger your memory on what to speak about. Have this with you, but know your content so well that you will generally not have to refer to it. Use it only as a safety net if absolutely lose your way.

Trust yourself next time you speak and deliver your presentation without notes.

Mentoring And Coaching

If you want any help as you move forward and grow your public speaking confidence and effectiveness, consider using coaching or mentoring. It was quite difficult to reach the goals you set yourself alone and one of the tools that most successful people use are coaches and mentors.

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