

# HOW TO GIVE A DYNAMIC PRESENTATION

By Raymond Gerson

## INTRODUCTION

Would you like to experience the benefits of being a good speaker? Speaking before groups offers a tremendous opportunity for personal and professional development. Never before have excellent communication skills been more important than they are today.

Many persons have advanced their careers through their ability to make excellent presentations. Communicating effectively before groups is expected of people in leadership positions.

Mastering the art of speaking to groups will increase your confidence in communicating with others on a one-to-one basis. Your confidence in speaking before groups will grow with practice. Also, you will conquer one of humankind's greatest fears.

This article contains seventeen elements for making a successful presentation. Use these ideas, and you will speak with greater self confidence and ease before a group of any size.

### ***1 BUILD RAPPORT AND TRUST.***

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Talk *with*—not *at*—your audience. Establish some common ground. Communicate with sincerity and warmth, and make eye contact.

In speaking to a large group of secretaries, I established rapport quickly by telling them about my mother's success as a secretary and how much I admired her. I gave them examples of why competent secretaries are the backbone of my successful organization.

## **2 DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE OPENING.**

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Grab your audience’s attention from the start. Use a dramatic or startling statement, a human interest or personal story, a question, an anecdote or illustration, a relevant quote—or a humorous opening, if appropriate. I recently heard a speaker open with, “I wrote that great introduction you just heard. It gives me something to shoot for when I speak.”

## **3 DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE ENDING**

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Close with a bang. Use a relevant quote, a poem, or an appeal for action. Give your audience a sincere compliment, a powerful story, or a summary of your main points. Make sure your closing---whatever it is--- is relevant to your topic. Also, your entire speech and the ending should be tailored to your audience.

## **4 REDUCE NERVOUSNESS.**

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According to the book of lists, public speaking is the number one fear, greater even than the fear of death.

- **Before presenting:** Thoroughly prepare and rehearse before your speaking engagement. When you are about to begin, take several deep breaths. Visualize yourself giving a relaxed presentation.
  
- **During the presentation:** Focus on your message and your audience, not on yourself. Give yourself opportunities for physical movement. Don’t try to be perfect. Make nervousness work for you. Channel your nervousness into enthusiasm; let your adrenalin take over. Butterflies in your stomach? Let them soar, taking you with them.

**5 MAKE YOUR PRESENTATION COME ALIVE.**

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Talk to the audience in terms of their interests, problems, and concerns. Communicate with vitality and conviction. Talk to, and make eye contact with individual members of the audience. Change the pace with vocal variety and humor, using pauses to emphasize points. Use inspiring human interest stories, making only a few points and supporting them with examples, illustrations, anecdotes, and analogies. Use natural gestures; physically move from time to time instead of remaining behind a podium.

**6 USE VOCAL VARIETY.**

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Variety speed, volume, and pitch. To emphasize points, speed up or slow down, speak more softly or loudly, and allow your voice to rise and fall. Speak conversationally to an audience, but with greater force and energy. Appropriate vocal variety and gestures will naturally occur.

**7 VISUAL AIDS, HANDOUTS, OTHER AIDS:**

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Use visual aids only when needed to clarify a point or idea. Don't show a visual aid to the audience until you are ready to use it. Use visual media as an aid, not as crutch or a substitute. Visual aids should be large, clear, legible, and brief. Avoid talking toward your visual aid or turning your back to the audience. You might provide a brief outline of your objectives, the topics to be covered, and information about yourself. Then supply handouts that reinforce your points. Distribute most handouts at the end of your presentation so that participants maintain eye contact and keep their attention on you during the presentation.

## **8 TRY USING HUMOR.**

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You don't have to be funny. But humor can be effective in changing the pace, relaxing the audience, building rapport, and supporting your points. If you are uncomfortable using humor, avoid it—or practice it on your friends and family until you become more comfortable with it.

If you use humor, keep it brief, relevant to the topic, and appropriate for the occasion. Do not tell off-color jokes or racial, ethnic, or religious jokes. Don't say, "I'm going to tell you a joke"—just do it. Allow your audience to laugh before you continue speaking. Have a comeback if your attempt at humor fails.

Never use humor at the expense of another. However, poking fun at yourself can let your audience know you don't feel superior or have an egotistical attitude. I often tell my audience the following story:

A woman and her little boy came up to me after what *I* thought was one of my most inspiring speeches. The woman gushed, "That was a wonderful talk, and I am so full with your message!"

Smiling with delight, I asked her little boy, "And how did you like it, son?"

He replied, "Yeah, I got a bellyful of it, too!"

## **9 INVOLVE YOUR AUDIENCE.**

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Use stories and examples that relate to audience concerns. Keep your presentation lively, allowing time for questions. Ask if there are questions, and hold the silence a few moments. If no one responds, say, "If there are no questions, let me mention a question I am often asked"—and then answer it. You might also ask questions and request a show of hands.

***10 APPEAL TO DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES AND PERSONALITY TYPES.***

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People think and learn in different ways. Some are more logical; some, more intuitive. Broaden audience response by varying your techniques. Use some human interest stories, appeal to logic, present general themes (“the big picture”) and appeal to the senses, providing concrete examples.

The success of an engineer often depends upon his or her objective analysis of a problem. If you’re speaking to a group of engineers, appeal to their logical thought processes. Present a problem and a logical solution for it, perhaps using a graph based on statistical data. This is not to say that human interest stories or appeals to the emotions are lost on engineers. But they are most likely to be persuaded by logic.

***11 MANAGE THE SEATING ARRANGEMENTS.***

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Being physically close to your audience increases your ability to build rapport. If the audience is scattered, it is more difficult to lead them as one unit. Bring them together, removing large numbers of empty seats. They will be less self-conscious if they are sitting close together. Arrange seats so the audience can easily see you.

***12 DEAL WITH DISRUPTIONS.***

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If you encounter disruptive persons, keep control of your emotions. Do not show irritation. Wait until they finish talking; then use active/reflective listening. Lower your voice; don’t try to shout them down. Sometimes humor can reduce the tension. If they continue to be disruptive and it is appropriate, ask them to leave or to meet with you later to discuss their concerns.

***13 BE A LEADER.***

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Your audience expects you to create the atmosphere, set the tone, assume a leadership role, and be in control. They want to be treated with respect. Arrive early to make sure everything is properly set up and ready. Be yourself, allowing your unique personality to shine.

Remember, you are there to make something happen, to move your audience in some way. It is up to you to inspire them.

***14 KNOW YOUR GOAL.***

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Every speech has at least one of four goals: to inform or explain, to persuade, to inspire action, or to entertain. Know the goal of your presentation, and keep it in mind as you thoroughly prepare.

Lack of preparation reflects indifference and insults your audience. Careful preparation is the only way to achieve the results you want. Use simple and clear language that communicates your ideas in a manner suited to your goal.

***15 EXHIBIT VITALITY.***

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When Dr. Kenneth McFarlin, an outstanding professional speaker, was asked what is the most important quality of a speaker, he responded: “vitality.” Vitality includes enthusiasm, energy, forcefulness, and aliveness. It comes from a depth of conviction—a deep belief in yourself and in what you are saying.

**16 INCREASE YOUR SELF-MOTIVATION AND SELF-CONFIDENCE.**

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Use positive affirmations and visualization exercises. Speak about something you believe in. Set goals and take small steps toward your goals.

**17 TAKE RISKS.**

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Be willing to stretch your comfort zone, to risk, to grow. Risk doing the thing you fear, and be optimistic. Remember, an optimist is someone who may have worn-out shoes, but concludes, “Well, I guess now I’m back on my feet!”

## CONCLUSION

Mahatma Gandhi was timid and afraid of people when he was a youngster. He was afraid of conversing even with his classmates, and the thought of speaking to a large audience was terrifying. Yet Gandhi became a great leader, fearlessly speaking to thousands of people. By word and example, he inspired a nation to win freedom from British rule.

What was responsible for Gandhi’s transformation? He became impassioned with a grand purpose, a great message that he was motivated to share. Like Gandhi, you and I can become dynamic speakers when we have a valuable message to communicate.

You will be amazed at the positive influence you will have on others by becoming a good speaker. Public speaking will enrich both your life and the lives of others.

Take advantage of opportunities to speak to audiences no matter how small. Remember the words of Demosthenes, one of the world’s greatest orators, who said, “Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises.”

Raymond Gerson has a masters in psychology and over forty years experience teaching personal and career development. He is been a professional motivational speaker and is a former Toastmasters contest winner. Career counselor, job placement specialist, trainer, and former owner of an executive search business, he teaches college success strategy courses. He is the author of five books, including Create the Life You Want. Two of his e-books, How to Create the Job You Want and Effective Job Search Strategies are available for free at <http://www.raymondgerson.com> along with numerous articles on success and study skill strategies.