



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COURSE

Grand Lodge Committee on Leadership Services F. & A. M. New York

ORAL COMMUNICATION

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

An effective speaker gets and holds the attention of the audience, expresses ideas that are organized and understandable, and leaves a clear idea of what has been said. He follows the simple rule: **HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY - SAY IT - THEN STOP.** With practice, anyone who has normal vocal organs and is willing to follow the "Rule of the three S's," can become an effective speaker. In this training letter we shall be concerned with the first of the three S's, the others will be discussed later.

KNOW THE SUBJECT

Obviously, you should not accept a speaking engagement unless you have a reasonable command of the subject or have time to research it thoroughly. Or will you? Too often we hesitate to refuse for fear of what people will think. Actually, you are doing yourself and your audience a favor by frankly admitting that you do not have the time to do an adequate job. They will respect you for it.

What about the program chairman who invites you to speak for fifteen minutes on a subject so broad that it would be impossible to cover it in a series of one-hour lectures? Insist that you be given a specific topic that you can cover in the time you have allotted. If you do not, you are wasting everyone's time, including your own.

KNOW THE OCCASION

Careful study of the OCCASION can help you make successful predictions about your audience. You should always be clear about:

- 1) The purpose of the gathering. Why was this meeting called? What information is needed? Is there a problem to solve or an appeal to be made? In short, why were you invited?
- 2) The nature of the gathering. Is this a meeting of the general public, is it limited to members of an organization, or does it include a combination of both?

If you do not have definite answers to these basic questions, you, your audience, or both may be in for an uncomfortable and unproductive session. If you do have the answers, you are ready to consider some specific questions concerning:



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a) The complete program. How many speakers have been invited? Who are they? Is a business meeting scheduled? Will it be held before or after your presentation? Will refreshments be served? When? Will there be questions from the audience?

b) The place. Often, effective communication can be hindered by physical facilities. Consider the potential "listener-losing" factors such as room size, seating arrangement, temperature control, ventilation, lighting, and distracting noises.

c) The equipment available for "reaching" your listeners. Will a stand or table be provided for notes and materials? Will you be using a tape recorder, movie or slide projectors, or overhead projector? Are electrical outlets available and are they conveniently placed? What other visual aides - chalk board, flip chart, diagrams, demonstration materials - could you use profitably? Which of these must you provide?

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Consider listeners both as individuals and as members of a specific group, the group you will be addressing. Individual characteristics such as age, sex, language, family and community background, occupation, and economic standing can be determined quite easily. Depending on the subject of your talk, you may want to know special characteristics of the audience such as nationality, religion, political beliefs, hobbies, aspirations, and general likes and dislikes.

Although you will talk to each listener as an individual, you will SEE him as a member of a group. The group characteristics can be profitably examined:

1) Size. How many members are there? What is their percentage of attendance and what response is anticipated for this meeting? Why?

2) Affiliations. Is this a formally organized group? What is its history? What is its organizational structure?

3) Climate. What is the group's "morale?" Are there any member conflicts? Are there opinion differences within the group concerning your topic?

The audience provides the justification for having a speaker. Your efforts to understand your listeners individually and within the group can help to make your planning meaningful.

KNOW YOURSELF

Few speakers study themselves adequately before gathering information about a topic. There are two aspects to consider:



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1) Your attitude toward your audience. Do you really want to talk with this group? Are you convinced that what you have to say is or should be important to the members? Do you expect them to be open-minded, responsive listeners? A positive attitude on your part helps to assure their acceptance of you and your ideas.

2) Listeners' attitudes toward you. Do your listeners have any information about you? What reputation do you bring to this speech? What effect will it have on your listeners? Will your occupation help or hinder your efforts? How will they respond to such specific characteristics as your age, voice, and general personal appearance? You may not be able to change any of these attitudes but you should KNOW what they are before you go very far in your speech preparation.

PREPARE AN OUTLINE

Organizing a speech is the first step toward making it a success. Time spent preparing a good outline will save you time later and will result in a far better final product.

The Introduction:

The introduction and the conclusion are the two most important parts of any speech. A good introduction does two things: First, it gets the audience's attention. Second, it states your purpose or gives the audience a clear idea of what the speech is about.

Here are some workable attention-getting devices:

1) Narrative material. Open with a story but not necessarily a joke. Your own experiences or those of people familiar to you are your best sources. Be sure the story is related to the rest of your speech. Above all, if YOU can't tell a story well, DO NOT.

2) A quotation. Choose an appropriate selection from poetry or literature which is pertinent to your subject.

3) A challenge. Be sure that you know your audience so that you do not create bad feelings.

4) Shock treatment. Lead your audience to expect you to open in one way, then begin in a startlingly different manner. For example, remain silent when you're expected to begin talking; then state a dramatic fact about your subject. To be effective, this method requires self-assurance, a sense of timing, and an accurate knowledge of your audience.

After you have audience's attention, state your purpose. Give them a brief, pointed thesis statement. Nobody likes to wait until halfway through a talk to find out why you are giving it. Do not leave them guessing.



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By all means, avoid apologetic statements such as "try to," "attempt to," or "in the limited time allowed to me." Also, avoid vague phrases like, "a few of the reasons," or "a little bit about." The thesis statement should always be specific. Here are some examples:

A. Well Stated, Adequate Theses

1. "There are three schools of thought with respect to price supports for agricultural commodities."

2. "Let us carefully examine the five chief arguments advanced by our legislators of a retail sales tax."

B. Incomplete and Inadequate Theses

1. "This morning I should like to talk about how to make bread."

2. "It is my conviction that something must be done about this problem."

The Body:

First, jot down all the points that you would like to cover, regardless of their order or degree of importance. By eliminating those that time will not permit you to include and by combining those that are similar, you can cut the number in half. Finally, arrange the remaining points under two to four main headings. Remember, regardless of the attentiveness of your audience, the importance of the topic, your ability, and the allotted time, the fewer main ideas you present, the more successful you will be.

The Conclusion:

In a well-planned speech, your audience will know when you have said what you had to say. Do not lose them by failing to move swiftly into your conclusion.

Keep in mind Mark Twain's story about listening to a speaker's appeal for funds. When the speaker had reached what should have been the end of his discussion, Twain was ready to give him \$10.00 and was considering giving \$20.00. When the speaker actually concluded, one-half hour later, Twain took 50 cents from the collection plate as partial payment for the time he had wasted in listening until the end.

The conclusion consists of a summary and a final appeal. Be sure to restate your objective or purpose for giving the speech. Remember, in the introduction you tell your audience what you are going to tell them, in the body of the speech you tell them, and in the conclusion, you tell 'em that you told 'em.



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The summary. Usually, the summary can be handled in several sentences that use parallelism. Have new phraseology to bring out your main discussion points. This is your last opportunity to implant them firmly in your listener's minds. Always reemphasize your main points to prepare the audience for the final appeal.

The appeal. Frequently, the final appeal is made to the audience's emotions. Since this is the point at which you win or lose, build your appeal around one of the five great motives that impel men to action: self-preservation (or health), cost (or profit), reputation, power, and sentiment. Be specific. Do not let the listener go away saying, "So what? - What's all this to me?"

The pronoun "I" is out of place. You are now openly urging the audience to understand, to believe, or act according to the thesis that you have clearly revealed. Your final note can be either vigorous and challenging or quiet and visionary. Either technique can be equally effective.

Of course, in a strictly informative speech, the appeal may be essentially an application of materials that seems to say, "Here are how the facts apply, make use of them if you will." However, since persuasive elements are present in all good teaching, you may wish to make as vigorous a final appeal as possible.

Finally, make your conclusion brief. Avoid bringing in any new ideas, and do not start it with the words, "in conclusion." As my former speech teacher said, "The only time I like to hear those words is when the speech has been so dull that I'm glad it's nearly over."

WRITE THE TALK

Although you should not plan to write out completely every speech you give, going through the exercise occasionally can be helpful.

A check on timing. The average speaker delivers about 120 words per minute. Writing the speech will help you stay within your time limit.

A check on arrangement. Although your outline may appear to be logical, writing the speech may show you how changing the order of some points can result in smoother transitions and a more effective style.

A check on expression. Test various ways of saying the same thing and remember that short sentences are usually more effective than long, dragged out ones.

A check on you. After you have written your talk, put it in your desk and let it season for a few days. Take it out and read it aloud. What originally sounded so well done may now fall flat in some places. This gives you an opportunity to put on a final polish.



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PRACTICE ALOUD

Having written your talk, you may want to memorize it. **DO NOT.** It will sound memorized, and if you forget, you are lost. The exception to this rule may be the introduction and conclusion. Since they are so important, you may wish to commit them to memory to maximize their effectiveness.

Memorizing your outline as a list of key words or phrases so that you are speaking from ideas is the only way you will be conversational in your delivery. Practice it aloud several times. If you can get someone to serve as your audience, fine. If not, practice alone. Practicing in front of a mirror is a good test of your command of the material. A tape recorder is an excellent tool if you want to check your delivery. Remember, to do your best job, there is no substitute for practice.

-Prepared by Russell D. Martin, Professor Communication Arts.
Cornell University

Notes:



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Excerpts from: Allen E. Roberts

CAN WE BREAK THE BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION?

In every organization, in every business, in every profession, everywhere, the lack of effective communication is the weakest link to success. Without it, the bottom doesn't know what the top expects. And those on the bottom could probably care less. But unless the top knows what the bottom is thinking, there can be no growth.

A few of the barriers to good communications are:

- o Human nature
- o Organizational realities
- o Assumptions
- o Prejudice
- o Fear
- o Low Trust

Each of the barriers is related to the first--human nature. So, let's remember Freemasons are in "the people business."

Let's also remember why we want to communicate. "Our basic purpose in communication is to become an affecting agent, to affect others, our physical environment, and ourselves; to become a determining agent; to have a vote in how things are. In short, we communicate to influence--to affect with intent."

To make it even shorter we communicate to change, or affect, human behavior. There is really no other reason for communicating. Modern day communicators haven't improved on the thinking of Aristotle who was born in 384 B.C. He claimed for a person to communicate effectively he must be able to understand human nature, character, and behavior in their various forms; he must reason logically; he must understand emotions.

Let's look at organizational realities as a barrier. The stifling of ideas is something too prevalent in too many organizations. This is usually caused by the fellow at the top believing he knows the answer to everything. He's not interested in the ideas of anyone--just his own.

Without ideas, freely expressed and freely discussed, no organization can grow. This takes teamwork, not "committee-work," nor one-man-ship. It means organizations should have policies rather than iron-clad rules and regulations. With the latter, the worker/member won't feel free to be creative.

Assumptions cause us to make mistakes in judgement, because we assume our words and actions mean the same to everyone. We forget all of us look at life through restricted windows.



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There are these methods of Breaking the Barriers to Communication:

- o Discard the "Crutch"
- o Talk about ideas
- o Utilize non-verbal communication
- o Use examples
- o Danger--I assumed!
- o Don't prejudge
- o Learn to listen
- o Welcome Feedback

Organization realities are used as a "crutch" by the Obstructive leader to do nothing. He can always find an excuse to be lazy in the rules and regulations of any organization, especially in Freemasonry. The Constructive Leader will use them as guides, not as a "crutch" of any kind.

Ideas kept locked in our minds are useless. It is said that for every idea put into practice there have been at least ten people who thought about it. Talk about your ideas. Work with them. You will be amazed at how often you'll see them worked out to completion.

Non-verbal communication is used constantly. A raised eyebrow, a handshake, a frown, a grin, a pat on the back all have meaning to someone. Everyone knows what a mere wink can do. And non-verbal communication can speak volumes at times when words would do more harm than good.

Using examples can work wonders. For example: Will lighting a high-crime area keep down thefts? Put up more lights and find out. What makes one Lodge more successful in attracting attendance than another? Look for the reasons. Will they work in your Lodge? Try them.

"I assumed!" are two of the most dangerous words in real life. They are deadly to effective communication. We can't assume the other fellow received our message until we make sure he has. We find this out by questions. MEANINGS ARE IN PEOPLE--NOT IN WORDS. The 500 most common words have over 15,000 dictionary meanings. So, never assume the other fellow puts the same interpretation on your words as you do. Then, too, we must not draw conclusions until all the facts are in.

If we'll stop pre-judging, prejudice will disappear. Conditions are changing daily. Past experience or teachings may be completely different today than they were yesterday. Our thinking may be based on insufficient knowledge, and it may not fit present circumstances anyway. We should consider the other fellow's dreams, then we'll learn to appreciate him more. When we do, we'll be able to communicate on the same level.



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Gossip contributes to every barrier to communication. Truth is the only way to stop gossip. As Truth is considered a "divine attribute" in Freemasonry, gossip should be unknown among the Craft.

Listening is all-important. We can't communicate if we can't listen. And we should learn to "listen" with our eyes as well as our ears. Meanings are often conveyed by actions rather than words. Frequently our eyes will "hear" more than our ears. Feedback is part of listening. Feedback is information communicated upward, downward, and sideways--to our superiors, our subordinates, and our equals. Feedback is the only way to learn how well, or badly, we're doing. The Constructive Leader seeks feedback. The Obstructive Leader wants no part of it. Feedback, if there is any, tells us what kind of atmosphere we have in our organization. If there is no fear of superiors, if there is trust, if there are good listeners, there is feedback that helps us grow.

In Key to Freemasonry's Growth there is a guide showing the five senses--seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting-- the channels used in communicating. Most important, we find the Sender must be closer to the same social level as the Receiver. Communication skills, attitudes, knowledge, their social system, and culture must match or effective communication can't occur. But, there are ways to overcome even this battle in many cases. .

If we remember --**MEANINGS ARE IN PEOPLE--NOT IN WORDS**--we can put ourselves on the other fellow's wave length. By working at it, we can break the barriers to communication. If we do, then we'll grow.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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This is the best material we have seen on the subject of oral communications. It was presented in seminar format to leaders in Freemasonry sponsored by the Grand Lodge of F. & A. M. in the State of New York.