

BUSINESS STORYTELLING

STORY POWER

Use the POWER Method to Organize Your Ideas



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PREFACE

Entire libraries have been filled with books on how to write a powerful speech. Thankfully, after years of study and working with thousands of clients, we at Moxie have found that everything you'll want to know about writing your talk can be boiled down to a single piece of advice:

“ When putting together your presentation, **write from the seats, not from the stage.** ”

We know that sounds easy, but in practice, it's anything but.

Actors learn the importance of audience-centric performance early. It's just not enough to inhabit a character on stage and express the emotions of this imagined person. Acting requires a constant attention to the needs of the audience while adopting that persona: where to stand, how to work with the lighting, how to project one's voice. How to give your portrayal of those emotions just enough of a push to be seen from the back of the house.

As it turns out, public speaking is no different.

It requires a performance from the speaker, and a performance that's attentive to the needs of those listening.

That process of attentive, powerful performance begins with the words themselves.

...There's just one slight problem.

The actual humans sitting in those seats are complex! The audience wants you to move them but they also don't want to be moved. They want you to be attentive but their own attention is all over the place.

Let's look at these problems in detail.

In this book, we're going to take our own journey, a journey to enable you to take an audience on another of your own design.

Our focus will be on the **POWERTALK**. We call it that for two reasons. First, all the tools and techniques you need to write a powerful talk have been known to a handful of scholars and writers for centuries.

We've committed our professional lives to learning them, and all those decades of hard study have prepared us to share these secrets with you. Learn them, use them, and you're guaranteed to write a masterful speech.

The second reason is that **POWER** happens to be the perfect acronym for the process:

P = **PURPOSE**

O = **ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS**

W = **WRITE FOR THE EAR, NOT THE EYE**

E = **ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE**

R = **REVISE**

Each of the following chapters addresses these in detail.

Our message in this eBook is one of encouragement:

You can write a POWERTALK on your own and these pages have all the tools you'll need to get started!

READY TO WRITE WITH POWER?

LET'S GET TO WORK!



FIA & GREGG FASBINDER

We started with a single goal: to teach authentic performance. When speakers in Southern California began asking Fia Fasbinder for help with the skills she'd learned at the prestigious NYU Tisch School of the Arts, the need was clear. Fia's husband Gregg Fasbinder—entrepreneur and Fortune 100 executive—saw how better training could meet that need.

Every day the team they've built—which includes award-winning actors, renowned writers, designers, and entrepreneurs—creates transformation, from the TED stage to the C-suites of Fortune 500 firms.

Our background means we approach presentations differently.

THE MOXIE INSTITUTE KNOWS HOW TO TAKE YOUR PRESENTATIONS FROM BORING TO **BRAVO.**

When your team needs nothing less than world-class performances, we'll be there.



Our acting experience made us experts in stage presence



Our work in higher education made our workshops models of adult learning, based in the latest research in psychology, neuroscience, and performance studies



Our years of executive speechwriting taught us all the tricks of the trade



You'll find all that experience in each line we write, each slide we design, and every minute of our famous trainings.

BEFORE YOUR SPEECH

What does the audience want from your words? **They want to be moved.**

THE PROBLEM OF THE STATUS QUO

They want to be led from where they are right now —their fears, their hopes, their nervous tics, their outlook on life— to somewhere new. To Somewhere better and to somewhere transformational.

And as it turns out, leading them on a journey like that is a shockingly difficult task.

Why? **Because we're stubborn.**

We want your words to move us but we also don't want to go anywhere. We're ready to move but everything in our lives is arranged to encourage us to stay. Psychologists call this the "**status quo bias.**" That bias means that we like for things to stay the same, even when we know the status quo isn't very good, and the place we'd like to go is even better.

Anytime you hear the saying, "if it ain't broke,

don't fix it," you're watching status quo bias in action.

There are good evolutionary reasons for our brains to be wired this way: change is risky when you're barely surviving on the savanna. But the same mental habits that served us well on that savanna tend to hurt us everywhere else.

It's not enough to show your audience the destination: you have to show them why it's worth taking the first few steps. Joseph Campbell famously named this the "call to adventure", the part of any great journey where new imaginative horizons open.

Your audience wants just such an adventure. Show them where you're moving them from, and then paint a compelling portrait of where you're moving them to.

Persuasion, then means, make the **journey compelling.**



PROBLEM OF ATTENTION



The problem gets worse. **Not only do people not want to be moved;** *they don't really want to listen.*

How often does the average cell phone user touch their phones in a day?
Answer: 2,617.

We touch, tap, and swipe our little love-it-and-hate-it glowing rectangles 2,617 times per day.

And that's the average. Your hyperconnected TED-talk attendee? Double that number, and you're in the ballpark.

That means one thing: as a speaker, you're not just competing against daydreams or lunch planning. You have to compete against devices—Fia calls them “weapons of mass distraction”—that your audience can use the moment you lose their attention.

All of this adds up to a second problem speakers face from the moment they begin planning their speech: their words must capture their audience's attention.

(And even the best words aren't enough— your delivery must be engaging too! For more, see our *Speak with Moxie* eBook.)



Our **diversions** are infinite. Our **attention spans** aren't.

THE SOLUTION

The good news is that these two problems—**motivation on the one hand, attention on the other**—have a simple solution.

TRANSFIX YOUR AUDIENCE AS YOU LEAD THEM TO TRANSFORMATION

If your audience isn't transfixed, they'd rather be on the latest social network. If they're captivated but unmoved, then they'll leave feeling cheated.

We were just speaking with a client—let's call him Jack—who said he'd just returned from a conference in which the biggest name in motivational speaking had given a three-hour talk. (I'm omitting names here to protect the innocent and not-so-innocent.)

For three hours this speaker had told the audience to follow their dreams, believe in their own power, and on and on. But a few days after the event, Jack realized he couldn't remember a single transformative takeaway from the talk.

It was all sound and fury, signifying nothing... except regular reminders to head to the back tables for merchandise and a \$10,000 weekend with the speaker.

Jack felt cheated. We would have too.

Three hours is no cheap investment of time.

The problem with the speaker's talk wasn't related to his delivery—it was perfect. He's one of the most dynamic speakers in the game!

The audience was transfixed by speaker's charisma—what we at Moxie call the "it" factor—but the words rang hollow. On their own they could neither transfix nor transform. They were little more than platitudes.

We're firm believers that every presentation should begin from a position of service to the audience. Speakers are there to teach, guide, give, transform, and offer solutions. If not, then they're just there to stroke their own ego at the expense of the audience's time and attention.



1

CHAPTER

P = PURPOSE

Every presentation should be built around **One Big Idea**... and only one.

Think back on every speech you've ever heard. Can you remember what the speaker's main point was?

If you can't... that speech wasn't a complete success.

A **POWERTALK** has a central message so clear and concise and catchy that the audience can't help but remember it. You may recall these particular examples:

"I have a dream."

"A house divided against itself cannot stand."

"Ain't I a woman?"

In this chapter, we'll walk you through the process of finding your One Big Idea, which will (sometimes literally!) set the stage for everything else about your talk.



MOXIE'S TWO TESTS

In her years of coaching, Fia has developed two tests to help speakers tease out their main theme:

- 1 What keeps you awake at night? This may be a problem that needs solving, an injustice that needs righting, or a solution you just can't wait to share with the world.
- 2 What subject is so scary and so personal that talking about it on stage would make you want to throw up?

(Around the office we call these the “up late and regurgitate” tests.)

These are especially helpful for TED-like talks, but in truth they're useful for any presentation.

You may not think your shareholder's call needs to solve a problem or connect emotionally, but read the best of Warren Buffett's letters to shareholders, and you'll find that's exactly what they do.

Let's take each test in turn!



SOLVING THE PROBLEM



Start the search for your one big idea by **exploring what keeps you up at night.**

Why?

Because whatever keeps you awake touches something deep. Something you're passionate about; something in which you either are, or want to become, an authority.

That's the level of depth at which all great presentations work.

We like to use this test as a way to get at the logical side of your content—what Aristotle called logos.

Every good presentation **has a clear, logical structure**, and uses **evidence** to support its claims. That's logos.

And that's where your mind will be directed when you turn it toward the problems that keep you from counting sheep.



GETTING TO THE HEART

Aristotle said there was another piece to every good presentation: pathos, or emotion. (Pathos is where we get the English word “pathetic,” which originally meant simply “relating to the emotions.”)

How do you find the right emotional components for your talk?

By drawing from the core of who you are.

We’ll be the first to admit: that isn’t easy. All of us have some heavy, secret stuff down in the dark.

And furthermore, not every presentation needs you to bear your soul! There’s a reason you won’t find Kleenex on the boardroom table.

And yet: every **POWERTALK** connects with the audience’s emotions. Yes, even your corporate audience, Mr. Gray-flannel-suit.

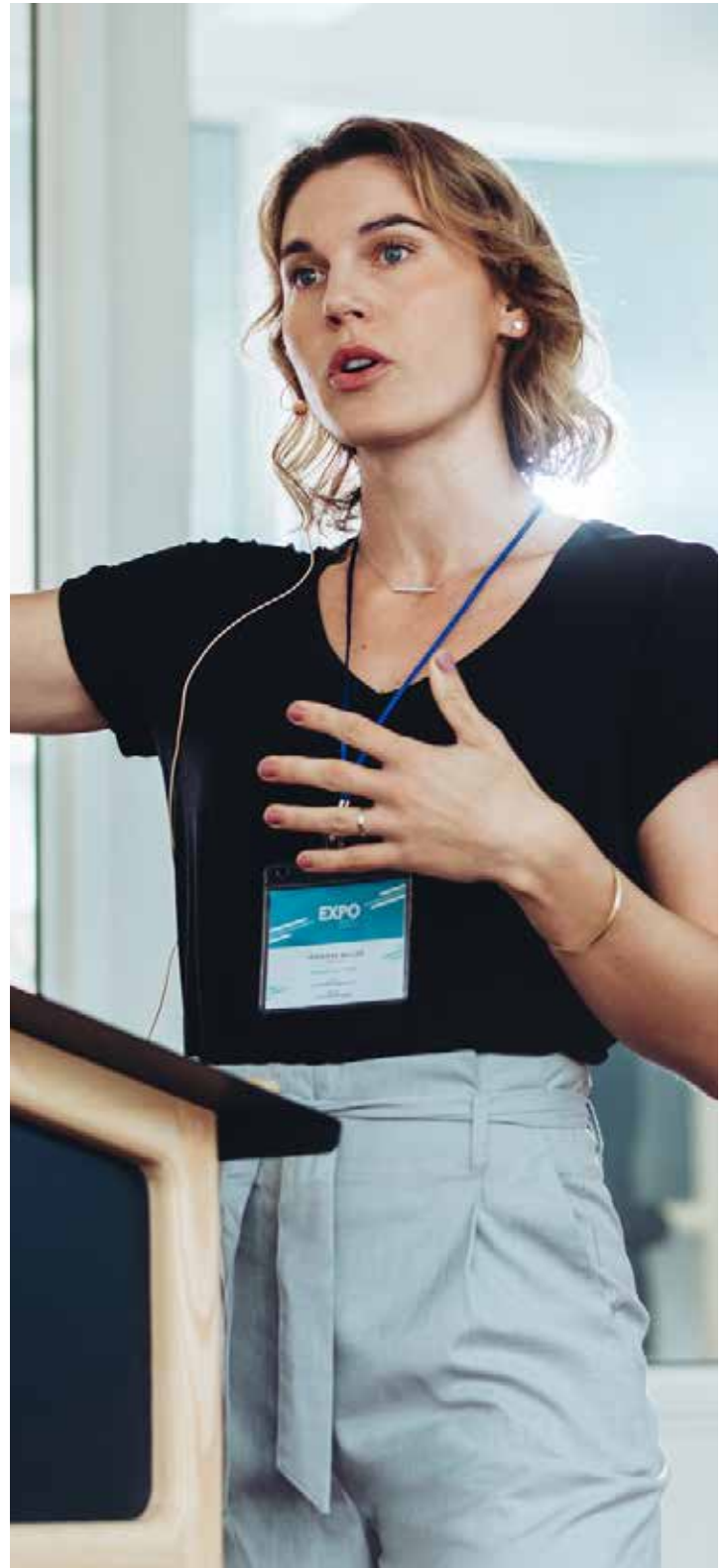
If your speech is built around your personal story (as most good TED talks are), then dive to the deeps.

What your audience wants is authenticity and vulnerability here, and so if you’re talking about hard stuff, they’ll understand if it’s difficult. When your voice catches, they’ll know why.

And if your speech is heavier on the logos than the pathos (as in most business presentations), you’re still not off the hook—you’ve got to do some emotional work too—but now the task is slightly different. Chances are you’ll want to incorporate more humor, and direct the emotional appeal to your listeners’ needs and desires.

The difference between a know-it-all and subject matter expert is that the latter says to the audience, “I’ve been in your shoes. I’ve had the same problems. I’m here to tell you how I figured it out so you can too.”

It’s not just enough to stop with what keeps you up at night. Think about your audience and ask the same for them. In doing so, you’ll identify the concerns and desires that will ensure your talk will resonate.





We're going into such detail in this chapter because **getting clear about the "why"** of your talk is crucial for everything that follows.

You've got the two tests; now let's put them to work.

Again, the key here is to think like your listeners. How will you want to frame your problem so that they'll understand? What level of emotional appeals—both the light and the heavy stuff—will they need to connect with your message?

In fact, it all boils down to this: **why** are you speaking? And **why** should they listen?

Simon Sinek puts it well in his TEDx talk and in his book *Start with Why*:

**“ People don't buy what you do.
They buy why you do it. ”**

Maybe your “why” is purely informational; maybe the only reason you've been asked to speak is to work through facts and figures. This tends to be pretty rare, though.

In most cases, you're there to persuade. To get the audience to think just a little more like you, or see why your solution is the right one. You're there to create change.

And that's it. That's your “why.”

Don't shy away from it. **Push forward with it.**

Don't say “Here are a few reasons why I'd like to suggest that we consider the possibility of...”. Who wants to be convinced by someone with such tepid passion?

Instead, frame your One Big Idea with the most powerful language you can muster: “I'm here today to convince you that...”.

Let the force of your purpose carry you through the rest of writing.

MAKE YOUR WHY UNIQUE

One of the other benefits of the two tests is this: **it makes your “why” unique.**

The only thing worse than a boring talk is a talk that just warms over old ideas that have been better expressed elsewhere.

“Be bold.” “Trust your gut.” “Collaborate.”

Okay, sure. These are good ideas, and yet if your talk doesn’t advance beyond the level of mere cliché, your audience won’t have anything to set you apart in their mind from the hundreds of other talks they’ve heard in their lifetime.

So **emphasize your uniqueness**. Is your background in aviation? Use metaphors about the sky and taking flight. Do you have a common message, like “live your dream”?

Then go deeper, using your own experience to say why someone needs to live that way. Don’t settle for the easy, surface-level understanding

We’ll be honest: avoiding cliché is hard. But it’s essential if your words are going to stick.

If you feel great about your “why” but are worried your One Big Idea is a bit too familiar, just drop us a line at Moxie. We’ve found that most clichés arise because the speech is still aiming to go broad when it needs to go deeper. We’re experts in helping your uniqueness shine through, and, frankly, it’s one of our favorite parts of what we do.





BUILD AROUND YOUR ONE BIG IDEA

Brainstorm everything you want to say in your speech. And we mean everything! In the ideation phase, say “yes” to all your ideas. (It might be the craziest one that wins out!) Now throw your notes in a drawer, go for a walk, and come back to it tomorrow. What stands out to you as the central idea? Write it out, try some variations, and then use that as your provisional One Big Idea. (You’ll tweak it as you go.)



IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

What keeps you up at night? Your audience? Are these the same problems? If not, how can you bring your audience to see the stakes of your problem? Jot down all the moving parts of these problems, as you’ll need them for your outline.



DRAW DEEP

Alright, so “heartstorming” isn’t a thing yet but we think it should be. Think of it like brainstorming for the emotions. Chances are, you’ve already got a fat, steaming cauldron of emotions that you’ve considered for this talk... including some stuff that makes you feel like heaving. Write it all out. Talk it out with a close friend. Getting it all out now will let you know what to use later.



2

CHAPTER

O = ORGANIZE YOUR IDEAS

Our goal in this chapter: to put together all the swirling ideas from the chapter on Purpose into a tight, cohesive talk.

In the last chapter we were thinking like a member of the audience. We'll be keeping that audience-centric view throughout the rest of the book, but in this chapter, more than anything, you'll be **thinking like an architect**.

You'll be looking at the framework of the speech—all the structures that hold it together—and arranging and rearranging those to give a solid foundation for the final edifice we'll add later.

So in this chapter, we'll be working through some time-proven strategies to convert your One Big Idea into a full presentation. This (to use a different metaphor) is the **10,000-foot view of your speech**—close enough to ground to see the landscape clearly but high enough that the entire landscape is apparent.



STRATEGY 1

Make your takeaway memorable and clear.

Every word of your talk should have to fight for existence. That’s because your time—and your audience’s time—isn’t unlimited. With only a few minutes to speak, you’ve got to make sure that each phrase supports your speech’s message.

Start with the purpose of your speech that we worked out earlier.

Got it? Good. Now strike from the possibilities for your outline that isn’t essential to that point.

Speakers are **tempted to take a “kitchen sink” approach** to speechwriting, adding everything they can to the talk.

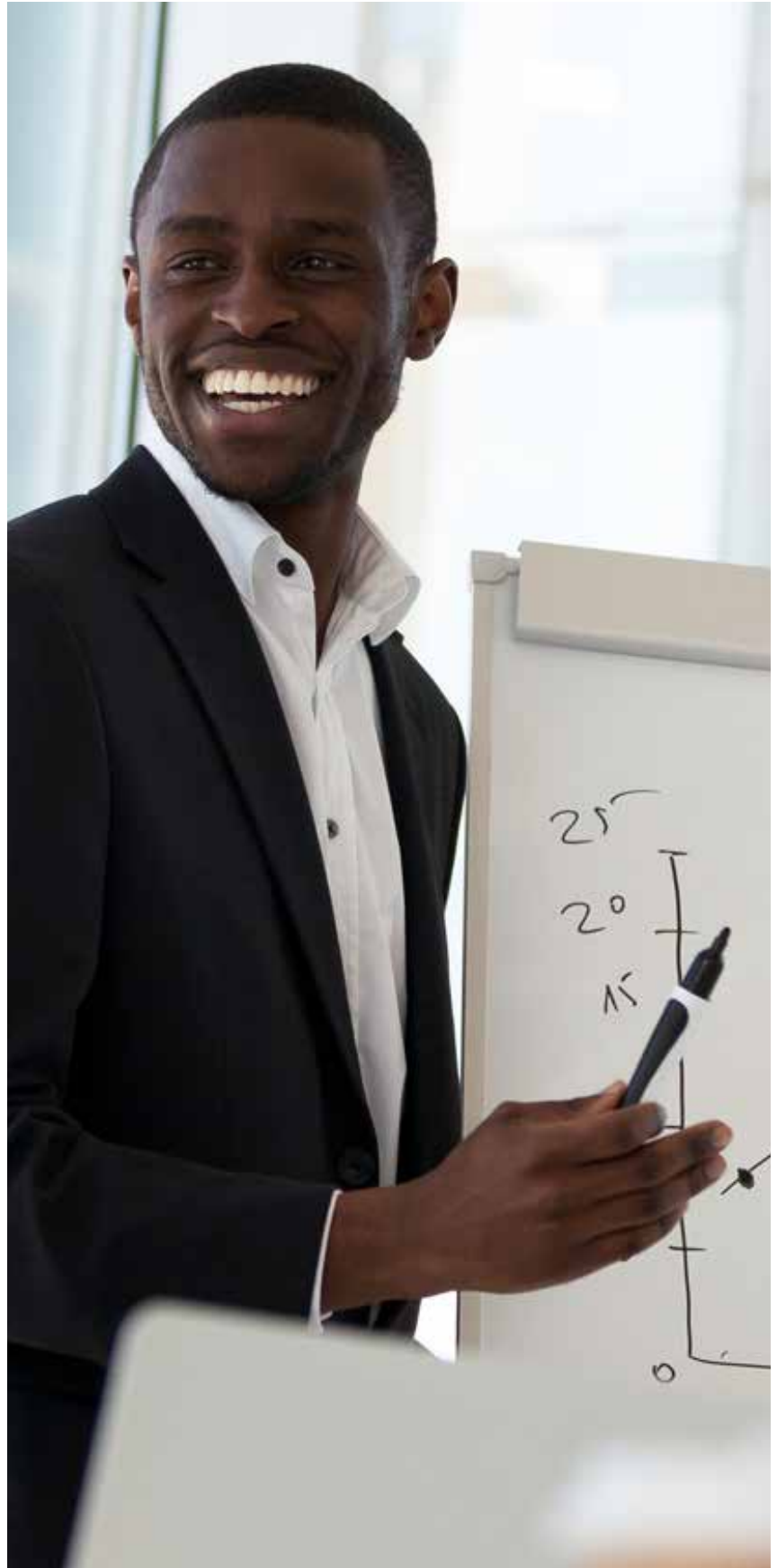
Instead of “One Big Idea”, they go for “All the Big Ideas I’ve Ever Had.” They go wide instead of deep, and that’s a mistake.

Excellent presentations, no less than excellent novels, require their authors to “murder their darlings.” That means being so ruthless in honing your message that even some clever bits get saved for another occasion.

(And trust us, there’s always another occasion. Phrases of genius are never lost, just postponed.)

In speaking, **less is more.**

First, cut the fat and trim everything that’s unrelated to your central idea. Then get close to the bone, going deep into why your message is important, and what you need to convey.



STRATEGY 2

Start with three points. That's all most speeches need.

Once you've got your speech's core idea, you'll build the main points of the speech around it. Those points should **naturally guide the audience toward agreeing with you.**

Every speech demands a few things of a speaker. You'll need to explain your main claim and how you discovered it, show why it's important, and then say what the audience should do with it. That naturally suggests a three-point structure.

Three-point speeches are definitely the most familiar format because they are the unmistakable quality of completeness. Aristotle wrote that three parts have this wholeness because "a whole is what has a beginning, middle and end."

Sometimes you'll want more points—rarely fewer—but three is the perfect number to start with

Those three points should be bookended by an **introduction** that references all three points and your main takeaway, and a **conclusion** that subtly does the same and reframes what's come before.

Both take your audience from a place of apathy and inattention to being right alongside you in reaching your conclusion.

Fia likes to say that these three points are like actual, physical stepping stones. It's like you're taking the audience's hand and leading them across the stream of distractions below—first this step, now this one, and one last step before you arrive with them where you'd like them to be.

There are as many speech structures as there are speeches, so don't feel bound to any one of them. But whichever you choose, make sure it accomplishes what Nancy Duarte argues is true of all great speeches: it moves people to a better place by contrasting where we are now with where we should be. Contrast is critical for compelling presentations.

And by the way, do use an old-fashioned outline! Many clients start their presentations in Powerpoint, which is the worst way to order your thoughts. Start on paper, then move to the screen only once your talk is scripted and ready to rehearse.

Contrast. Narrative cohesiveness. Clear organization. If your speech outline has these, it can't fail.



Make it not too long and not too short.

The final element of a perfect outline is simple:

**Make it say everything it needs to say
in the time you've been given to say it.**

No one's said it better than Winston Churchill (supposedly) did: A good speech should be like a woman's skirt: long enough to cover the subject and short enough to create interest.

It's a lesson every actor and performer learns early: **always leave them wanting more.**

You've lost your audience once they're checking their watches.

As you're writing your outline, use this rule of thumb: the average speaker speaks at a rate of roughly 150 words per minute.

For an 18-minute speech, the target length for the full-text speech should be around 2,700 words. For a 45 speech, that number goes up to 6,750 words.

Like all good rules of thumb, this one is only a very rough guide. It won't exactly fit your speaking style. What it does do is provide a frame of reference. Use it to ensure you've got enough material to fit your ideal length.

Once you've got the draft completed, test the timing by **reading aloud** at a conversational pace and timing yourself.



STRATEGY 4

Start with force.

How you open and close your presentation decides whether your audience will be transfixed.

It's a bit like a long train. Ask onlookers what they remember about it, and they'll almost always be fuzzy about the stuff in the middle, but they're sure to remember the engine and the caboose.

The internet is full of great ideas for how to open and how to close speeches. (You'll be ahead of most speakers if you can just avoid the most common error.)

Here, though, we'd like to focus on a more specific question: how to choose an opening and closing, rather than which one to choose.

Why? Because without a killer set of first lines and last lines, your speech is over before it's started.

The reason is simple:

A good opening earns your audience.
A good closing moves your audience.



movement, nothing changes. Both are required of any great presentation.

Let's take the opening first. You will gain or lose your audience's trust and attention from the very moment you start speaking (in fact, from the very moment you step on stage.)

Every person sitting in that audience, whether they know it or not, wants you to thrill them. That's as true for a boardroom presentation as it is for the fullest TEDx crowd. Your audience wants you to grab them and take them somewhere they've never been before.

Do you think they'll take that journey with you if all the excitement you can muster is "Um, thanks for being here. I'm not really a public speaker, but Frank over there—wave Frank—asked me to say a few words at the last minute, so here goes..."? No way.

See, it's not the type of opening and closing that matter. This confuses many speakers. It's instead the force that gets communicated by your opening and closing that matters, whatever type is chosen.

The introduction to your speech thus has one goal: to persuade the audience to give you their most precious and scarcest resources—their time and attention—for the next many minutes.

The intro doesn't need to solve world peace or sound like Shakespeare. It needs to convince your listeners that you're someone worth listening to.

There is an infinite number of options: a quotation, a deep question, a prop. One that never fails is "I'd like to tell you a story."

Who doesn't want to be told a story? In fact, almost every opening should have a story, either implicitly or explicitly, because every good speech has at least one story.

WHICH OPENINGS WORK BEST?



Clients often ask our speechwriters a seemingly simple question, hoping there's a right answer:

“How should I open the speech?”

Speechwriting is an art, not a science. In all art the only true answer to the question “what should I choose?” is “whatever works!”

So experiment. See what works for your setting and message. Maybe it's a song lyric, or maybe a poem, or maybe a shocking statistic from your latest paper. Try them all out on friends and find what's effective.

You'll know your audience is hooked when they're ready for more; when they've decided your message makes it worth sticking around.

The key to a killer opening, then, is this:

Make it worthy of your audience, so that they know it's worth their time.

After that, they're all yours.

How did Steve Jobs open his historic Commencement Address at Stanford in 2005?

“ Truth be told, I never graduated from college, and this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. Today, I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it, no big deal—just three stories. The first story... ”

And just like that, we're hooked.

Because we know who Jobs is, and because we now know he's got three stories for us, if we get anything less, we'll feel cheated. We want them all.

STRATEGY 5

Close by looking forward.

A weak ending can sabotage everything that came before. Bad endings have a way of ruining good journeys.

In a 20th century packed with important oratory, Douglas MacArthur's 1951 farewell address stands with the most memorable... and stands there almost entirely for its closing lines.

MacArthur—one of America's greatest generals, the man who accepted Japanese surrender on the deck of the USS Missouri in 1945—stood humbled before that joint session of Congress, after having been publicly and shockingly removed from command by President Truman.

MacArthur knew his legacy was on the line. This one speech would set the tone for how history would remember his accomplishments, and his downfall.

The bulk of the talk itself is only of historical interest now—a justification and defense of his actions—and it's the magic in the closing lines that made the speech whatever counted as the midcentury version of viral content.

“ I am closing my fifty-two years of military service When I joined the army, even before the turn of the century, it was the fulfillment of all my boyish hopes and dreams.

The world has turned over many times since I took the oath on the plain at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have long since vanished, but I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barracks ballads of that day which proclaimed most proudly that old soldiers never die; they just fade away.

And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty. Goodbye. ”

Moving stuff. Let's unpack what makes it work.

MacArthur knows that the last words of the speech are vital for one reason: that's when the audience **decides what to do with the message** it's just been given.

The opening can't do that, because the audience doesn't know the message yet. The middle of the speech can't do it, because that's where the message is being built. Only the ending can thrust the audience forward to a place that's better than where they started.

After a fairly technical discussion of foreign policy, MacArthur chooses to set aside the persuasion for

pure emotion. He wants to set the terms by which he's remembered: an old soldier, a man who gave his life for his country.

Every talk needs to engage the audience's emotions. As you prepare yours, ask yourself: how should your audience be moved? To a new way of thinking? A new outlook? Toward specific acts like protesting, or buying, or winning a war?

You'll know you've perfected your ending when that call to action—or that feeling—is both **compelling and clear**.

BRING IT HOME

MacArthur also uses his final lines to reinforce and revisit the speech's theme: his complete commitment to the cause.

In other words, he returns to the place he started.

He brings it back home.

MacArthur doesn't close with boring summary. Instead he pulls on the thread that he's woven throughout the talk—his patriotism, and response to duty—and ties it together in a new and moving and memorable way. He's simply an old soldier, he implies, and his good work has secured some small measure of immortality.

Thematic wholeness isn't just for speeches before Congress. Your next business pitch should have a unified theme as well.

Did you start the talk with a story about the company's founder? Reintroduce that person at the end in a new, slightly different way, and in a way that mirrors the journey on which you've led the audience in your talk.

Has there been a recurring joke throughout the presentation? Rather than overusing it, turn it on its head at the end—it'll be unexpected, and it'll make the audience rethink what's come before.

The closing is where the entire talk comes together for a final statement of the reason for your talk. Use that statement well, and you're sure to leave them with something unforgettable.

The irony of MacArthur's closing? It was so good that it couldn't fade away. Instead, it became one of the greatest rhetorical triumphs of the century.

**All because MacArthur knew how
to move an audience.**



TAKE ACTION



START WITH THREE POINTS

Most speeches don't need more, and nearly all need at least three. Make the first point the one that's most closely related to you and your story to build credibility.



TIME IS JUST RIGHT

We like to say that no one ever got in trouble for a short speech (think Gettysburg), but your audience will want to string you up by your lapel mic if you go too long.



OPEN AND CLOSE WITH BOLDNESS

Grab them from the very first seconds, and leave them with a rousing end.



3

CHAPTER

W = WRITE FOR THE EAR
NOT THE EYE

Believe it or not, the hardest work is behind you.

“Really?” you say, “But I haven’t written the speech yet!”

Of course. And that will take time. But look how far you’ve come! Now you know what you want to say and roughly how you’ll say it. All that’s left is to let your **POWERTALK** say it, and say it in the right way.

And thankfully the techniques in this and the remaining chapters are quick to grasp and easy to use. In fact, using the tools offered here will make the writing nearly painless, and you’ll see why the bulk of the book is about purpose and organization.



In this chapter, our aim is to get through the first draft. Here’s how.



WRITE FOR THE EAR NOT THE EYE



Before you take out your pen or start typing away, we should talk about tone.

Here's what we often see with our coaching clients. With a new outline in hand, they trot off to their study, emerging three days later, over-caffeinated and unshaven, holding in their hands the final copy... of a college essay.

You don't want your speech to sound like a college essay. Think about how we normally talk: it's fluid, with few fancy words.

We use simple, descriptive language. We don't say, "I beseech you to reinvigorate the remnants of the conflagration." We say, "could you add more wood to the fire?"

The tone we're aiming for in your talk is conversational but considered. In other

words, **speak like you normally do when you speak at your best.**

The words you're adding to this draft should sound exactly like your voice. If you don't use a lot of contractions normally—if you always say "I cannot" instead of "I can't"—then write that way. If you don't typically use adverbs like "typically," omit them.

(We're usually unaware of our verbal habits. Ask a spouse or very close friend. Trust us, they'll know some.)

Finally, know your audience. Don't use jargon your audience won't understand, but even when speaking to specialists, if your grandma couldn't understand your central message, it's too complex.

Your goal in a presentation isn't to sound smart. It's to be clear.

WRITE EVERYTHING

Having said that: don't sweat the tone too much at that stage. That's what we'll do in Chapter 5 on **revising**.

To get through your first draft, write everything. Aim for simplicity, but don't ask yourself whether each phrase is simple enough.

Just write.

Turn off your inner editor, and let the creativity flow.

We could elaborate on this, but we couldn't say it better than Anne Lamott:

“For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really sh***y first drafts. The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later. You just let this childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come through and onto the page.”

The goal with your first draft is just to get it done. It won't be perfect—it probably won't even be good!—but it will be done.

In the process of writing your sh***y first draft, a funny thing will start to happen: you'll notice that some words and ideas start to cluster together.

This is natural. English is a language rich with bonds between words, and most of the concepts you'll be using in your speech are connected in some way.

So here's your chance to have fun. Let the child play a bit in the sandbox of language.



5 ANCIENT RHETORICAL TRICKS

You've been using these techniques all your life without knowing them! Now's your chance to learn them so that you can take full advantage of them.

We've ahem—overdone our use of these devices to make a point. A word of caution is in order for rhetorical devices: use them sparingly. Overuse becomes obvious immediately. They're the verbal equivalent of salt and pepper: they enliven a talk but a very little goes a long way.

Here are 5 tricks to take your talk from good to great:

1 Alliteration

Alliteration means collecting words that commence with common consonants. In that last sentence, the repetition (there it is again!) of “c” adds a rhythm to the sentence it would otherwise lack. Alliterative phrases tend to stick to our neurons for whatever reason, which is why you'll find them everywhere from children's rhymes (“Peter Piper picked a pack...”) to big box stores (“Bed Bath & Beyond”)

2 Chiasmus

Chiasmus is taking two phrases and inverting their order to produce tension. Most of the time it sounds serious—“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country”—but can also be used to lighter effect, as in this line by Oscar Hammerstein: “Do I love you because you're beautiful? Or are you beautiful because I love you?”

3 Repetition

Ah, our old friend repetition. Repetition is an old friend—see what we did there?—because it's so comforting. It's the linguistic equivalent of a warm blanket. There's just something enveloping in hearing “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” or the line in Hamlet's speech that begins “Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow...”

4 Parallelism

Like father, like son. Easy come, easy go. Parallelism is all around us. We remember Caesar's supposed line “Veni, vidi, vici”—I came, I saw, I conquered—because of its perfect parallel structure.

5 Cliché

You want to avoid clichés like the plague (which is itself a cliché, of course). But they can also be your friend. “Fit as a fiddle” is tired, but “fit as a Stradivarius fiddle” in a speech about music could get a smile. Clichés are universally to be avoided unless you can modify them. Perhaps it's true that every cloud has a silver lining...



AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

Make sure to do your audience analysis ahead of time in order to know if jargon is appropriate or not. If you're speaking to an audience composed of individuals in your field, industry or team, feel free to jargon it up! However, if you're speaking to an audience outside your field, industry or team, jargon will turn them off. In that case, try to use metaphors and analogies to bridge knowledge gaps.



WRITE HOW YOU SPEAK

If you use the word "send" then don't write "disseminate." If you use the word "many" then don't write "plethora." The best speeches and presentations sound like the person who is delivering them. Using fancy words that are not in your day to day vocabulary won't impress your audience. Instead, read your speech aloud and if anything sounds unnatural to your normal vernacular, change it.



SIMPLY TO AMPLIFY

Make sure to break down complex concepts into simple concepts. In that same manner, break down complex sentences into simple sentences. In order to create a speech that is intelligent yet conversational, you must unpack any language or ideas that are convoluted or too complicated.



4

CHAPTER

E = ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE

CONGRATS!

You've completed your first draft.

Now it's time to let that draft sit for a while. Try to get some distance from it. Stephen King shoves his first drafts into a drawer and doesn't look at them for months; for most presentations, a couple of days away from the work should do it.

While you're waiting to revisit that draft, it's time to start giving thought to how you'll engage your audience. You know roughly what you're going to say. *Now ask:*

**Does it have everything
it needs to be engaging?**

This chapter will help you answer that question.



THERE AND BACK AGAIN



Every talk, whether personal or corporate, **should take the audience on a journey.**

Our speechwriters at Moxie like to say that when you're thinking about your presentation's story, don't picture yourself on stage.

Picture yourself around a campfire.

The best campfire stories are dramatic, predictable in parts, unpredictable in others. They start off in one place, overcome a series of obstacles, and end up in another.

Your presentation should do the same.

Fia found that one of the most helpful lessons actors learn is how to use contrast to their advantage. The funny moment followed by the sad; the happy face that's forced to issue hard words.

Even in reading that description you probably feel the first hints of emotional movement!

If you're telling your own story or about your own work (think the TED stage here), then that journey will have the same outlines as your own. Make sure to heighten the drama as the situation allows.

That's essential in giving a personal talk but it's just as true in other settings. If you've got a key presentation to deliver to your board, you should still incorporate the drama that comes with any good journey.

Where's your audience at now that's less than ideal? Heighten the difficulties, make it clear how bad it is. Where should they be headed? Give that destination all the goodness and light that it needs.

Remember, you're not just speaking; you're performing and telling a story.

WORKING WITH YOUR AUDIENCE



We have this bias toward thinking that presentations all have to look a certain way: you, in front of a podium, with a slide deck behind you and the audience in front.

Who said that's how it has to be?

As you're thinking about your first changes to your speech, ask yourself:

**Have I used every opportunity
to engage the audience?**

Write questions into your draft that you'll ask the audience. Talk with them while walking the room or down the aisles to get new perspectives (if it fits the occasion). Give the audience questions to discuss with someone next to them. Give them a quiz or game to play.

The old model of presentations is **unidirectional**: the speaker imparts, and the audience receives.

At Moxie we know that works for some settings, but it's just a ridiculous straight-jacket in others. Sometimes the best presentations are **collaborative**, where the speaker works back and forth with the audience toward the end goal.

So don't feel shackled to any preconceived ideas about what your talk has to look like. If there's room for more audience engagement, use it!

MOXIE WAY TO HANDLE Q&A

This is especially true during the Q&A. Here's a formal time set aside for you to actually work with your listeners. What luck! But what horror. The Q&A can feel scary because we don't know what's coming next. And there's always that one guy with the "question" that's more of sermon...

Here's the Moxie way to handle the Q&A:

1 Roleplay, Roleplay, Roleplay

You can probably guess what you'll get the most questions about. Write out a list of those questions well before your talk, and run through them with a friend. Get honest feedback. Roleplay softball questions and the real zingers so that neither will phase you in the moment.

2 Listen Attentively

Make sure you're really listening to the question as it's being asked, and that you fully understand the speaker's intention. If it's unclear, ask for clarification, or restate it in your own words and ask "does that Capture the question?"

3 Be Generous

...because some of your questioners won't be. There's always a heckler or a skeptic in the room. Get angry with them and you'll instantly lose credibility. Be kind and you'll win points. The scofflaws in the room are really just looking for affirmation. Remember: the key to responding to hostile questions is that your response isn't mainly for the questioner. The audience knows he's a jerk. It's for the audience to see how you respond under pressure. Still, when you can, acknowledge your interrogator and their expertise/knowledge with charity and grace.

4 Be Quick

Get in and get out with your responses. Remember, this is your last chance in the presentation to make an impact. So don't drone on in your response. Be clear and concise, and then move on.

5 Repeat Positive Questions, Paraphrase Negative Ones

We love this suggestion from speechwriter Joan Detz. Repeating a question is a great stalling tactic anyway, but repeating the good stuff will reinforce it in the audience's mind. Paraphrasing the negative stuff will make sure you've understood correctly, but also let you cast the question in a more productive light.

VIRTUAL AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT



If you're giving a lengthy virtual presentation, it's imperative to mix up your presenting style. You don't want to be a talking head for 30 minutes or more.

John Medina, founding director of Talaris Research Institute, found that the general rule of thumb for virtual audience engagement is every four minutes. If you're not doing something to keep the attention of the people watching, they will start to lose focus.

You can change up how you're interacting with your audience by asking them questions, allowing them to ask you questions, vote on a poll, getting them to move/stretch/dance,

or otherwise shaking up the rhythm of your speech.

This will lead to audience engagement

For every single virtual presentation, not just day-long trainings, a speaker needs to figure out how he or she is going to engage the audience. Dumping information on listeners simply is not good enough.

Do you want to change hearts and minds through your company's presentations? If your answer is yes, then you need to think specifically how you will engage, entice, and entertain your audience.

How will you engage, entice, and entertain your audience?

You don't have to become an Oscar-worthy actor or actress. But you do need to incorporate activities, polls, quizzes, breakout rooms, exercises, visuals, improvisations, or other elements that go beyond information delivery to actively keep your audience hooked and enjoying every minute.

Expecting your audience to sit there while you recite information is an ineffective way to teach, inspire, or motivate them. Remember, when we finish a virtual presentation, we want our audience to have learned and want to know more!

No matter how convincing or obvious the data seems, don't make the mistake of thinking that it speaks for itself and will be enough.

The best presentations target both the right brain (**emotion**) and the left brain (**logic**). Aristotle noted that good public speaking can be broken into 3 parts:

1. Appeals to reason
2. Appeals to emotion
3. Appeals to speaker's credibility & personality

When a virtual audience is silent or just staring with a blank expression on their screen, how will you engage them?

The biggest challenge for any virtual speaker is connecting with people who are not even in the same room. This is why the best speakers make their virtual presentations feel like a conversation with the audience.

Gaining this kind of engagement takes practice and experience. But even if you're new to speaking, there are steps you can implement to make your presentations, workshops, or trainings as interesting as possible.

Use the following techniques to keep their interest and attention:

1 Keep It Short

An hour and a half is the maximum a virtual meeting or event should go on for. If possible, try to break it up into smaller, shorter sessions.

2 Assign Roles & Topics

If people know they will be speaking in the meeting and involved, they will pay attention.

3 All Cameras Turned On

When everyone can see each other, it helps them feel part of the group, see reactions, and put more effort into being engaged.

4 Use Breakout Rooms

This changes the pace and is a great way to get everyone thinking, forming ideas, and sharing opinions.

5 Have Planned Breaks

Make sure to include moments where participants can get snacks or use the restroom. You can also do fun activities to get the energy up. Refer to our other guide for ideas!

TAKE ACTION



IMAGINE THE CAMPFIRE

Remember that the most engaging forms of human communication are stories. Use narrative to frame and propel your talk everywhere it is.



BE CREATIVE WITH AUDIENCE INTERACTION

Don't let yourself get lost in the staid format that thinks of presentations as lectures. Interact with your audience at every turn: ask for their perspectives; have someone tell a story; give them 30 seconds to brainstorm a topic; invite a friend on stage to help with an object lesson. The possibilities are endless!



PREP FOR YOUR Q&A

First prepare questions and work through them with someone you trust. Then prepare mentally just before your talk to remain calm, welcoming, but still sharp-witted. Think of these questions as more opportunities to express your message, and remember: don't let the naysayers get under your skin. End with confidence and vigor.



5

CHAPTER

R = REVISE

YOU'VE MADE IT!

The last stage of the writing process.

Now's our chance to take your presentation from **draft to done**.

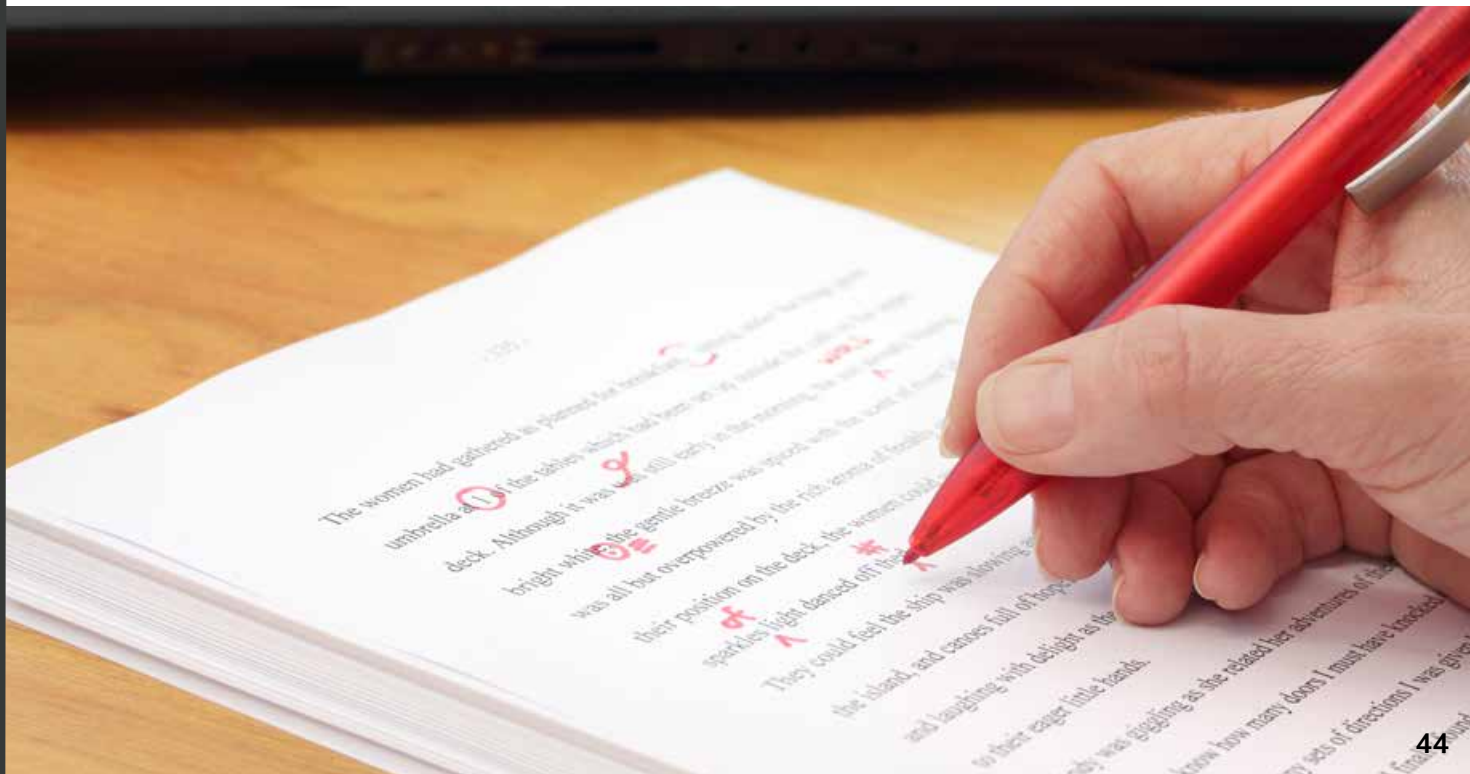
This chapter is the shortest in the book because the process is so simple: iterate, iterate, iterate. Then execute.

At Moxie we've learned a lot about producing at top efficiency by studying the best manufacturers who, these days, all rely on lean processes.

There are many different versions of lean, but nearly all have the core commitment of kaizen, or constant improvement. Start with a minimally-viable product, get it in the hands of consumers, study how it's used and how it could be better, and then improve.

Then repeat the process over and over again.

Remember, done is better than good.



We love the idea of using a “**minimally-viable presentation**”, otherwise known as “**MVP**”, as the first milestone. That’s the version that after working on your first (and likely sh**y) draft, comes to have everything that it needs.

Remember, done is better than good. At some point you’ve got to just call the draft done so that you can start rehearsing (which we cover in our *Speak with Moxie* eBook!)

Once you’ve got your “MVP”, then you’re ready to start getting feedback.

The most honest feedback comes from 3 sources:

1 Close Friends

You know that one friend who wasn’t afraid to tell you when that one outfit of yours really wasn’t working for you? That’s who you want for your first practice session. Spouses are often a little too close to be objective here.

2 Trusted Colleagues

If you’ve got someone on your team here with some distance from the problem but familiarity with the issue, run your “MVP” by them. They’ll likely have good insight, and so long as they’re not above or below you in the hierarchy, you’ll have good reasons to think their

3 Coaches

Most executives wouldn’t consider going through tax season without a CPA, but few think to bring on a coach to help with their speech. We think that’s a mistake, since speechwriters bring years of experience to bear, and can instantly spot the room for improvement. We find content coaching to be a remarkably good investment long-term, since good speeches are never used just once.

And don’t forget that you can edit your own work by reading it aloud! We’ll say it again because we can’t say it enough: **speeches are meant to be heard, not read.**



TIGHTEN THE ONE BIG IDEA

Make sure that the central idea of the speech gets clearly stated in the introduction; mentioned in each of the points in the body. Sometimes flatly stated, sometimes simply glanced at and then restated as close to the last line of the speech as possible.



HAVE A STRONG CORE

A good speech is like a strong tree with a solid trunk and thick, balanced branches. Inexperienced speakers often go off on tangents that aren't connected to their One Big Idea. Imagine a tree that's all branches and no trunk. That sort of tree isn't long for this world, and neither is a speech that looks like it.



TREAD LIGHTLY WITH HUMOR

If the audience will be drunk, keep a few jokes. If they're sober, watch out: jokes are difficult even for comedians to get right. Instead, let the humor of your story and the situation shine through. Think David Sedaris, not Rodney Dangerfield. In fact Sedaris put it perfectly: "Never tell a joke. Always tell a failure."



SIMPLIFY

The most common mistake folks make in writing their speech is including too much detail. For example, the audience doesn't want to know the date you went to the hospital, they want to know how you felt while you sat there, the smell of the operating room, and so on. You need very few details to evoke emotion.



Back in the early days of Apple, in the months leading up to the introduction of the Macintosh, Steve Jobs would often remind his team that **“Real artists ship.”**

What he meant was that, at some point, for your work to mean anything it’s got to be stamped “Done.” Otherwise it’s just a collection of dreams and notions that aren’t doing anyone any good... especially you. (Seth Godin famously uses the same language in describing deliverables.)

With a presentation, “shipping” means incorporating all the feedback you’ve been given and getting to a draft that’s ready for memorization and delivery practice.

How will you know when you’re ready to ship?

There’s no strict standard that we can offer here, but here’s our rule of thumb: **start memorizing when all the stops along the journey are complete.**

Memorization isn’t about recalling each work in sequence— that’s hard for even the sharpest minds, and it works against you in speaking, where one forgotten word would cause you to lose your place.

The script—the speech you’re just written—is now a set of polished phrases that help your audience along their journey, but you’re not tied down to them. The individual words will evolve as you practice. That’s why we recommend memorizing the journey, not the script.

So, once your draft has all the individual moments of the journey complete—all the arguments and stories and statements you need to make, polished with the feedback you’ve received—you’re ready to begin committing them to memory and starting the process of improving your delivery.

But first, go treat yourself to a nice meal and a bottle of your favorite beverage. You’ve accomplished quite the feat: good speeches are sparse, and great speeches are rare.

Having used the techniques in this book, you’re among the very few speakers today whose presentations lack nothing and have everything they need.

That’s worth celebrating!

That’s what writing a **POWERTALK** is all about.

TAKE ACTION



TAKE THE KAIZEN APPROACH

Don't aim for a perfect second or fifth or seventh draft. Instead, work toward constant improvement. With each draft getting better, you'll not only gain confidence, but you'll be consistently getting the speech toward your goal.



GET RAW FEEDBACK

Find folks who will give you the bare truth about your draft. If you can, read the draft aloud to them, so that you can both hear how the phrases sound when they're delivered.



SHIP IT

You'll know when it's ready to start memorizing. It won't be exactly right, but it will be right enough to start working.



AFTER YOUR SPEECH

At Moxie we're advocates of celebrating wins big and small. That's why we ended the last chapter by suggesting a celebration—completing a speech draft is no small feat! We count that as a big win.

You've learned how to write with power!

Even finishing this ebook counts as a win. The time you've invested here will pay dividends not just in the next speech you write but for your entire communication aptitude. You'll start to notice more when messages are presented effectively or ineffectively... and now you've got the tools to understand why that's the case.

CELEBRATE!

Only you know what this looks like for you, so we won't belabor the point. But don't skip this step! Treat yourself.

You've earned it through your investment in learning, practice, feedback, and finally presenting. You now have the intellectual and emotional gear needed to start your journey to world-class public speaking.

Handiest among those tools? Confidence. You saw what it took to reach your goal; you've reached it; and now you're ready for even greater future accomplishments.

I'd say that's worth celebrating, wouldn't you?



WHAT'S NEXT

Where do you go from here? **Onward and upward**, as we like to say. Maybe that means pairing with one of Moxie's Master Trainers to lock in your progress or learn more advanced techniques. Or maybe you've seen how much your whole team could gain from an on-site workshop. Either way, use the momentum you've just gained to carry yourself—and those around you—forward.

First, we'd suggest adding a layer of professional polish to your draft. Speakers are always amazed at what a few hours with our Moxie writers can do for their speech. Speechwriters know how to maintain your voice while helping it sound its best, and how to make your talk unforgettable. **The time investment is short, and the payoff is great.**

After that, the next step is your slide deck. We'd need another book entirely to say everything needed about slides. Beyond the slide deck comes the delivery of the presentation, which we cover in great detail in our *Speak with Moxie eBook*.

CONGRATULATIONS!

A big congratulations from us here at Moxie for completing this e-book and a sincere thank you for allowing us to guide you on your journey. We have incredible trainers, classes and courses to help you move further onward and upward in all your endeavors to become the best version of yourself.

Visit our website for more information - www.MoxieInstitute.com

Send an email to discover@moxieinstitute.com or give us a call at **(858) 771-6827**

