



Aaron Wallis Career Success Masterclass

Day Fifteen - Improve Your Public Speaking & Presentations

Day Fifteen – Improve your Public Speaking and Presentations for Sales Success

Becoming a More Effective Presenter and Public Speaker

As a sales professional an important skill to master is public speaking and presenting. You simply never know when you may have to pitch to a large audience so being equipped with the necessary skills to control your nerves and deliver your pitch with impact is a necessity.

We've all met them and worked with them – some people are just born to be public speakers. Many enjoy making speeches in front of large audiences and they take to the stage with relish, no hint of nerves and perfectly deliver the message, leaving to rapturous applause.

However, the majority does not fall into this category but through these notes we hope to give you the confidence to overcome your nerves and become an extremely competent public speaker. The notes are aimed at sales professionals looking to improve both their presenting skills and their ability to pitch to a larger audience.

Four General Types of Public Speakers – Which are You?

The Avoider Does everything possible to avoid facing an audience. In some cases, avoiders seek careers that do not involve making presentations.

The Resister Becomes fearful when asked to speak. This fear may be strong. Resisters may not love to speak in public, but they have no choice. When they speak, they do so with great reluctance.

The Acceptor Can do presentations but is not that enthusiastic to do them. Accepters occasionally give presentations and feel good about them. Occasionally the presentations can be quite persuasive, and satisfying.

The Seeker Always looks for opportunities to speak. Seekers understand that anxiety can be a stimulant that fuels enthusiasm during presentation. Seekers work hard at building their professional communication skills and self-confidence by speaking often.

By knowing which type you are you will know what you need to do to develop your public speaking and presentation skills. Much improvement can be made by proper planning beforehand. It will go a long way to alleviate nerves which is a major factor that contributes to disliking presenting!

We shall now go into how to prepare a speech.



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Preparing Yourself to Speak

Here are the basic rules of public speaking and presenting:

- *Gain an understanding of who you are.* Understand the limits of your own knowledge, capabilities and biases.
- *Gain an understanding of your audience.* You must know what the audience you're presenting to wants to hear.
- *Gain an understanding of the situation.* Consider how the setting of the place and other unforeseen factors could affect the way you deliver your speech.
- *Anticipate response from the audience.* Make sure you have a clear purpose in mind so that the audience will respond in the way you want them to.
- *Search for other sources of information.* There might be more materials available for you to make your speech more colourful. Use graphics, visuals and depending on the audience perhaps even props.
- *Ensure the validity of your pitch.* Make sure that the purpose of your speech is supported by clear and reliable data.
- *Add structure to your message.* Organise your ideas and use graphics so that the audience will not have a hard time following and digesting your ideas.
- *Talk directly to your audience.* Make sure the language you are using is one that your audience is comfortable with. Present to every one of the audience and try to have eye contact with each and every one of them – work the floor!
- *Gain self-confidence through practice.* It is only through practice can you effectively present your speech. Master the flow of your presentation by repeatedly rehearsing it. That way, you can have command over your speech.

Eight Basic Steps in Preparing the Speech Itself

1. Know your topic! Be confident in what you are pitching.
2. What is the objective – close the sale, propose a solution or to attain a follow up meeting
3. What is the right style – formal, formal with visuals, informal, interactive, etc.
4. Analyze your audience – who are you pitching to, how can the pitch be effective to all levels of decision makers.
5. Plan and organise your main ideas.
6. organise your introduction and conclusion.
7. Prepare an outline and prompt cards (if necessary)
8. Practice your speech.

You are now ready to understand the 'Seven Golden Rules of Presenting'!



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Seven Golden Rules to Becoming a Great Public Speaker

1. **Be Respectful to all.** Respect the variety of the audience, i.e. don't just pitch to the major decision maker
2. **Listen.** Know as much as possible about listening, ensure you know that your audience are listening and be prepared to listen intently to any questions that are raised.
3. **Planning.** organise carefully to improve understanding and recall.
4. **Simple Three Staged Format.** The Format of a Safe and Solid Presentation - You can go wrong with a good old fashioned, three staged pitch that follows the old classic 'tell 'em what they're going to hear, say it and then say it again':
 - Introduction:* Capture the attention of your audience, boost their interest, and give them a background of your topic.
 - Body:* Start with your main ideas. Keep them organised and support them with visual and verbal aids as much as possible.
 - Conclusion:* Provide a recap of all your points and join them together in a way that will create an impact on your listeners, making them remember your points. Conclude to close or follow up.
5. **Use language effectively.** Keep it short. The simpler the language you use, the more powerful and interesting your speech will be.
6. **Sound natural and enthusiastic.** Speak with passion about your products and services, engage the audience.
7. **Use high-quality visual aids and graphics.** There is a tremendous free or low cost resource online now for graphics and photos.

Developing Speaker Confidence

Confidence develops a positive impression while anxiety creates a negative one. When we speak, we are communicating in three ways - verbally, visually, and vocally. Our verbal delivery may be clear and well organised; but when we are anxious, the audience will likely notice more our negative vocal and visual signs (for example, lack of eye contact, poor posture, hesitant delivery, and strained vocal quality). Yet, when we are confident and our verbal, visual, and vocal signals are in unity, we look more credible.

If we want people to believe us when we speak, if we want to improve the impressions we make, we need to boost our confidence. The following techniques will help you to manage speech anxiety and ensure you give more confident and professional deliveries.

Call it speech anxiety, stage fright, or communication apprehension; you have to understand it for numerous reasons. First, speech anxiety can incapacitate you. Second, misconceptions about it can strengthen your anxiety. Finally, knowing the strategies for managing speech anxiety can help lessen your apprehension.

Major Contributing Factors to Speech Anxiety

Knowing the causes of speech anxiety is the first step in managing it effectively. Many anxiety-generating factors affect nearly all of us, including:

- Poor preparation
- Inappropriate self-expectations
- Fear of evaluation
- Excessive self-focusing
- Fear of the audience
- Not understanding our body's reactions

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Misconceptions about Speech Anxiety

No one would agree that experiencing speech anxiety is enjoyable. However when we better recognise why our bodies respond as they do, we become more prepared to face our anxieties.

Let us examine some misconceptions and how to counter them.

Myth / Misconception versus the Reality

- 1. Everyone will know if a speaker has speech anxiety.** Few, if any, will notice. So keep the secret to yourself and start acting confidently
- 2. Speech anxiety will intensify as the speech progresses.** It's all up to you. Mostly, a well-prepared speaker will relax as the speech progresses.
- 3. Speech anxiety will ruin the effect of the speech.** If you let it, it will. On the contrary, speech anxiety may improve a speaker's effectiveness.
- 4. The audience is inherently hostile and will be overly critical of what we do.** Most listeners are polite especially when the speaker is obviously trying to do well.

Strategies to Overcome Speech Anxiety

Let's look at some strategies that have been very effective to many speakers:

1. Be Well-Prepared and Practice Your Speech.

To prepare adequately, first, try to understand who the audience is and what will they want to hear. Finance will want to see the 'nuts and bolts' of how the deal stacks up financially; Quality/Manufacturing want to see how it improves the efficiency and quality of manufacture; HR want to see how your product/service improves the team culture, MDs want to know how it will help them achieve their long term strategy, etc.

Next, prepare easy-to-follow notes. Using these notes, practice your speech three or more times from start to end – speaking out louder each time. Mentally thinking through your presentation is not the same thing as actually speaking in front of the audience. For instance, if you will be standing during your speech, stand while practicing. If you will be using visual aids, practice using them. As you practice, time yourself to check if you have to shorten or lengthen the pitch.

Lastly, invite and expect questions and prepare answers for what you feel are going to be the common ones. Knowing that you are well prepared will help lessen much of your apprehension.

2. Warm Up First.

Speakers are no different from singers who warm up their voices, musicians who warm up their fingers or athletes who warm up their muscles before a performance. Before giving a speech, you'll need to warm up your voice and loosen your muscles.

In the car on the way to the meeting try the following (NB It probably helps if you are alone and not on a packed train!):

1. Sing up and down a scale, the way singers do before a concert.
2. Rehearse your speech from start to finish and visualize how your audience are enjoying your pitch
3. Put on a rock anthem and sing your heart out!



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Upon arrival:

1. Read aloud a note or a page from a book or poetry, changing your volume, pitch, rate, and quality.
2. Do some stretching exercises such as touching your toes and rolling your head from side to side.
3. Breathe deeply

Just like musicians and athletes, these warm-up exercises will help you relax and will make sure that you are prepared to present at your very best.

3. Use Deep Breathing.

One fast way to calm your anxiety is through deep breathing. This involves taking in deep breaths through your nose, holding it while you count to three, and then slowly exhaling through your mouth to count to five. Try to breathe from your stomach rather than your chest. As you exhale, think that the pressure and nervousness are slowly draining down your arms and out your fingertips, and down your body and legs and out through your toes. Repeat the procedure a number of times as necessary.

4. Prepare an Introduction That Will Relax You and Your Audience.

Most speakers find that once they get a favourable audience reaction, they will relax. This is why several speakers begin with humour – it relaxes them and their audience. Sharing a personal experience is another alternative. Whatever you prefer, make your initial moves work so you can feel comfortable throughout your speech.

5. Focus on Meaning.

Rather than worrying about how you look or sound, or about whether you are impressing your listeners, focus your energy on getting your meaning across to your audience. In other words, be sure your listeners are following the order of your speech and understanding your ideas. Pay close attention to their nonverbal feedback. If they look confused, explain the concept again or add another example. A speaker who is focusing on the audience soon forgets about being anxious.

6. Use Visual Aids.

Visual aids make listening easier for your audience and increase your confidence as a speaker. They make it practically impossible for you to forget your main points. If you're unsure of the next point, just put up your next visual aid. Moreover, using visual aids such as posters, flip charts, or actual objects not only can add eye-catching movements to your presentation, but can also keep you fully engaged in your pitch, so you'll be bothered less by your appearance.

7. Develop a Positive Mental Attitude.

With positive imagery, you develop a positive, vivid, and detailed mental image of yourself. When you visualize yourself speaking confidently, you become more confident. In your mind, you can simulate feelings (of pride, for instance) even when no real situation exists. Obviously, positive imagery alone will not give you the outcome you want unless you prepare and practice your speech.

Positive self-imagery can be used in many aspects in life. It can help us manage apprehension in job interviews, problem-solving discussions, testing situations, or any circumstances in which our confidence needs a boost.

To succeed in public speaking, you have to visualize yourself as a successful speaker. No amount of talk, encouragement, or practice will make you successful if you deem yourself an anxious or ineffective speaker.

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Overcoming Your Fear

You can become a very effective speaker if you have these tools:

1. A voice.
2. Basic language construction: i.e., a working vocabulary and grammar.
3. Something to say
4. A need to express your ideas to others.

You have been using these tools for years. You have been saying something to others, several times everyday, and under these conditions, you call it “conversation”! Conversation is talking to a few. Presenting and public speaking is, essentially, nothing more than having a conversation with a larger group. They don’t tend to interact so much, nothing more!

Can You Conquer Fear?

There are three solutions to help you reduce fear and make it work for rather than against you:

1. Accept it as nature’s way of helping you.
2. Analyse Your Fear – Why do you have this fear, where does it stem from.
3. Make use of what you have learned and as yourself ‘what’s the worst that can happen?’

Delivering Your Message Effectively

Obviously, delivery is not everything in public speaking. A good delivery cannot compensate for a poorly prepared message, or one lacking in substance. Despite that, most of us know the significance of delivery, and at times it scares us.

Visual Delivery

Because the first impression comes more from what the audience see than from what they hear, we will first talk about visual delivery – particularly, how to appear to your audience. As a public speaker, your physical appearance, clothing, posture, facial expressions, eye contact, body movements, and gestures all influence your audience’s perception.

The audience judges your **appearance** as a hint to your position, credibility, and knowledge. The safest thing to do is to dress conservatively.

Good posture is nothing more than standing straight and having your “chest out” and “stomach in.” Proper posture makes the speaker look and feel comfortable, and aids voice projection and poise.

Move around occasionally. **Body movement** can add interest, energy, and confidence to your presentation. To add emphasis, try moving at the beginning of an idea or at a transition between ideas. If you are using a projector and slides, be sure what is shown coincides with what you are saying.

Gestures are movements of the hands, arms, head, and the shoulders to help you communicate. They play an important role in presenting but they must enhance communication and not hinder it. Try making the gestures when rehearsing a speech. Practice before a mirror, even to the point of exaggerating. Then adapt your gestures to a point where they are appropriate and natural. However, gestures should be spontaneous. Too many gestures may distract the audience.



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One kind of gesture is **facial expression**. This reveals your attitudes and feelings. Let your face glow with happiness or burn with enthusiasm. Avoid wearing the deadpan poker face that reveals nothing. This doesn't mean that you will always give vent to your feelings in a bombastic and extravagant manner. A good speaker expresses views and feelings with appropriate restraint.

Eye contact is a very important factor in getting and holding attention. Look at your listeners directly, not above them or at the floor or ceiling or out of the window; otherwise, you lose your contact with your audience and their attention strays off.

Here are some questions you might consider in order to guide your visual delivery:

- Do I gesture enough? Too much?
- Does my body movement reinforce the flow of my speech?
- Are my gestures disturbing in any way?
- Am I depending so much on any one gesture?
- Does my face express the meaning or feeling I am trying to convey?
- Are there different gestures, body movements, or facial expressions that might express my intended meaning more effectively?

Vocal Delivery

Sounds have four fundamental characteristics: volume, pitch, rate, and quality. If any of these is faulty, distraction results. Important announcements are uttered in a slow manner and with a relatively low pitch, whereas jokes or other light remarks are uttered in a rapid fashion with a relatively higher pitch.

1. Volume

A well-modulated voice is important to be an effective speaker. There is no hard and fast rule about the degree of loudness that should be used on different occasions, but an effective voice must be as loud as the specific speaking situation requires. If you are speaking to a group, every member of the audience with normal hearing and concentration should be able to understand your statements without straining their ears and without getting irritated because of an excessively loud voice. Good speakers fit voice and actions to the words used, to the situation, and to their personalities. An important principle in speaking clearly is that consonants should be pronounced well. Vowels are easier to pronounce, yet consonants give intelligibility to speech.

A voice that is dominated by intellect rather than emotion tends to be moderate in pitch as well as in loudness. This does not imply that intellectual efforts are devoid of feeling. It just implies that intellectual efforts accompanied by vocalization are not normally characterized by the exaggerated range and intensity of feeling exhibited in emotional behaviour alone.

2. Pitch

Pitch is the general level on a musical scale of the voice in speech. Pitch may either be high, medium, or low; or we may use such terms as soprano, alto, baritone, or bass for vocal pitch.

Natural pitch in speaking is important for an effective voice. One who speaks unnaturally will be ineffective, disagreeable, and uncomfortable.

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3. Rate

There are three rates or tempos in speaking – slow, average, and fast. Changes in rate can be achieved by the rate of articulation or by the use of pauses. The use of pauses is a very useful technique for separating or grouping phrases, for creating dramatic effects, and for emphasizing ideas. As a general rule, the use of a comma is a sign for the reader or speaker to pause. But in some instances, long sentences without commas should also be divided according to thought content by a pause to give time for breathing and for the listener to grasp fully what is being read or said.

Dramatic effect can be achieved by speakers who pause after a rising inflection, thereby creating suspense; after which the expected outcome follows to the satisfaction of their listeners.

4. Quality

Voice characteristics (or voice timbre) and voice attitudes (or voice colour) come under the general term of voice quality. What is voice quality? Vocal quality is related to resonance and to the avoidance of undesirable vocal aspects such as excessive nasality and breathing. It is also related to feeling and mood.

Verbal Delivery

Besides being greatly conscious of your visual delivery (you and your visual aids) and vocal delivery (your manner of speaking), the audience will focus on your verbal delivery (the language you use and the way you construct sentences). Listeners prefer speakers who use a more informal language than what is usual for written reports. Moreover, it is absolutely acceptable to use personal pronouns such as *I*, *we*, *you*, and *us* and contractions such as *I'm* and *don't* – forms that are frequently avoided in formal written reports.

One mistake is to use long or extremely technical terms or jargon to impress the audience. Even though you are speaking in a professional setting, don't think that your listeners use or understand the same technical words or jargon that you do. The best language is *vivid and colourful* (paints a picture for the audience), *concrete and specific* (gives details), and *simple* (is easy to understand).

Now onto the dreaded Audience Questions.....



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Response to Audience Questions

The key to successful question-and-answer periods is to actually know your topic and expect questions from the audience. One of the most frustrating things about presenting is having to eliminate so much vital information (both personal and research-based) from your speech because of time constraints.

- Besides knowing your topic, expect several questions that you think your audience may ask and prepare one or two visual aids to use when answering these questions.
- Listen attentively to each question asked.
- If appropriate, repeat the question before answering it so that everyone can hear it and keep track of what is going on. Rephrase any confusing or negative questions in a clear and positive way.
- Think a moment before answering each question. If you don't know the answer, say so, and refer the questioner to someone in the audience who does know. Or, tell the person that it's a good question and that you will find the answer and let that person know in the next meeting.
- Do not allow one person to dominate the forum period.
- If you think a question is irrelevant or will take too long to answer, thank the person for the question and mention that you will talk with that individual personally about it after the period.
- Don't try to fake your way through a response.
- Don't argue or get angry or defensive while answering questions. What you say during the question-and-answer period will influence the audience's overall judgment of your credibility and your speech.
- If appropriate, actively encourage listeners to participate.
- If you expect a hostile audience, avoid a question-and-answer period in any way possible. If not, mention in your introduction that there will be a short question-and-answer period at the end of your speech and ask the audience to write out questions during the speech. After your initial conclusion, collect the questions, select three or four good ones, and answer them – ignoring the less desirable ones.
- Watch your time, and end the period with a final conclusion that refocuses audience attention and puts a pleasing closure on your speech.

General Questions on How to become a Better Presenter

Q: How do I manage fear, apprehension, stage fright, and speech anxiety?

A: Gradually. These are very usual situations even for experienced speakers. Increased nervousness and rapid heartbeat before a speech are the coping mechanisms of the body. The more experienced you become, the better prepared you will be. Every one of us experiences this so it is good to breathe out the accumulated carbon dioxide in your lungs and breathe deeply before you begin your speech. Beginning your speech slowly helps decrease nervousness.

Q: How do I capture and maintain the listener's attention and interest?

A: Remember the following:

- Establish eye contact with the audience.
- Do not talk if someone is walking down the aisle or if there is audience movement.
- Make appropriate pauses for the audience to catch their breath.
- Use interesting and powerful visual aids.
- Talk from personal experience and tell stories.
- Make your speech concise.



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Q: How do I know when the listeners are bored and inattentive?

A: Observe the following:

- A lot of listeners sit with their arms folded.
- Vacant looks – no smiles or nodding of the head.
- Most of the people are yawning.
- Polite coughs which are more than usual.
- Nonverbal gestures like audience frequently looking at their watches, biting their nails, shuffling their feet, looking at each other, and worse, starting to exit the venue.

Q: How do I develop my self-confidence?

A: Practice. Practice is the key. Look for every chance to give a speech. The more you face the audience, the more you will develop self-confidence. Begin with very short speeches that last three to four minutes. Always bear in mind that a short speech can barely go wrong. Impromptu speeches make good practice. Concentrate and be natural. Do not try to pretend to be someone else. Master your topic. Believe in yourself. If you don't, no one else will.

Q: How much information must I gather for a speech?

A: Your experience is your guide. Some need 60 minutes of information for a 5-minute speech. You will have to read widely. At times you have to conduct some research. The most important information is your personal experience.

Q: Can I memorise a speech?

A: Yes, you can. But don't. Never memorise a speech. You are bound to miss out a line or two and worse, your speech will likely be insincere. Your listeners will discover anyway. Memorising stops you from being natural. If you like, you may memorise a specific poem or a memorable quote.

Q: Can I read a speech?

A: Yes, you can. But don't. That is the best technique to bore a listener. The only instance you read a speech is when you do it on behalf of someone else. Even when you do that, make it brief or summarize it. At the end of the summary, give out the entire speech in the form of a handout. The written language and the spoken language are different forms of expression. What is beautifully written may not sound beautiful when it is spoken.

Q: Can I use notes during a speech?

A: Yes, you can. But be sure that they don't appear bulky. The worst thing a speaker can do is to pull out pages and pages of notes before a speech. Preparing 3" x 5" index cards is all right. Be sure your entire speech does not go beyond seven cards. A single sheet of paper with an outline of your speech is still the best. Be sure the letters on that single sheet are big enough to read.

Q: How do I develop my speech?

A: Never talk about one idea too long. If you have three ideas, allot equal time to each. The transition from one idea to the next must be smooth. Listeners must not wait too long for the next idea.

Q: During an open forum, what do I do when a person gives a speech rather than a question?

A: It is your responsibility to interrupt and say, "Excuse me, what exactly is your question?"

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Q: What do I do when I get a hostile question?

A: Be cool. Be courteous and disagree with a smile by saying, "Perhaps I was not clear." or "It's possible you misunderstood."

Q: What do I do when someone has many questions in one question?

A: Answer them one by one and begin with the easiest.

And lastly...

Take time out to listen to the great speeches of history and those of great modern speakers. A good listener is a successful communicator. Don't forget to take down notes when you listen to these speeches.

recognise speeches that you like and those you can't stand. Examine the speeches you like, and there you will learn useful and helpful tips to develop your speech. Examine the speeches you dislike, and there you will learn what you should prevent. Communication as we all know as sales professionals is more a manner of listening than it is of speaking!

We hope that these notes will help you become a more effective presenter and will help you in your interview presentations.

This concludes the sales 'Career Success Masterclass'. We hope that you've enjoyed the modules and would love to hear your feedback. From now on you will receive our regular newsletter aimed at helping you progress your sales career. Goodbye for now and we look forward to either helping you in your next career move or sourcing your next sales employee!

For further information on Aaron Wallis please visit www.aaronwallis.co.uk