



# MANAGING THE SPEECH

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The essence of giving a good speech is simply to view it as another managerial problem (opportunity) and apply the four management functions to resolve it. The four functions typically used to define management – planning, organising, motivating, and controlling – apply regardless of the task a manager is performing. Intimidated or novice speakers will manage to speak when they accept the proposition that they must manage the speech.

## **Planning the speech**

Planning can be defined as “determining a desired set of future conditions, formulating the strategies required to achieve those conditions, and deciding on the means (activities and resources) needed to accomplish one’s goal.” This definition serves as a foundation for four public-speaking principles.

**Principle 1:** An effective speech takes into account what the audience currently knows, feels, and/or expects.

**Principle 2:** An effective speech achieves a specific, narrowly focused, audience-centered purpose. This purpose is the bottom line mission statement of the speech.

**Principle 3:** The strategy of an effective speech is simple: Take the audience from where it currently is to where the speech’s mission says it ought to be.

**Principle 4:** An effective speaker takes a contingency view and uses whatever resources are appropriate to achieve the mission of the speech.

The following questions are derived from the four principles identified above:

- What does the audience currently know and/or feel about this topic?
- Is the general purpose of my speech to inform, persuade, entertain, reinforce, or a combination of these four?
- In one sentence, what do I want the audience to do and/or know as a consequence of listening to this speech? (What is the mission of my speech?)
- Does my strategy require significant movement or drastic change by the audience toward the speech’s mission? If so, should I plan a series of incremental speeches or a single speech?

When planning anything, a person must ask basic questions about his or her goal, direction, and mission. Similarly, planning a speech requires determining goal, direction, and mission. If you cannot specify in a single declarative sentence what you want the audience to do or know as a result of hearing your speech, don’t give it.



## Organising the speech

Organising can be defined as “the process of dividing work up among individuals and subunits and then linking those elements together to achieve a common purpose.” Four public-speaking principles are based on this definition.

**Principle 5:** An effective speech contains a series of “oral paragraphs” (major ideas), each of which is related to one another and supportive of the speech’s mission.

**Principle 6:** An effective speech contains three major divisions: introduction, body, and conclusion. They are interdependent and supportive of the overall mission of the speech.

**Principle 7:** The oral paragraphs constituting the body of the speech can be organised into one of a number of standard structural formats: inductive, deductive, cause-to-effect, effect-to-cause, problem/solution, chronological, or topical.

**Principle 8:** The choice of a specific structured format is based on the first three planning principles. There is no single best way to organise a speech. “Best” is defined in terms of the audience, the speech’s mission, and the organisation’s culture.

The following questions are derived from the four principles identified above:

- What is the most appropriate way to introduce the speech given the constraints of the audience’s predisposition and values and the corporate culture?
- Given the audience, the speech’s mission, and the corporate culture, what is the best structural format to use (inductive, deductive, cause-to-effect, effect-to-cause, problem/solution, chronological, or topical)?
- What are the three to five “oral paragraphs” (major ideas) that best support the speech’s mission and that are logically integrated into the format chosen?
- How should I conclude the speech to reinforce its overall mission?
- Does the overall structure of the speech present a co-ordinated set of ideas that move from introduction through body to conclusion and reinforce an explicit, unequivocal mission?

Managing the speech forces the speaker to bring together those concepts in a way that enables the audience to leave the room knowing what was said, why it was said, and why it made sense to say it in that manner.



## Motivating the audience

Motivating can be defined as “the process that energises, sustains, and/or diminishes behaviour.” When applied to public speaking, this managerial function suggests four principles.

**Principle 9:** An effective speech is delivered “to” and “with” an audience, not “at” an audience.

**Principle 10:** People are motivated by things that directly and personally affect them. An effective speech answers the question “Why should I listen?”

**Principle 11:** An effective speech is easy to listen to. It is a type of communication designed to be heard by an audience rather than read by an audience.

**Principle 12:** An effective speech is delivered with conviction.

The following questions are derived from the four principles identified above:

- What can I do to maximise direct contact with and involvement of the audience?
- Does my nonverbal behaviour (eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, physical appearance, and use of podium and visual aids) create an aura that enhances rapport with the audience?
- Have I written this speech recognising that it will be heard by an audience? Does it have a “you” orientation rather than an “it,” “they,” or “them” orientation?
- Are the sentences short, simple, and direct rather than long, complex and indirect?
- Am I simplifying complex ideas with analogies, examples and metaphors?
- Am I using words and phrases that elicit sharp mental images, or am I relying on jargon, clichés and abstractions?
- Have I provided the audience with an explicit reason for listening?
- How will the audience benefit by the mission of my speech?
- Which complex and/or important ideas need to be highlighted by visual aids?
- Which type of visual aid (flip chart, transparency or slide) is most appropriate given the answers to the questions for the planning and organising functions?
- Given the first three planning principles, what are the motivating forces affecting this audience? (What are the forces predisposing the audience to “tune out” the speech? How do I use these positive and negative forces to my advantage?)



## Controlling the Speech

Controlling can be defined as “the monitoring and modification of organisational activity and resource utilisation to ensure that predetermined standards are met and desired outcomes attained.” This management function yields three principles related to public speaking:

**Principle 13:** An effective speaker anticipates and controls as many problems as possible.

**Principle 14:** An effective speaker monitors audience response during the speech and makes adjustments, if necessary.

**Principle 15:** An effective speaker compares the audience’s comprehension of the speech’s mission with its intended mission and clarifies any misunderstandings that may arise.

The following questions are derived from the three principles identified above:

- If nervous, have I taken steps to control? Have I practiced the speech to the point where I feel comfortable with it? Have I developed relaxation techniques such as slow, deep breathing or meditation?
- If I am going to use audio or visual aids, have I taken steps to ensure that the aids will be present and in working order?
- If I am giving the speech in an unfamiliar environment, have I taken steps to check it out and change those things that I can (must) change?
- Am I monitoring audience reaction while giving the speech?
- Am I aware of nonverbal messages such as squirming, lack of eye contact, or agitated movement that indicate I am doing and/or saying something wrong?
- If the audience response is so pronounced that it requires recognition and adaption on my part, am I prepared and do I have the resources to enact a contingency plan?
- Am I prepared to conduct an extemporaneous question-and-answer session earlier than I had planned?
- Am I prepared to address the concerns of the most vocal and/or influential dissenter and do so while supporting my mission?
- Have I thought about the weakest position in my speech, how this audience is likely to exploit it, and how I can turn this to my advantage?
- If the audience has misinterpreted my intent, do I have the resources to clarify and elaborate my point?

If managers accept the proposition that a speech is a management task and therefore can be managed, the trepidation and fear normally associated with this task should be diminished. As a result, communicating from the podium will no longer be viewed as the manager speaking, but rather as the speaker managing.