

# “Top Ten Tips for Credible Presenters”

by Richard M. Page, Jr., Executive Director, Boston Bar Association

1

Do not touch the podium – it’s like using an anvil for a life preserver.

2

Move – your body is one of your most effective tools for communication.

3

Be enthusiastic about your topic and your audience – audiences can always detect a lack of engagement.

4

Finish early – surprise them.

5

Know that you may be asked to present any time – and act ready if called upon.

6

Watch your audience – the whole group, not one or two people.

7

Edit as you talk – because your audience will expect you to speak to them, as they are at that moment.

8

Ask someone you trust for feedback – especially about things that bothered you in your presentation.

9

Avoid giving the exact same speech twice – every presentation can be improved.

10

Don’t comment on your own presentation – the audience is indifferent to the constraints upon you.



**Boston Bar**  
ASSOCIATION

## **Pointers on Presentation Technology**

By David Beam  
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- 1) Your content is the key to your presentation. Technology should be used to enhance your communications vehicle. Don't try to impress people with technology for its own sake.
- 2) Do a dry run with all the technology you plan to use; don't wait to identify glitches until the moment your presentation begins.
- 3) If you are planning to present material that is located on the Internet, if at all possible: download the material to your hard-drive beforehand and use it from there (rather than going on-line in front of your audience). Pesky things like security and anti-virus updates can wreak havoc with your presentation.
- 4) Make sure that the audio/visual technologies you are proposing to use for your session are in-line with the audio-visual budget constraints of your session. You might be surprised to learn that a hotel could charge you large fees for simple a/v solutions.

### Special Tips for PowerPoint Users

- 1) Your PowerPoint slides provide an overview. They are not the sum total of your presentation.
- 2) Just because there are many new technologies that work with PowerPoint, that doesn't mean you should use all of them. (Would you use all 125 fonts on your computer in a printed communication or on a web page?)
- 3) If you read directly from your PowerPoint slides, you will lose your audience's attention.
- 4) Always use a dark background and white or light type for greater ease of visibility. Think about the lighting of the location of your presentation.
- 5) Limit each slide to two or three bullet points. Keep the text short and sweet.
- 6) Print out your slides beforehand. Proof and re-proof them for spelling and grammatical errors.
- 7) Break up slides of text with visual images.

Clarity, Contact & Compassion:  
Connecting With Your Audience

By Valerie Brown, Esq.  
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***“THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY OF SPEECH IS TO HELP PEOPLE LEARN TO GESTURE SUCCESSFULLY” – Wallace Bacon***

**CLARITY**

- Everyone in your audience is entitled to hear every word. Better to be a little too loud than a little too soft...a little too slow than a little too fast...a little too precise than a little too blurred.
- Voice quality (the musical sound of your voice) should at least not be harsh or otherwise unpleasant to the listeners' ears.
- Confirm and practice the pronunciation of difficult words, such as the place and person names.
- The way in which you phrase and emphasize words has a vital bearing on how you will be understood by your audience.
- The interplay of language and thought is a mystery, but expression of thought cannot adequately occur if you lack proficiency in the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of your primary language. If your spoken communication is heavily dependent on “I’m like...” or “It’s like,…” or “Do you know what I’m saying?” Or “You know...you know...you know,…” your communication will be severely limited. In speech communication, quality of expression depends substantially on your degree of mastery in your primary language. This is not a value judgment, but a practical truth.

**CONTACT**

- Every good speech or reading is largely a series of brief conversations with different persons in the audience.
- Direct contact (open focus) means eye-to-eye. You look at one or another person and briefly bond with them visually, almost as if you were calling their name. Radar sweeps or cursory glances in the direction of the audience are virtually worthless. I call such attempts at contact “upsy-downsy” or ‘glancy-glancy.’ Be careful not to lock in with one segment of the audience to neglect the others. The audience gets nervous if you look at the same few people in one small area.
- Indirect contact (inner closed focus) could well be called the look of musing...the kind of psychic contact a blind person has with an audience. The so-called ‘mind’s eye’ (imagination) functions best when you are not looking into someone else’s eyes.

## COMPASSION

- This category covers everything to do with the feeling content of your communication. Involve yourself with your material at the emotional level.
- You must activate your potential as a sensitive human being. Every time you say something to an audience, remember that it is the first time you have said those words to that audience. Practice is important, but never try to fix exactly how you are going to say something or look when you say it.
- Since concentration, and the absence of excessive stage fright are requisites of creative communication, always be patient with yourself at the moment when you take your place at the lectern, and never let yourself feel rushed into any presentation.
- Take your time at the beginning to settle yourself and calmly remind yourself just what it is you want first to share with your audience.
- Pausing deliberately for a moment of ‘public solitude,’ a moment of privacy, even before a large audience, just before you begin.
- The best communication is ‘serious entertainment’ and ‘vital conversation.’
- Have your sense of humor at the ready, but don’t try to be funny, and never go searching for a joke with which to start.
- Don’t be afraid to be serious and simple. The lighter moments will come, usually unanticipated.
- When presenting your own material (e.g. speech), be free to improvise a remark or two that you hadn’t planned to say. Little inspirations that you can’t anticipate will often occur...go with them!

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