



What Not To Do When Making a Keynote Presentation

by

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-keynote n : an address designed to present the issues of primary interest to an assembly and often to arouse unity and enthusiasm. A wonderful communication device, that keynote presentation is. Did you ever have to sit through a bad one? It happens. If you would like to give a -snoozer- yourself, here are a few sure-fire ways to give your audience the sleep they may have been lacking.

1. TRY TO FOOL THE AUDIENCE. It probably won't work. Audiences are very perceptive. They know when the speaker is congruent and "walks the talk". They also know when the presenter is just giving a book report, having spent a little time in preparation to learn about the high points of the topic presented. When you are the keynoter, your audience ought to sense that you are not just a gallon of water, but, rather, a fountain of knowledge.

2. READ IT FROM YOUR TEXT. We liked hearing stories read to us as children. But our audiences are adults. They want to experience what is in your heart and in your mind. Notes to guide you through the important points are fine, but if you are reading from a text, you may as well hire a professional actor who is trained to bring a script to life. Know your material cold. Tailor it as you deliver it. As your audience reacts to a particular point, expand on it. Feed them what they hunger for.

3. USE INSIDE STORIES. Be sure to mention some event or some anecdote about someone that most of your audience will know nothing about. Isolate the majority of your audience. Keep them in the dark. Make them feel that they are not among the chosen few. Use their time to have a private, inside dialogue with someone. They will be riveted.

4. MAKE YOUR AUDIENCE THE BUTT OF A JOKE. Humor is a wonderful communication tool (if you are funny). Self-deprecating humor that reveals your own vulnerabilities and foibles works. Stories about people and events, other than your audience, if done in good taste, will set the tone for a positive learning environment. But if you direct the barbs of your humor directly to your audience, you set up an "us versus him/her" climate that will interfere with your message getting out. Attacking an audience, even if not meant to offend, will tend to make them defensive and distrustful of the speaker.

5. GO OVER THE TIME LIMIT. You have a contract with your audience. Their obligation is to be attentive. Yours is to deliver the material that was promised and to do it within the announced time frame. If you are given twenty minutes, finish in twenty minutes. If no time frame is announced, tell the audience up front how much of their time you will take. ("We are going to be together for the next 50 minutes and during this brief time"). I frequently tell my audiences at the outset of my presentation, "I will be your speaker and you will be my audience. If you get done before I do, please let me know."

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