

**Al Jensen's**

# 3 Biggest Mistakes

# Emerging Speakers Make



And How  
To Avoid Them

# The Top Three Mistakes Emerging (and many experienced, professional) Speakers Make - And How To Correct Them

## Mistake #3

Don't open your speeches effectively. Fail to hook their audience in the first 30 seconds of their speech with a component which sets the stage for the closing of the message.

Audiences typically give the speaker the benefit of the doubt for around 30 to 45 seconds. If the speaker doesn't say something to capture the listeners interest in that time, the balance of the speech is pretty much irrelevant. Eyes and attention go to smart devices, reading the agenda, wondering if it would be rude to stand up and leave the room for a presumed restroom break. Let's face it.....if you don't capture the listeners attention right up front, you're never going to move them to action at the conclusion.

A good speaker captures the audience's attention right up front, while setting the stage for the closing and call to action. It outlines the premise and tells the audience what you're going to be speaking about.

Capture the audience's attention with one of these techniques:

- Offer to tell your listeners a secret - "I'm about to share the TOP THREE SECRETS of....."
- Ask the audience a question, such as:
  - Do you like.....?
  - Have you ever wondered why.....?
- Shock the audience with a statement like "Here's why you're wasting your time with ....." Grasps listeners attention when they fear they are making some kind of common mistake
- Open in the middle of a story - "So there I was, sitting on the floor in the middle of the family room when my son walks in and says....." The idea of an interesting story captures listeners attention.
- Open with a quote that supports your premise
- Open with a self-deprecating joke

What-ever you do, don't open with "Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today."

Ultimately, your opening should set the stage for the balance of your message and your call to action. When the listener hears your closing, they should think back to your opening and realize your message has come full circle and is now over.

Try out various speech openings while at Toastmasters or Speakers Clubs. Test the waters and pay attention to the audience reactions. Do they lean in and pay attention? Do they laugh, or do they begin to yawn or check their social media on their smart devices?

Don't forget, after the closing and call to action of your speech, the opening is the most important component.

## **Mistake #2**

Utilize data conveyance instead of stories to make their point(s)

Far too often, speakers rely on data to make and support their point(s). Data is boring. Data is available everywhere. Your audience members could easily look up data details on their smart phones while you're speaking.

I must admit, on more than one occasion, I've opened up Google and fact checked a speakers data. If you've listened to more than a handful of speakers who rely on sharing data to make their points, you're probably done it too!

if you want to connect with your audience, and ultimately move them to action at the conclusion of your speech, stories are a much more effective medium to make that happen.

".....so Joe implemented the action plan we developed in our coaching session, and ultimately closed 5 sales in the subsequent month. Much more than he'd ever sold before. Joe learned the value of ....." People want to hear stories. They want to hear how plans and procedures work out in real life. Deliver your data disguised as a lesson learned by one of your students or clients. Data is there to support your message, not be the

message. Again, if I want data, I can access more data on my smart phone in 1 minute than you can talk about in the next 30 minutes. Tell me a story. Engage me. Help me see how your prescribed action plan works in real life. Don't bore me with data.

### **The #1 Mistake emerging speakers make is:**

Failing to have a clear and concise Call to Action (CTA)/Don't close their speeches effectively

I can't count the number of times I've listened to a speaker deliver an eloquent speech over several minutes, telling stories, being humorous, making thought provoking points.....only to close the speech with "Thank You".

WHAT? No wrap up? No summary? No call to action? I'm embarrassed to say that more than 90% of the speakers I listen to (both emerging as well as seasoned, professional speakers) don't make it clear what they want me to know, think, feel or do as a result of their message. I listen to a lot of speakers each month. Typically in the area 50-75. Sometimes as many as 100+ in a given month.

I want to shake my head in disbelief when a speaker says "That's my time, thank you for being here today".

Here's how to avoid the "Bad Speech Closing" trap: When you begin writing your speech, start by writing the closing paragraph. Ask yourself: "What do I want listeners to think, to know, to feel or to do as a result of spending time with me?" Get your premise clear. Refine your premise. Distill your premise.

Don't begin writing your speech until you can explain what you want the listener to know, think, feel or do in 15 words or less. Just don't do it.

When you've clearly defined your speeches purpose, then write the closing paragraph (6-8 sentences) being clean and concise, describing what you want the audience to know, think, feel or do as a result. It should call back to the opening so the audience knows you're wrapping up.

Example: "As I mentioned in my opening remarks, I believe that we have the ability to rid our streams, lakes and oceans of plastics that are harmful to not only the environment, but the animal life that counts on clean water to complete their purpose in the eco cycle. Please begin today by utilizing reusable containers for your food and water when you enjoy nature. Take your trash with you and dispose of it in marked containers. If you'll join me in this endeavor, not only will animals and the environment appreciate it, our children and grand-children will have an environment to be proud of as well."

This closing calls back to opening remarks, and asks the listeners to take specific actions as a result of listening to the presentation. Be specific with your call to action. Before this becomes second nature, even use the phrase: "What I'd like you to do as a result of listening to this presentation today is....." Using the words "What I'd like you to do (or think, or feel or know) is...." will force you to explain how you want the listeners to act as a result.

## **Summary**

There you have it. The three top mistakes I see emerging speakers, and many seasoned professionals, make when presenting to an audience. I've given you some options as to how to overcome these mistakes.

The best way to learn how to create a smooth speech, with a great opening, awesome stories and a compelling call to action close is to practice.

Here's my call to action:

Get to a Toastmasters club on a regular basis. Join a second or third club to gain access to multiple speaking opportunities.

Join a Public Speakers Club and share your message.

Hire a speech coach to help evaluate your skills and abilities and move you to the next stage in your speaking development.

Record yourself each time you speak so you can review your performance and have a baseline example of where you started, so you can see the progress you make each time you speak.

Above all, free yourself from these common mistakes and you'll soon find yourself moving audience upon audience to action from the platform.