

The New Rules of Public Speaking

How to get more customers
by speaking to groups
like a professional



By Kevin Stirtz



Thanks go out to...

Thanks to my good friend Teresa Wilts who volunteered her time to proof and edit this book. Her scrupulous attention to detail complements my complete lack of such skill. Thanks also to my lovely and patient wife for putting up with my frequent monologues about how to be a great speaker.

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Finally, thanks to my friend Mark LeBlanc of SmallBusinessSuccess.com who has shown me repeatedly what it means to be a great speaker.

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If you like this book I have two simple requests...

1. Please share it with your friends.

Email it to them. Print out copies and give to them. Post a link on your blog or website. I wrote this to help people get better at public speaking so the more people you share it with the more you are helping.

2. Please tell me what you think.

The only payment I receive from writing this book is your feedback (good or bad). So, please take a moment and drop me a note to let me know what you think. There are three easy ways to do that:

- Send me an email: Kevin@stirtzgroup.com
- Use the Contact form on my website: <http://stirtzgroup.com/contact/>
- Leave a comment on my blog:

<http://stirtzgroup.com/2007/06/04/the-new-rules-of-public-speaking/>

Thanks!



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About the Author

My job is helping people get more customers. I do that with a system I call [Smart Marketing](#).

I have spoken to hundreds of groups all over the USA on topics ranging from technology and the future to marketing to customer service to youth mentoring. This has taught me a lot about how to speak to groups in a way that helps the audience leave with more than they came.

There are many great speakers in this world. I have been privileged to see some at work. There are many more speakers who put people to sleep. I have experienced more than my share of them. All of these people have provided me with valuable lessons in the art of public speaking.

In this book you'll read these lessons. You're getting them straight from the street. What you read here is road-tested and proven. No fluff. No hype. Just solid, useful advice to help you be a great public speaker.

You can use this book to be a great speaker to promote your business, your non-profit, your school, your club or your association. And, if you get the urge to become a paid professional speaker, you can use this book to get there too.

If you do what I advise in this book, to the best of your ability, you will become a great speaker. I guarantee it.

Have fun and enjoy your journey.

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Introduction

This book exists for one reason:

To help you tell your story better.

You might own a small business. Maybe you're a professional. Perhaps you're an executive or a manager. You could be a non-profit executive or a volunteer.

No matter what your role is, if you want to spread the word about your organization, this book can help. One of the best ways to tell people about your business, your product, your service, or your organization is to talk to people in groups.

They might be small groups of just a few folks. They could be large groups, like a school auditorium filled to capacity. No matter whom you speak to, this book will help you tell your story to them more effectively.

The more you get in front of groups and tell them your story, in a fun, entertaining and memorable way, the better your organization will do. I call it building a fan club. If you treat them right, many of these people will become adoring and raving fans of your organization.

But to do that, you first have find them and tell them your story in a way that makes them want to learn more.

That's what this book is all about. That's what you'll learn here. So let's get started!



Part 1: How to Get Speaking Engagements

This is easy. Since you're speaking for free you have a big audience. There are thousands of groups looking for good speakers every single day. So, if you do what it takes to be a professional, you'll have more speaking offers than you can handle. (The good news is, this book tells you exactly what to do to speak like a professional.)

If you read the title of this book, you know our context here is to use public speaking to grow your business. But, this does not necessarily mean you're selling something. You might work for a nonprofit and you want to raise awareness of your cause. Or, you might work for a local hospital and you want to build better connections with your community. You can use public speaking to promote almost any kind of organization.

To best plan your public speaking marketing campaign, start by answering these questions:

1. Why do you want to speak?
2. What is your message?
3. Who might be interested in your message?
4. Who might be able to benefit from your message?
5. What groups exist where these people might belong?
6. How can you find them?
7. How can you contact them?
8. Do they have opportunities for speakers (like you)?
9. Why would they want to have you speak at their group?
10. When and where do they meet?
11. How do you get on their calendar?

Write down your answers to each question. This becomes your plan of action for your public speaking marketing campaign.

Once you develop your purpose and message, think about who would be a good audience. This should match with your existing business or marketing plan.

Then, after identifying the right audience(s) you need to start your research and data gathering. This is easy using the Internet. Just do a Google search on the words you used to describe your audience.



Some groups you might speak to are:

- Chambers of Commerce <http://www.chamberofcommerce.com>
- Rotary Clubs <http://www.rotary.org>
- Jaycees <http://www.usjaycees.org>
- Lions Clubs <http://www.lionsclubs.org>
- Churches <http://www.usachurch.com>
- Non-Profits <http://www.guidestar.org>
- Parents Groups (check with city hall, schools, newspaper)
- Neighborhood Groups (check with city hall, newspaper)
- Schools (public, private, colleges, technical schools)
- Business, trade or professional associations
- Franchise groups <http://www.worldfranchising.com>
- Networking groups

You can find these groups using the usual sources:

- Internet (Google, Yahoo, MSN)
- Phone books
- Newspapers
- City Hall
- Libraries

Once you have your list of potential groups, call or email them. Ask if they have a need for speakers on your topic. If so, get the name and contact information of the person who coordinates the speakers in your area. Contact that person to introduce yourself and tell them what you speak about.

Make sure you let them know several important things:

1. You will speak for free (if that's your plan)
2. You will not deliver a sales pitch for your company
3. You are knowledgeable about your topic
4. You will tailor the presentation to meet their needs

Then find out what their procedures are for scheduling speakers. Some might have a need right away. Others might be filled for the next year. Ask them to put you on their calendar.

They might ask for information about you, your company and your speaking experience. Or they might not. It depends on the size of the group and how they handle speakers. Be sure to have some information you can email or mail to them.

That's it!

Like I said it's easy. It takes some time and effort, like anything of value does. But because the demand for good, free speakers is high, you should be able to find plenty of bookings if you work at it.



Part 2: The 45 Essential Rules to Speak Like a Professional

Once you get booked to speak to a group, your fun begins. Now it gets real because before long you'll be standing in front of a room full of strangers. And they'll expect great things from you.

The good news is, you can deliver a great presentation. This book will help you. What follows are 45 rules you need to know and follow if you want to be a great public speaker. They are road-tested and learned from experience. They work.

Read them. Learn them. Live them. You'll be well on your way to speaking like a professional.

Rule #1: It's ALL about your audience.

You are there for them. (They are not there for your gain.) Whatever you do, your intent and focus needs to be 100% on your audience. Help them leave with more than they came. Entertain them, inform them, inspire them.

Rule #2: Always play to win.

Have something worthwhile to say (that they will want to hear) and be able to say it well. Half-way efforts don't count. Public speaking is a pass or fail deal. Always be prepared to hit the ball out of the park. No exceptions.

Rule #3: Pick the right audience.

Match your audience with your reasons for speaking. You're there to increase awareness for your business so your audience should be either potential customers, potential referral sources or influentials who can help boost your reputation.

Rule #4: Don't sell.

You're not there to sell. Pitch your product or service and your audience will tune out and turn off. You're there to build awareness and credibility. Focus on those outcomes. Don't sell!

Rule #5: Don't talk about yourself

I know this sounds contradictory since you're there to build awareness for your business but it's not. People are not there to hear about you or your business. In their eyes that's the same as a sales pitch.

Save it for your "Call to Action" which we'll cover in Rule #18.



Instead, entertain, inform and inspire them. Connect with them. Bring them into your world. Do this and they'll want to learn more about you and how you might be able to help them. But never talk about your business, unless they ask.

Rule #6: Entertain and inform.

There are plenty of boring speakers. Don't be one of them. Use humor and stories and fun to make your presentations sparkle. Give them enough solid information to make it worth their time. Enable them to leave with something they can use to improve their jobs, their companies, their lives.

Rule #7: Use stories. (Your stories.)

Stories are not just for kids. Everyone loves a story. Just make sure it's fun and relevant. Use your own stories. It's okay to use some that you hear about from others. But if you use too many, you'll risk sounding like every other speaker who uses those stories. Use your stories and you'll always be unique.

Rule #8: Use personal examples to illustrate your points.

Dig into your life for real examples to help you demonstrate concepts or illustrate points. People learn in different ways and real life examples are a great way to help them understand and remember your key ideas.

Rule #9: Get them involved.

Forget the lectures you had in high school or college. People don't want to be talked at. Ask questions and expect answers. Then use those answers to further a point if appropriate. Make it a two-way exchange of information and you'll connect with more people. They'll think you're great!

Rule #10: Show them the dream.

We all have dreams. We all aspire to something greater. One of the reasons we enjoy great public speakers is they show us the dream. They help us believe it's possible. Help your audience see their dream better. Help them believe they can take steps to accomplish their dream. Do that and you'll win new friends for life.

Rule #11: Get comfortable speaking to groups.

Some people are naturally at ease in front of groups. Whether large or small, they handle themselves with grace and calm. Others (most of us) are not so lucky. We sweat. We tremble. We shake. Our brains lock up. Our mouths go dry. It's a nerve-wracking experience. But it doesn't have to be.



The best way to get comfortable speaking to groups is to do it a lot. Speak at groups you belong to. Or join new groups where you can speak regularly to groups. Networking groups, Toastmasters and Rotary are all good places to get practice.

Rule #12: Know your presentation inside out.

There is no substitute for being prepared. To get prepared there is no substitute for practice. Write your presentation and then practice it 100 times. I'm not kidding. Do it 100 times and you'll know it better than you know yourself.

Practice alone. Practice in front of your spouse, your kids, your dog, it doesn't matter. Just practice. Do it until you know it start to finish, every pause, every sentence, every word. Be able to start anywhere in your presentation as smoothly as you would the beginning.

Note on writing your presentation:

Write it out in whatever way works for you. If you work best with a complete word-for-word presentation then do that. Or, if you prefer to work from concepts and fill in the gaps on the fly, do that. The key is, do what works for you and then practice it 100 times minimum.

Rule #13: Never use notes. Never!

Amateurs use notes. It shows because they're not very good. Professionals don't use notes. When you know your presentation so well you don't need notes, you'll be more confident. You'll be less nervous. You'll be more aware of what's going on around you and you'll be better able to connect with your audience.

Know your stuff so well that notes would be a hassle, an inconvenience. Remember Rule# 2, play to win. A winner never brings notes!

Rule #14: Watch the audience.

You've done your research. You know your audience. You know your speech. You're ready to kick butt. But, as you launch into your presentation you find people are not responding like you thought they would. You give them your best stuff and...nothing happens!

You can't predict what's going to happen. But you can be prepared and you can be aware. So, watch your audience. See how they respond. Maybe they're tired. Maybe it's hot in the room. Maybe you have food on your face! It doesn't matter what the issue is, if you ignore the audience, you'll never know if you're reaching them. And then you're violating Rule #1.



Rule #15: Be flexible.

I've seen speakers stand up and give their presentation from start to finish with no regard for what's happening in the room. They see the audience. They know things are not going well but they do nothing about it.

There are many things you cannot control when you speak to groups. In fact, the only things you can control are what you say and how you say it. When "stuff" happens (and it will happen) you need to be flexible. You need to adjust on the fly.

You might have a late start. Your microphone might not work. The room could be so hot people are ready to pass out. The lights might go out in the middle of your presentation. Whatever the situation is, just roll with it.

Remember, you're there for your audience. Your objective is to help them get something of value from their time with you.

So do what you have to so you accomplish your goal. Expect the unexpected. Be flexible. Be prepared so you can wow them no matter what happens.

Rule #16: Watch the clock.

The worst thing you can do to your audience is disrespect their time. I've seen speakers who go on and on without ever looking at a clock. They're so focused on themselves and their speech they forget why they are there.

Always know what time it is. Always know how much time you have left. Always know where you are in your presentation. (This is why you need to practice it 100 times.)

I watched [Mark LeBlanc](#) speak recently. About 5 minutes before his time was up he glanced at his watch. Then he gradually rolled into his close. No transition. No rushing. Just a natural, smooth and powerful finish. He ended right on time and he knocked our socks off.

Rule #17: Watch the professionals speak.

Find events you can attend where professional speakers are speaking. Watch them. Study them. Take notes. If you can, pick a professional who is very good and watch them several times. Maybe they have a website with a video you can watch online.

We learn by watching others. We learn best when we watch the best. If you're serious about being a good speaker (and you should be serious if you're using public speaking to promote your business) then watch the pros as often as you can.



Rule #18: End with a call to action.

You're there to increase awareness of who you are and what you do for people. You're there to increase your professional credibility. If you knock their socks off with a great presentation, you'll accomplish those two goals. Your next objective is to move them to action. This increases the chance they will contact you later and eventually become a customer.

To move them to action, give them a reason to act. Maybe you offer them a free copy of your book. Or a guide. Maybe it's a free consultation with you. Don't sell. Offer something of value. Maybe you direct them to your website to obtain a resource or subscribe to your newsletter.

Offer them something that makes them want to take the next step. But you should only do this after you have thrilled them with a fantastic presentation. Then they'll want to know more about you and your organization.

Rule #19: Be real. Be yourself.

Many people have multiple personalities. You see it when they get in front of a group. Their language changes. Their tone changes. They might even change their accent or dialect. They become someone else.

Don't do it.

Be yourself. Be genuine. Be sincere. Be real. Being real means acknowledging you're not perfect. It means opening the door to your life (if only a little) and letting them peek inside.

One of the best ways to be real is to laugh at yourself. Don't run yourself down but find ways to show your audience you're just as human as they are. They'll repay you by listening to you and by caring about you.

Rule #20: Always arrive early.

If you're always early, you'll never be late. As a speaker you can never be late. This is so important I'll say it again. You can NEVER BE LATE. There is never an excuse for being late.

Remember Rule# 1: "It's all about your audience." It's not about you. Sure, they'll wait for you. But they won't like it. And no matter what the reason, you'll have a big hurdle to overcome before they'll trust you.

Professionals always arrive early because that shows respect for the people who invited them to speak.



Rule #21: Have one presentation. (Just one.)

A lot of people say join Toastmasters to become a good speaker. Toastmasters is fine as a way to get comfortable speaking to groups. But it will not help you become a great speaker because in Toastmasters, you're always using a different speech.

Professionals have one great presentation. They own it. They know it. They live it. They know every word, every syllable, every meaning, every pause. They could do it at a moment's notice with zero preparation.

Because they focus on just one presentation.

When you have several presentations, you dilute your efforts. You spread your time and energy across them all. You'll never be as good at delivering 2 or 3 presentations as you will be delivering just one.

I'm not saying you don't vary your presentation to suit your audience. You do. But you're tweaking and tuning it. At its core, it's the same presentation. This is why you need to know it inside and out. This enables you to tweak it based on your audience and their desires.

Rule #22: Don't use PowerPoint (or any other visuals).

I understand certain situations might need visuals. But, if at all possible, don't use them. You probably don't need them.

Visuals take the audience away from you. They become focused on the visual. But you want them to connect with you, not a PowerPoint slide. So, keep them focused on you by avoiding visuals of any kind.

The other reason to avoid visuals is because they become a crutch. People read from them. (Bad speaker. Bad! Go sit in the corner!) They become an excuse for a lousy and ill-prepared presentation. "I'll just show a few slides and then ask some questions..." says the wanna-be speaker.

No. Do not show slides. Instead, do a real presentation using only the technology you were born with. It will be easier to do and you'll connect better with your audience.

Rule #23: Lists are great. Use them.

When you want to communicate content to your audience, be careful. Too much content can easily overwhelm or bore them. Think of how people read. What's easier to read, a page of solid text or a short bulleted list of items?

So it is with your speech. Lists make it easier for people to follow and to take notes. With lists you can number things. Numbers are great to help people record and recall information easier.



Using lists forces you to think about what you're saying and boil it down to the most important stuff. Make it easy for your audience to digest your information. Lists are a powerful way to do that.

Rule #24: Handout your handouts after you speak.

I've done this the wrong way. And I've paid the price of having people ignore me while I'm talking. If you give someone a handout, they'll look at it. It's like putting a visual on a screen (see Rule #22). They can't help it. It's human nature. And you can't compete with a handout.

At the very least, you find yourself asking your audience to look up from their hands and pay attention to you. This is not the best way to get started.

The solution is simple. Unless the handout is something they absolutely, must have during your speech, leave it until the end. Give it to them after you're done talking. Plus, they'll see it as a bonus on top of the great message you just gave them.

Rule #25: Never speak during a meal.

This is closely related to Rule# 24. Never try to compete with other things, like people eating and servers clearing tables.

When you stand up at the front of the room, all eyes and ears should be on you. You're there to give them something but they have to pay attention to get it. And you need to be able to focus on your audience to do that well.

Always wait until the meal is completely done and the tables have been cleared before you speak. (Note: if you need to start before the tables are cleared, talk to the banquet manager. Ask them to wait until you're done before they start clearing. Be polite but firm about this.)

Rule #26: Vary your voice.

Many people are confident and calm speaking to groups. They're very knowledgeable and passionate about their topic. And they might even be likable. But they're lousy speakers.

They put people to sleep. They drone on and on in a vocal style that never changes. Same volume. Same pace. No inflection or emphasis anywhere.

Don't be that person. Be excited and show it. Let the beast out. Don't hold back. Lift up your voice and your energy level. When you do, you'll also lift up your audience. You'll get their attention and you'll keep it.

If you want to make a point, lower your volume. Speak in a hushed whisper. It forces people to focus 100% on you and it gets their attention. We're conditioned to pay attention when someone speaks in a hush or a whisper. Use this to add variety to your talk.



Vary your rate (or pace). Pause occasionally. Emphasize certain words or phrases. Change your volume and inflection. Take on a different voice once in awhile. Instead of saying “he said...” be that person.

Have fun at the front of the room. Put some energy into your presentation. Your audience will listen to everything you say.

Rule #27: Pauses are your friends.

We’ve all heard of the pregnant pause. It scares some people. So they avoid them. Or they run right over them. Either way, they’re wrong. Pauses are your friend. They allow you to maintain a natural pace and rhythm.

Pauses also give your audience a chance to catch up. If you’re doing a good job holding their attention, they’ll need a break now and again. Use pauses for mini-breaks. It helps them mentally step back and digest what you just said. Pauses are especially helpful if people are taking notes.

Rule #28: Ask them questions.

One of the best ways to connect with your audience is to talk with them, not at them. The best speakers are having a conversation with their audience. And remember, conversations run two ways.

A great way to get and keep people engaged is to ask questions. Some might be rhetorical where you don’t really expect an answer. (Some people will answer anyway. That’s okay.) For others you want answers. You want to know what they’re thinking. You want to know if they’re with you.

If you expect an answer and get none, maybe you need to change what you’re doing. Use questions as a way to understand how well you’re delivering your message to them. Remember Rule #14: “Watch the Audience.” This is a great way to do that.

Rule #29: Find some allies before you speak.

If at all possible, meet and greet some people before you talk. It’s easier if you’re talking after a lunch or dinner. Dining with people is a nice way to get to know them. If there’s no meal, find out what is happening right before your presentation. Find a way to be there so you can get to know a few people.

They become your friendly faces in the crowd. This can help reduce anxiety or nervousness. The audience is no longer a crowd of strangers.

Rule #30: Use a short introduction. Don’t brag.

The best introduction I’ve ever heard was a story. It was a story about how the introducer first met and became friends with the speaker. It was



personal. It was funny. It revealed something about the speaker. It made me want to hear more.

The worst introductions I've heard (and I've heard a lot of them) are when the introducer goes on and on about all the things the speaker has done or accomplished. They talk about all the famous people they know and all the exotic places they go. By the time they're done I expect Gandhi, Mother Teresa and the President of the USA to walk out on stage.

Don't let your introducer do that to your audience. It wastes their time. They are there to hear you and your message. The fact you've been invited to speak means they can have some confidence you have a worthwhile message. So, a lengthy introduction is not needed.

It's okay to give a few highlights about yourself. But make sure they are relevant to the audience and to the purpose of the talk. It's not a brag session. That only turns people off.

Rule #31: Know why you're there.

The people who invited you to speak did so for a reason. They believe you have a message their group will want to hear. They believe you can deliver your message in a memorable and effective way. They want you there.

So make sure you know why they want you there. Don't be satisfied with "we heard you're a really good speaker" or "we want something motivational".

Talk to the organizer or planner. Ask questions about the event or meeting. Learn about their organization or company. Find out what you can do to help them, in the context of your presentation.

Discover what they want their people to get out of your presentation. Only then can you be successful in delivering what they want.

Rule #32: It's okay to be nervous. Get over it.

Unless you're an android, you probably get nervous before you speak. I've spoken to hundreds of groups and I still get nervous. It's no big deal. It's part of being human. It means I want to do a great job. I want to give my audience everything I have and I only get one shot at doing it.

So, don't worry about being nervous. Understand, if you are truly prepared (like you know you should be) then your nerves are there to help you. They keep you sharp and focused.

Everyone gets nervous. Be prepared, start strong, have fun and get over it.



Rule #33: Tell them what they want to hear.

Talk about something your audience is interested in. If you're speaking to a church group then talking about cold-calling to sell more insurance is probably not going to excite them. But, talking about how to get people more active in their church might.

Focus your message on your audience in terms of how it helps them. Help them see how your message can help them get what they want. Help them see new ways to reach their dreams. Do this and you'll capture their hearts as well as their heads.

Rule #34: Drink water during (but not before) your talk.

Maybe it's just me but if I drink too much before I give a presentation I risk having a challenging situation during my talk. So, I limit my fluid intake the hour before I speak.

But, during my presentation I have at least 16 ounces of water available. More if it's a longer presentation. Your vocal cords need water to stay lubricated so they function well. And, it prevents you from getting dehydrated which can easily happen during a long presentation.

It's always okay to drink water during your speech. Don't worry what people think. If you're thirsty, drink water. Avoid pop, alcohol, milk, coffee, tea, etc. Stick to water.

Some speakers insist on having room temperature water. Others are fine if the water has no ice. Personally, I like cold water. Do what works for you.

Rule #35: It's okay to give orders.

The first time I did this I thought it was the coolest thing in the world. I was teaching a seminar and I mentioned something I thought was important so I said "write this down."

To my surprise, everyone in the room grabbed a pen and began writing.

It shouldn't have surprised me because I do the same thing when I'm in a seminar. As a speaker, if you believe what you're saying can help your audience then help them even more by suggesting they write it down.

When you tell people (or suggest) they do something, you're doing them a favor if you believe it will help them retain the information. So, go ahead, give orders. They'll thank you for it.



Rule #36: Be a detective.

You've taken the time to discover what they want from your presentation. You know their purpose. You've tweaked your presentation to meet their purpose. You've practiced it 100 times. You've met a few people prior to your speech so you have some friendly faces in the audience.

So, you're all done preparing, right? Wrong!

Because you're a professional, you showed up early. This gives you the opportunity to be a detective. Find out how the event has gone so far. Get specifics. Learn details. Get people talking. Then weave this information into your presentation, if appropriate.

If you can reference events or people from the meeting in your speech, you'll wow your audience. They'll be amazed that you took the time to get to know them. They'll be thrilled you made it a priority. You'll connect with them better because you will have shown them you care.

Rule #37: Never show up late.

The absolute worst thing a speaker can do is to be late. When you show up late you are disrespecting everyone else there. You are telling them you're not a professional and you don't care about their event.

When you run late you set yourself up for a bad performance. You're more likely to be nervous. You'll have less time to make some friends in the audience. You'll also have less time to make sure things are setup for the best possible presentation.

Professionals always arrive early for their presentations. No exceptions.

Rule #38: Never tell the audience how happy you are to be there.

They don't care. Not that they don't care about you. They do. But they don't care how happy you are to be there. They are there to receive something from you. You are there to give them something. How pleased you are about being there is completely irrelevant to them. And it wastes their time. So don't do it.

Rule #39: Record yourself in action.

If you really want to be a good speaker you need to see (and hear) yourself as others do. That means recording yourself. You don't have to record every speech. But the more you see yourself in action, the more you can coach yourself to improve.



If you don't have much to spend, go to Best Buy (BestBuy.com) or Radio Shack (RadioShack.com) and get a voice recorder. They're under \$100. You can get a lapel microphone so nobody knows you're taping yourself.

To really get good, you need a video of yourself in action.

Buy a camcorder. Best Buy has them on sale all the time. You don't need the fanciest, most expensive model they have. Anything that will capture your image and voice on tape will do.

Rule #40: Don't use a script.

Maybe you wrote your speech out word for word. Maybe you memorized it that way. Fine. But don't read it that way. You'll sound like a robot.

Practice saying your speech like you are talking to someone. This is another reason you want to build in questions and other ways for the audience to interact. Remember, you're having a conversation with them. You're not lecturing to them.

If you're concerned about how you sound (and you should be) then practice your speech with a voice recorder. Do it entirely from memory – no notes. Then listen. If you sound like a robot reading a script then keep working on it until you sound more natural.

One way to sound more natural is to pretend you talking to a friend about your topic. Pretend you're explaining something. Use that tone of voice and you'll sound much better.

Rule #41: Check the room and equipment before you start.

The ideal situation is if you can get to the room before the audience. Stand at the front. Walk around. Sit in a few different chairs. Get a feel for the room, from your perspective and the perspective of the audience. Sit in the back row. Can you see the front okay. How far is it? Are there any things in the way (pillars, lights, etc.)?

Is the room open or are there doors that can be closed? Is it noisy or quiet? Light or dark? Carpet or hard floor? Knowing your room before you speak can help you adjust and fine tune as you speak.

If you will be using a microphone, white board, projector or anything other than your own body parts, then try them before the audience gets there (if possible). Make sure everything works to your satisfaction. Or if not, find ways to work around the problem.

You won't always have the opportunity to check the room and equipment before the audience arrives. That's okay. But if you do have the opportunity use it. If you're not sure, ask the event or meeting planner.



Rule #42: Keep your hands at your sides.

You see this everywhere. A person gets in front of a group and all of sudden their hands become their enemies. They have no idea what to do with them. So, they put them together in front like you might do in church. Or, they clasp them together behind their back, a la Prince Charles.

Don't do either. (Keep them out of your pockets too!)

When you're speaking to a group, you should let your hands rest naturally and comfortably at your sides. That way, when you need them you'll know where they are. You look more natural and you'll feel more relaxed.

As you speak more, you'll find you need your hands to help you communicate. You'll learn how to use them to add to and clarify what you're saying. It might not happen overnight, but if you speak enough, it will.

By watching professionals, you'll learn how, when and why to use your hands.

No one (except Prince Charles) walks or stands with their hands clasped together in front of or in back of them. It looks and feels unnatural. So, don't do it while you're speaking to a group.

Rule #43: Have a Short and a Long Version

We already talked about having just one presentation. But you should have two versions of it that vary in length. Sometimes you'll have 20 minutes for your speech. Other times you might have an hour or more.

So write two versions.

Create one that covers the essentials and the good stuff. Make sure you can do it 20 minutes.

Then craft another one with more beef. Add more stories and more details. Draw out some points a little more. It needs to be just as useful but you can give more attention to some points. Make this one last between 60 and 90 minutes.

This way you are prepared for anything. You never know when your 1 hour time slot gets crunched to 25 minutes because someone else runs late. (They didn't read this book!) Anything can happen and you must be prepared.

Having two versions of different lengths helps you be prepared like a professional.



Rule #44: Double Check Your Time Slot

Closely related to Rule #43 is to make sure you know how much time you have. Always confirm with your meeting planner when you start and when you finish. By double-checking, you're certain of the amount of time you have.

This prepares you in case there's been a change and nobody told you. Events and meeting agendas can change. Even though they should notify you of changes, the organizers don't always have time. By checking with them a week or so before the event you help make sure your presentation goes well.

You show them you're a professional.

Rule #45: Start strong. Finish big.

If you remember nothing else from this book, remember this rule. Start strong and finish big. Do this well and you can overcome just about anything. When you start strong, you engage your audience right away. They'll want to listen to what you have to say.

When you finish big, you help them understand the importance of what you just talked about. You help them connect it to their lives so they're motivated to act on it after they leave.

The Start

There is a lot of advice on how to start a speech. Ask a question. Make a startling statement or a shocking prediction. Quote a surprising statistic or example.

All of these can be effective.

But my favorite way to start a presentation is by telling a story. It should be relevant. It should be personal. It should be funny (or at least entertaining).

For example, when I teach a customer service seminar, I'll relate a story that about how I experienced or witnessed lousy customer service. And it's usually an extreme case of really bad customer service. It helps set the tone and the purpose for the seminar. It's something I can refer back to throughout the session.

Do what works best for you and your situation but, whenever possible, try to find a story (of your own) that you can use to get people interested in your topic so they want to hear more.



The one thing you should never do is start your speech by telling the audience how happy you are to be there. (Remember Rule #38.) And never start by telling them a lot of stuff about you or your company.

Just start. Launch right into your story or whatever you're starting with. Start strong and you'll set yourself up for a great speech.

The Finish

This is what they remember you for. The final words you leave them with are what they will carry with them. Make this count. Do it well. Do it very well.

A great finish always ties back to the opening. Use it to wrap a nice ribbon around what you talked about. Use your finish to show your audience why everything you just said matters.

The best way to do this is with a story.

Use a story to illustrate your concepts, theme and key ideas. Use it to put a human and a personal face on your topic.

Mark LeBlanc is a master at this. He'll talk for 85 minutes about his topic. He provides tools, tips and ideas. Then, in the last 5 minutes, he'll tell his audience how these same tools, tips and ideas helped someone important to him recover from what might have otherwise been a disastrous situation.

His story puts his ideas into action and into life. It becomes personal to the audience because it's personal to him.

If your finish leaves your audience with the belief that what you talked about is real and can help them, then you've done your job well. If it leaves them feeling better about their ability to make the changes they want, then you've done your job well. If it leaves them wanting more of you and your ideas, then you've done your job well.

That's how you finish big!



Your Next Step

Okay, you've read this book. Now what? I assume you have an interest in speaking to groups. If so, you now have some very useful information to help you do it better. So, you've taken a great first step. Now, you need to plan your next steps to put this information to work.

If your purpose in speaking to groups is to promote your business or non-profit then I can offer a few suggestions on what to do next.

One suggestion is to register for my free monthly newsletter called Smart Marketing: Get More Customers Without Spending a Fortune. You can register here:

<http://stirtzgroup.com/newsletter/>

Another recommendation is to spend some time reading my website (www.StirtzGroup.com). It's designed to help you find better ways to get more customers. It has over 100 articles and other resources available to you for no charge.

A third idea would be to get one on one help from an expert. Find someone who has experience in both planning and implementing effective marketing for a variety of businesses. I can help you do this.

As a marketing expert, my job is to help you get more customers. There are many tools I use to do this:

- [Advising & consulting](#)
- [Training and workshops](#)
- [Speaking at conferences and conventions](#)
- [Books and audio programs](#)

Here's how I can help you:

I have a specific service called the Smart Marketing On Demand. It's a flat rate, one hour with no contracts and no obligations.

You can learn more about it here:

<http://stirtzgroup.com/services/smart-marketing-advisory2/>

So, if you want to get a head start as you work to get more customers, contact me at 952-212-4681 or by email Kevin@stirtzgroup.com.

Thanks for reading and best wishes for a prosperous future!

Kevin Stirtz
The Smart Marketing Guy
952-212-4681



Resources

Organizations

National Speakers Association <http://www.nsaspeaker.org>

Toastmasters International <http://www.toastmasters.org>

Speaking Workshops & Training

The Bill Gove Speech Workshop <http://www.speechworkshop.com>

Burt Dubin Speaking Success System <http://www.burtdubin.com>

Books

To be a better public speaker:

[Never Be Boring Again](#)

[Presenting to Win](#)

[The Exceptional Presenter](#)

[The Confident Speaker](#)

To improve your marketing:

[The New Rules of PR and Marketing](#)

[Never Eat Lunch Alone](#)

[Marketing for Smart People](#)

[Growing Your Business](#)

[How to Become a Marketing Superstar](#)

Newsletters & Websites

[StirtzGroup.com](#) – get a free newsletter to help you improve your marketing

[WendiMoore.com](#) – agency for professional speakers and authors

[Great Public Speaking](#) – many tips on speaking to groups like a pro

Equipment

Best Buy <http://www.BestBuy.com>

Radio Shack <http://www.RadioShack.com>