

**FINISHING
CONTRACTORS
ASSOCIATION**

Finishing Contractors Association

Say a Few Words

Tips for Staying Cool on the Hot Seat

Amelia Townsend, Director of Communications

Finishing Contractors Association • 8150 Leesburg Pike, Suite 1210 • Vienna VA 22182 • (703) 448-9001 phone • (703) 448-9002
fax www.finishingcontractors.org • E-mail: fca@finishingcontractors.org

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When You are Asked to “Say a Few Words.”

Be Yourself.

You’ve been asked to speak primarily because of who you are and your position. While watching gifted speakers is good as a “research technique”, it’s best to avoid imitating them. Take the attitude that you have something to offer. Use your own words, your own phrasing. You have a style all your own.

Three BE’s of Public Presentations

- Be Honest.
- Be Brief.
- Be Gracious.

Don’t Worry About the Warts.

You may think that you have horrible physical imperfections. Seriously, no one will notice what you worry about the most. A study by Northwestern University’s Media Research Center (2007) asked 200 audience members to describe a speaker they had just watched make a presentation in a room designed to hold 300 people.

- ♦ 47% recalled the speaker wore glasses. She did not.
- ♦ 32% said the speaker was blonde. She had raven black hair.
- ♦ 61% said the speaker wore a green pant suit. She wore a pink jacket and dark skirt.
- ♦ 87% said the speaker’s subject was relevant to their work. She spoke to chemical engineering majors about career trends.
- ♦ 94% said they thought she did a great job. It was her first talk.
- ♦ 57% said her speech was less than 20 minutes long. She spoke for exactly 24 minutes.

Talk About Subjects You Know.

If you are in construction, you can bet you will not be asked to talk about medical advances in brain surgery. So, relax.

Make a list of three topics in your field that you know really well. Connect each of these to a universal theme. Most likely, you will be asked to talk about one of those – or even better – suggest one of those yourself. This allows you to easily prepare a “jacket pocket speech” that can be refined for just about any impromptu occasion.

The Jacket Pocket Speech Plan

Topic	Universal Theme

On the Fly Introductions

If you are asked on the spur of the moment to make an introduction of a speaker, all you have to do ask the speaker three questions. Ask them for a synopsis – or laundry list -- for answers to the second and third questions.

1. How to pronounce the speaker's name?
2. What's his or her experience in this field?
3. What's the point you hope the audience will take away from your presentation today?

With that, you can easily craft a simple introduction that will benefit the audience and the speaker while making you look great. **Your introduction should be warm and brief.**

Example of "on the fly" introduction:

I am John Doe, president of your association. I've been given the honor tonight of introducing you to

James Doe, who has been in the (**Answer to Question #2**) **field of construction economics for more**

than 20 years. James currently works with (**Answer to Question #2**) **Firm/university/research facility.**

Tonight, he's going to explain to us why we should (**Answer to Question #3 (point of speech.)**) Please

join me in a warm round of applause for James Doe.

Plan.

You would never start a big job without a set of plans. Think of a presentation in the same way. You really can't "wing it" or prepare on the plane on the way there. Usually, your presentation is just one part of a larger event.

Know Your Audience.

Just like every man needs a different suit, each audience needs a different presentation. They come to you with different levels of knowledge about the topic. Your goal is to develop your presentation for the PREDOMINANT group. You cannot start too early – but you can start too late – getting to know the people for whom you will be speaking. **Remember, the audience wants you to succeed!**

ASK IMPORTANT QUESTIONS of the meeting organizers:

1. Who is the audience? Contractors, Owners, Labor? General Public?
2. Why are they coming to this event?
3. What is the audience attitude toward the topic(s)?
4. What does the audience already know about the topic?
5. What external events are going on that could affect the audience?
6. What do I want the audience to know, feel, think, or do after my presentation?
7. Will the audience be eating during my talk?

Know Your Venue and the Event.

MORE QUESTIONS for the meeting organizers:

1. What does the meeting organizer think my contribution will be?
2. What is the agenda for the evening?
3. Where is my presentation on the agenda?
4. Are there other presenters?
5. What are their topics?
6. What will the set up in the room be? (If you have a choice, always opt for a setting that facilitates conversation such as a U shaped or semi-circles with you front and center.
7. Will A/V support – such as a projector, DVD/computer with speakers be available already?
8. Will there be microphones?
9. This is your opportunity to tell the meeting organizer what you need as well. Don't be shy.
10. If you work best without a lectern, say that. If you need any special considerations, speak up.

Write. Revise. Rewrite.

Now is the time to craft your presentation. This will become your template for all talks to come on this topic. Variations on this theme will serve you for any similar audience. Politicians call this the “chicken dinner talk.” Community leaders call it the “Rotary Club” speech. Your planning for this presentation is crucial to its success.

Step 1. Matchmaking

Take a look at your “Jacket Pocket Speech” worksheet.
Match one of those topics to your audience.

Step 2. Write.

Write 2-3 main points you wish to make with the audience.
Don't worry about length at this point.
Add a couple of introductory sentences that show you know the area and the events.
Write a conclusion sentence or two that answers the question of what you want the audience to know, think, do, or feel.

Step 3. Aloud

Read the talk out loud. Make sure the words are YOURS. Look for transitions that bridge from one point to the next. Put the talk down for no more than 24 hours
Read it again – aloud. Ask yourself if you were in the audience, would you get the point.

Step 4. Rewrite

Now rewrite the talk. Read it aloud again. Leave it alone for a few hours and read it again. If it still hangs together well, then move to the next step.

Step 5. Refine.

Write your final speech. Use whatever format works best for you. The standard is regular paper, double spaced 14-16 point type. But that's not required. Professional speech writers do this in order to give the speech to event planners and media technicians.

Practice.

- ♦ Now read the talk aloud again.
- ♦ Become so familiar with your opening and conclusion that you can easily ad lib them.
- ♦ Underline or highlight the main points.
- ♦ Rehearse the open, your points and conclusion in front of a mirror until you know them without the paper in front of you.
- ♦ Let your natural emotion for the topic be your guide to pacing. That will change throughout the talk.
- ♦ Take a break of no more than 24 hours.
- ♦ Ask several people to listen to your talk. Ask people who will give you honest feedback. Be sure to brief them about the audience and the venue.

Props. Power Points, video, music. Use these sparingly.

- ♦ Now it's time to think about props for your talk. Remember, that Power Points do not replace YOU. They only support your points. There is no need to fill up your time with words on a screen. You have more to offer than bullet points.
- ♦ All **props illustrate and support** your points. These can be as simple as holding up a folded piece of paper to represent a letter or document or as complex as showing a video snippet.
- ♦ Go through your talk again and **mark what would best support your point.**
- ♦ Then think about the mechanics of props.
 1. How will you get them to the lectern?
 2. How will you keep up with them?
 3. Will there be support staff to manage video, Power Points or musical props?
 4. These are important questions so that you make a smooth presentation.
- ♦ Once you have all those questions answered, you can add your "props."
- ♦ If you use Power Points, don't try to fill up the screen with words. Some of the most effective are photos that you can explain.
- ♦ Videos and musical vignettes need to be cued to exactly the point you want them to play.

How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, Practice. Practice.

- ♦ You've done all your homework. You've written your speech, prepared the props and you know your audience and the goals.
- ♦ Now the REAL work begins. You have to pull all those elements together in one seemingly impromptu presentation.
- ♦ Have someone assist you with the props and make a "mock" venue where you will deliver your talk.
- ♦ Deliver the presentation to a small, trusted audience. Evaluate the ease of use of the props and their relevance.
- ♦ Adjust and refine your presentation accordingly.
- ♦ Rehearse again with your trusted group.

Presentation Tips

- ♦ Your breathing and pacing will be naturally yours by now.
- ♦ Smile. Say hello. Welcome your audience. After all, they are the same as guests in your home.
- ♦ Be a gracious host.
- ♦ Don't keep them waiting but don't rush them either.
- ♦ Their good time depends upon you, so they want you to succeed.
- ♦ It's okay to tell them you're a bit nervous.
- ♦ It's okay to ask for their help in getting through the presentation, if you feel so inclined.
- ♦ Look toward people in the audience, but not necessarily at them. They will all believe you've looked just at them.
- ♦ Your goal is to make your audience feel welcome and at ease.

Attire & Grooming

- ♦ Men- pastel shirts and jackets.
- ♦ Make sure your shirt is ½ size larger than normal so your tie will look appropriate.
- ♦ Dress for the occasion, but not too casually.
- ♦ Wipe the natural oils off your face before you speak.

“Homework” Assignment

Prepare a talk to give to your association's annual meeting on the topic of your choice.

Make the following assumptions.

You are the keynote speaker.

You will be introduced by your association executive.

You will conclude the meeting so that everyone goes home after your presentation.

The only other speakers precede you. They are:

1. The association executive with a report on the organization's activities.
2. The finance committee with a report on the budget.

You may use any combination of props you wish.

The venue will be a meeting room that holds 200 people, who will be eating dessert or finishing their meal as you begin to speak.

The audience has heard talks like yours before from your predecessors.

When we reconvene, you will make your speech.