HOW TO GET STARTED IN PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC SPEAKING

By Dan T. Moore
Director General Emeritus
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INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM ASSOCIATION
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What is the reason for making a speech? One object of a speech is to achieve an effect on the audience. Another object is to make money on the speech. If a speaker is trying to make money out of his speech, the effect he wants to achieve on his audience is the feeling that they got more than their money's worth and that they would like some day to ask the speaker back to make another speech, possibly even at a higher fee.

The speaker must speak on a subject that is interesting to the people in his audience. They are not looking for an orator, they are looking for someone who can talk in an intelligent manner on a subject which interests them. If they just wanted to hear a good orator, they could go to any church, just about any Sunday, and hear one free.

The second quality of a speaker is that he must have a background which relates to his subject and which should be so interesting to the audience that this background can be used to sell him for cash.

The basic problems of the professional speaker are:

1. He must have something to say.
2. He must know how to say it.
3. He must somehow get someone to listen to him say it and pay him for saying it.

It is these three problems of the professional speaker and their ramifications which are the principal subjects of this booklet.

The first rule of the lecture business is: The speaker's subject must be one that can be sold to enough audiences to make it worth doing some real work on. Most of the speeches made in the world should never have been made at all, because they are neither interesting nor salable, and we will right now create a term for such a speech and call it a "non-speech."

The audiences that are most willing to pay for speeches are conventions, men's clubs, women's clubs, service clubs, executive clubs, chambers of commerce, schools, colleges, and specialty organizations such as medical associations, foreign affairs, councils, parent-teacher organizations, and a few others. The more narrow the interests of an organization's membership, the fewer the speakers that are suitable for them and usually the less the fees they can pay.

The Denver, Colorado, Executive Club, with its extraordinarily competent executive secretary, Everette Peterson, will pay for the services of just about any type of lecturer that will appeal to its thousand-odd, unusually sophisticated business and professional men and their wives. They have the money and the interest, but the subject must be broad enough to interest most of the membership. Foreign affairs, spy warfare, conventional warfare, problems of business and government, juvenile delinquency, crime, and other civic problems are all grist to the mill. A speaker on "the love life of the ruby-throated hummingbird" might interest a couple of the members but he wouldn't stand a chance of getting booked. On the other hand, the Audubon Hummingbird Society might be ecstatic about this speaker, but would probably have no money in its treasury to pay him. If by some miracle it could pay him, where could he find another paying client for his narrow subject, much less enough clients to bring him an income? He has an unprofitable, nonrepeat-

business subject. The speaker-for-profit must develop a speech that is interesting to the general membership of those organizations that have sufficient money to pay for speeches.

It must be emphasized that, because this book is written primarily on the subject of speaking for money, a "non-speech" is defined for our purposes as one that, even if handled correctly, cannot be turned into cash without great difficulty. This does not mean it may not be a good speech, surprisingly successful in some other direction. The impassioned speech which seduces the beautiful girl is obviously of great value to the ardent swain, but unless he is marrying her for her money, it is difficult to turn it into cash.

It is important to realize, though, that there are a few speakers who are so beautifully attuned to crowd psychology, to the sense of humor of their listeners, and to their convictions about every conceivable subject and who are such good storytellers that they can actually electrify an audience with no content in their speeches whatsoever. They are like Jim Thorpe, the famous Indian football player, who once demonstrated he could advance the ball up the field with no defensive line of his own. The obvious comment is: Imagine what he could have done with a good defensive line.

Most successful inspirational speakers, as they are called, would be absolute sensations if they could somehow become experts on some subject that their paying audience was really interested in. Presumably, most of them have looked in vain for a subject and failed to find it, and, with incredible skill, have honed their non-speeches into acceptable salable products. They are doing it the hard way because they have no other way. They really have nothing definite to talk about.

A good way to test a speech is to ask "Has this beginning speech got a central selling point that is so interesting to the type of audiences that have money to pay speakers that they will actually shell out their money to hear it? Will they choose this

speech over the many other competing ones that are offered to them?" In 99 percent of the cases, the honest answer is "No." This is the beginning speaker's first problem. He must get himself an interesting subject before he starts shaping up his speech.

The second rule of successful speaking is: Once you have found your subject, know your subject. William Jennings Bryan often said, "Be sure that when you are the speaker, you know more about your subject than 75 percent of the audience." Bryan himself was the most famous violator of his own rule, and his deficiency in this respect finally ruined him in the famous Scopes evolution trial in Tennessee. He was disastrously humiliated and defeated by Clarence Darrow, a top-flight lawyer who had completely prepared himself on this subject. Darrow even made Bryan, a famous Biblical scholar, look ridiculously inadequate in his knowledge of the Bible. A few days later Bryan was in his grave.

The potential speaker should get himself a carton of 3" x 5" cards. He should then sit down, pace around his living room, stand on his head – however he thinks best – thinking of his speech subject. As every important point comes up, he should write it down on a 3" x 5" card, being just as economical of words as possible. There should be no more than one point on each card. Depending on his subject, he may end up with a hundred cards. These should then be laid out on the dining-room table and rearranged again and again and again until there is a beginning, a middle and an end.

Gradually, as he switches the cards back and forth, it will be obvious that some should come before or after others, that subjects in the beginning should be at the end, and vice versa. Slowly but surely the organization of his speech progresses.

As he is arranging the cards, more ideas come up, which are then put onto new cards and added to the arrangement. Duplicates are eliminated, cards are combined and thrown away and changed, and there is no outline to scratch up or type over.

The speaker then goes over his cards, making a little extemporaneous speech out loud on each card. The first card has his opening sentence on it. If he is talking about spy warfare, the card might just have the word "Definition" on it. That reminds him to say, "A spy is a man or a woman who tries to get information someone else does not want him to have." The next card might have on it "Definition – counterspy." After defining counterspy extemporaneously, he sees that the third card says "World War II job," reminding him to give the audience his own background in espionage so that the rest of his remarks will have authority. It is important that each card have as little on it as possible and be only a reminding of the little extemporaneous speech that the card triggers off. The best cards have only one word on them. Trying to read a card with many words on it only mixes up the speaker's thought processes.

The speaker now has a pack of cards arranged in what he thinks is the best order for an organized, interesting speech. He goes through his pack as many times as possible, giving the speech out loud, changing it, refining it, adding and subtracting cards until he cannot think of any further way to improve it. When most of the cards have been cut down to a word or two, his speech is now ready to try.

In speaking, the lecturer glances at the top of the pile, starts talking on the subject mentioned, and immediately moves that card over to the right in a separate pile. While he is speaking on this card, his next subject is facing him at the top of the left-hand pile. As soon as he runs out, he glances down and there is a new subject for the next little extemporaneous part of his speech. After going through a pack of cards like this a few times, the whole situation becomes completely automatic. The audience, of course, doesn't see the cards, which are on the podium. They think they are listening to an extraordinarily well-organized extemporaneous speech. And, as a matter of fact, they are, because most of the cards contain just a single word.

After a little practice on his speech, the speaker should take his time on each card with a stopwatch

and mark it on the card. He should also number the cards so that they can be arranged swiftly in correct order when necessary. With the time marked on each card, the speaker can plan his speech to match precisely any time that the program chairman wants him to speak. This timing problem, usually one of the most difficult for the beginning speaker, is solved almost automatically by the card system. If the chairman wants a thirty-minute speech, be sure the pack of cards adds up to thirty minutes. The more often the speech is given, the more precisely the time will work out.

If there is a royal road to making a well-organized speech on short notice, it is the 3" x 5" card method. But it is not foolproof. I found out the hard way when I was making a commencement address at Trinity College in Hartford some years ago. It was a wild, blustery day, and the commencement was outside in the quadrangle. I had barely gotten started when a gust of wind swept down and blew all my cards into limbo. I had to finish as best I could without any reminders. It wasn't much of a speech. I now carry a heavy Plexiglas ruler in my speech bag. The ruler pins the cards firmly to the podium that it would take a real Kansas twister to blow them away.

It is important that every speaker have a podium for his speech, and his desire to have one should be outlined in the correspondence preceding the speech. Lacking a podium, a table will just barely do; but if the subject is complex and there are many cards, it is extremely inconvenient to have to hold them in your hand. In those rare cases where this is necessary, the speaker can transfer his card subject to one card written on both sides. This is not nearly as easy as having individual cards and tends to confuse the speaker, but it is better than nothing. Most good speakers, however, will not make a speech unless they have a podium provided.

The speech cards, after use, should be bound up with at least two rubber bands (in case one breaks) and put into a suitcase marked "Speech File."

The sixth rule of speaking is: A speaker has to "package" himself. Inasmuch as speaking for money means that either the speaker or his agent has to "sell" him to his listening audiences, it is essential that the speaker do his best to turn himself into a piece of salable merchandise. It is not enough that he actually be an expert on his subject. Contrary to the old adage, his better mousetrap is going to have practically no one beating a path to his door. He must see that as many people as possible know he has a better mousetrap. Every shred of publicity he can get, particularly the type that connects him with his speaking subject, helps his salability as a speaker. Even bad publicity is often better than no publicity at all, and Barnum's adage, "I don't care what you say about me, but don't spell my name wrong," is usually applicable to the professional speaker. The program of the century would be Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr debating with Jack the Ripper and Judas Iscariot.

One reason why many newspaper columnists moonlight as speakers is that the automatic publicity given to them by their columns makes them a salable product because their names are familiar to the audience. The agent, like every other salesman, drools at the thought of an easily salable product.

A successful book, or even an unsuccessful one, by making a speaker an automatic expert on his subject, makes him more salable. The name of the book in his advertising and publicity and in his brochure tends to remove any questions concerning his authenticity.

John Henry Faulk, one of America's great humorists, after his television career had been ruined by outrageous attacks from the extreme right, repackaged himself and made a comeback by winning the largest libel judgment in history. Although the subject of the judgment had nothing to do with his humorous speeches, it made his name familiar and gave him something to talk about in his brochures. His depiction of his uncle wondering what on earth anyone could say about him so bad that it would be worth two million dollars is one of the most amusing vignettes on the American platform today.

Few beginning speakers are as lucky (or as unlucky) as John Kennedy. A small neighbor at Hyannis Port once accosted him. "Mr. President, how did you become a war hero?"

"It was absolutely involuntary," the President answered. "They sank my boat."

The seventh rule of speaking is: If humanly possible, make your points with a succession of short, interesting stories that have a beginning, a middle, and an end. This is one of the oldest and least-understood weapons in the arsenal of the speaker. Without Christ's parables, there would probably be no Christian religion; without Lincoln's ability to demolish the opposition with an apt story, our Union probably would not have survived. Throughout all ages it has been the storyteller – the speaker who could use his imagination to paint a mental picture in the minds of his audience – who was able to put his point across.

A good story has little units of audience satisfaction incorporated in its makeup; it often has an ending which brings laughter or admiration for some piece of cleverness. The audience should be able to relate personally to the problems of the principals in a story. Like the proverb, a story tends to lend weight to an argument by fogging out the opposition. "Look before you leap" sounds like just as wise advice as "He who hesitates is lost."

Audiences love to laugh and chuckle, and a succession of stories is the best way to bring humor into a speech without reaching too much for it. Great care should be taken that each story is apt. A succession of unrelated stories, even if they are funny, merely makes the speaker look as if he is reading out of a joke book. The best speakers try to strike some sort of a general balance in their speeches between giving the audience facts, creating emotions in the audience, and making them laugh.

Good quotable sentences are important in a speech. The audience likes them, remembers them, and will probably try them on their friends. The newspapers tend to pick them up and make a lead out of them. Speeches and statements tend to be remembered by their cleverest quote: "Give me liberty or give me death." "If we don't hang together, we will all hang separately." "Something is rotten in the State of Denmark." "Love is to man a thing apart." "I'll fight it out on this line if it takes all summer." "To Hell with the torpedoes." "Nuts." "Lafayette, we are here." "Corn is sausage on a stick."

The first sentence of a speech is important and should be selected with care. The speaker has been introduced – we hope properly – and the audience is waiting, expectantly, to get their first impression of the person to whom they have already decided to pay cold hard cash for a speech. His first sentence tends to set their mood, and there are many theories about how to pitch it. They can all be summarized in one piece of advice, and that is to put a lot of thought on the first sentence.

The classic opening sentence of all time, was the one by Adlai Stevenson at the Gridiron Club dinner right after he had failed in his bid for the presidency. He got up to thunderous applause. As soon as things quieted down, he said, "A funny thing happened to me on the way to the White House." This completely broke up the ultra-sophisticated Gridiron Club membership and Stevenson could literally have read the telephone book for the rest of his speech and made a success of it.

Some speakers compliment the audience by saying they are glad to be back (if they have spoken there before) – "glad to see so many old friends in the audience." A speaker must be careful with this lest it look patently phony. One speaker who said, "I understand this is the smartest audience in the United States," was rewarded only by embarrassed laughter.

It is always a good thing, if possible, to have an opening statement that is spontaneous and that refers to something that has happened in the room before the speaker got up. When I was to speak at a dinner meeting of the Marietta, Ohio, Executive Club, the chef was preparing a flaming dessert in front of the audience. A container of brandy, poured into the flaming solution, exploded, throwing flaming brandy all over one of the waiters. He jumped up and down madly, with everyone beating him with towels, and emerged completely unhurt except for a pair of singed eyebrows. It was a striking, dramatic incident, and I opened my speech by wondering what the waiter was going to do for an encore.

Victor Borge, met at the airport by ladies of the Tuckahoe Women's Club of Richmond, Virginia, gallantly offered to drive their car into the city. When they came to the public square, one of the ladies said, "Make a right turn around the statue of Stonewall Jackson." That evening, Borge opened his speech by announcing with some pride that he was the only Yankee who had ever succeeded in making a right turn around Stonewall Jackson. The southern belles were still laughing about it three years later.

The importance of the last sentence. The last sentence is important because it leaves the last thought of the speaker in the audience's mind. It is also important because there is presumably going to be applause anyway when the speaker finishes, and the better his last sentence, the most applause will result. This is unconsciously interpreted by the audience to mean his speech has been a good one. (However, the silence that greeted Lincoln's Gettysburg Address illustrated the phoniness of this yardstick).

Some performers, and particularly the old vaudeville comedians, worked harder on their "exit line" than on anything else because it was usually this line that decided whether or not they would be called back for an encore. Being called back meant everything in prestige to the performer. One old vaudeville trooper on his exit would let the audience get started on their applause. He would then step out and hold up his hand for silence. "Applause," he

would say, "is meat and drink for a performer . . . Thanks for tomorrow's breakfast." This usually brought him back for an encore.

Occasionally a last sentence will demolish a whole speech. A radio commentator, after World War II, was talking about General George Marshall, the U.S. Chief of Staff, saying what a capable and modest man he was, and went on to say that, "This great man, General George C. Marshall, has no definite plans for the future, after the war, except to settle down on their country estate with *Mrs.* Eisenhower."

Many experienced speakers develop a rising inflection on the last sentence, perhaps holding up their right hand in a dramatic way that, in effect, almost demands applause. A prominent Ohio politician, during the war, was addressing the Blue Star Mothers – those who had sons in the war. In a moving last sentence, on a rising crescendo which brought all the mothers to their feet, he expressed the hope that everyone in the room would be a Gold Star Mother. There was thunderous and tumultuous applause which went on and on and on. It was not until the audience had come down to earth again that they realized that he was hoping each mother's son would be killed in action.

Mayor Lindsay of New York brought down the house with the last line of his speech before the 1966 International Platform Association Convention. "I'd rather be right than President, and I'd rather be wrong than be David Lawrence."

The eighth rule of speaking is: Practice your speech. Harry Harrison, former owner of the Redpath Bureau, and the School Assembly Service, and one of the greats of the business side of the lecture business, always said, "No speech should ever be given the first thirty times." Meaning, of course, that no speech ever got thoroughly shaken down into a polished and finished product before it had been given at least thirty times. Like Napoleon Brandy, a speech should keep improving the older it gets. The speaker becomes more facile and keeps finding better words and sentences. A constant pruning, and cutting, and

adding, shapes the speech in accordance with the reaction of the audience. Perhaps applause for a statement means it should be expanded. A question period after the speech shows where the audience interest lies. Unexpected laughter pinpoints the humor. The more times a lecturer goes over his speech, if he tries to improve it each time, the better the speech gets. If he originally uses the card system described earlier, the point may finally come where he can eliminate the cards and give the speech without them because each unit has been locked into the next unit in his mind.

The very spontaneity that the audience finds attractive in a speaker tends to come out of constant practice on one's speech. Will Rogers, one of the greatest lecturers and humorists in America's history, once wrote to James B. Pond, the lecture agent, "I take days preparing for an act, for and about the people who are there. I don't go as an ordinary entertainer to do the same old act."

Shaking down a speech to perfection is so important that some top-flight speakers on the club and celebrity circuit sometimes take short school-assembly tours where they may speak two or three or four times a day and get themselves and their speech thoroughly shaken down. Next to an audience, the best shakedown practice is with a tape recorder. Most persons are stunned and disappointed when they hear themselves speak. Hearing your voice through the bones of your own head gives it a richness that the audience never hears. Making notes as you hear your speech being played back to you is a foolproof and easy way to improve it.

It goes without saying that many of the speeches given by important people cannot be rehearsed thirty times and a good percentage of all the important statements of the world have to be given extemporaneously the first time, on a moment's notice. An experienced speaker can often do a very creditable job extemporaneously, but it should never be forgotten that even the best speaker in the world improves his speech every single time he gives it. If it is

humanly possible for him to rehearse a speech before giving it, he should do so. If he can get together some 3" x 5" cards and rehearse it five times, it will be a better speech; ten times, an even better speech. Remember every time you speak, your mind is on parade. Few things are more important to a speaker than the rehearsing of an important speech.

The ninth rule of speaking is: Put drama into your speeches. This is one of the hardest things in the world to teach. The best way is to learn by experience. The speaker should constantly experiment to increase the drama in his performances. The more he succeeds, the greater will be the audience impact of his speech.

Drama can be increased by saying things in a dramatic way, using dramatic words, and dramatic sentences. Try to arrange your speech so that there is an increasing tension which is discharged periodically during the speech. (Good stories or parables with a beginning and a middle and an end do this for the speaker automatically.) Publicity before the speech will increase the drama of whatever follows, but it will only cause the greater disappointment if no drama appears.

A dramatic introduction will give the speaker a platform to spring from and, in some cases, it is even possible to set the stage like an actor. One speaker quoted a newspaper editor who, instructing his staff on the use of drama, said, "I am not one bit interested in the Rhine River unless there is a dead man floating in it. Then I am suddenly interested."

Two American tourists in Germany were listening to one of Adolf Hitler's speeches. At the end of the speech, one American looked at the other with stars in his eyes. "That's the best speech I've ever heard," he said flatly. His friend looked at him in astonishment. " But I didn't know you understood German."

The first tourist blinked his eyes as if a hypnotist had suddenly released him. He smiled sheepishly. "I don't," he admitted.

The trappings of power, the soldiers marching in review, the airplanes roaring overhead, the uniforms and banners, the impressive ceremony, and the massed hysterical crowd built up a picture of drama so extreme that Hitler literally did not have to say anything. The American was for it even in another language.

The paid lecturer can hardly duplicate such conditions, and this is merely an admittedly extreme example of how drama can take the place of everything else, including reason.

John Barrymore could turn practically anything into a dramatic prop and his ad libs became famous. One night when he was performing at the Hanna Theatre in Cleveland, he was right in the middle of an emotional soliloquy, when a succession of fire engines clanged down Euclid Avenue, bells and whistles going full blast, and drowned him out completely. In the dead silence that followed the audience looked at Barrymore expectantly. He did not disappoint them.

"Sounds exactly like my third wife," he said, and got the biggest ovation of the evening.

Every speaker must adapt to himself, and what works for one will not necessarily work for another. Harry Allen Overstreet, the author of Influencing Human Behavior, emphasized the importance (in a case where a speaker has many arguments with which to persuade an audience) of presenting the most powerful argument first. He found by experimentation that the generally accepted method used by salesmen for centuries of giving successively more compelling arguments until finally the recipient was knocked over by the biggest one of all, the "clincher," was all wrong from a psychological standpoint. The clincher, according to Overstreet, should be given first. It then tends to soften up the hearer so much that he is even impressed by the less convincing

arguments that come later. Like Henry Ward Beecher starting his sermon against slavery by auctioning off a white slave girl with her hands bound behind her back, drama in the beginning of a presentation sets the stage. Overstreet's law applies just as truly to drama as it does to salesmanship or the science of argument.

Suppose a program chairman, in introducing a speaker, said, "Our speaker tonight, wandering around in the darkness of the Vietnamese jungle, stumbled into a tunnel opening, shot out the lights, and in the next thirty minutes, in a desperate historic battle in the darkness, killed forty-seven members of the Viet Cong with his bare hands. James Bond will now speak to us about the art of self-defense."

The drama of an introduction like that, if the speaker could live up to this billing, could result in an A+ audience reaction.

In summary, the general rule is, once the speaker has a salable speech, the more drama, the better the audience reaction. Drama can seldom make ordinary talent look like excellent talent, though, and too much drama poured on top of an unsalable speech makes the speaker look ridiculous, like the mountain that labored and brought forth a mouse. Every speaker, however, if he always keeps drama in mind, can constantly find ways to improve his audience reaction.

The tenth rule of speaking is: Put emotion into your speeches. This is exceedingly difficult unless the speaker feels the emotion himself. At the Washington, D.C. Convention of the International Platform Association in 1979, "Dear Abby" Van Buren, the newspaper columnist, in a speech to her fellow members, was so moved by her story of a polio victim in an iron lung who finally succeeded in raising a family of his own, that her voice broke and she had to pause in her speech. Sitting next to her, I was astonished to see tears in her eyes. All over the audience, in a mirror reflection of her emotion, people were surreptitiously dabbing at their own eyes.

Signaling humor. Despite the adage that storytellers are not supposed to laugh at their own jokes, many humorists get a huge effect from doing just that. Al Capp, the "Li'l Abner" cartoonist, signaled the end of a story by a little, cynical, evil-sounding laugh, which started breaking up the audience before he even gave them the punch line. Bob Hope has an expression that signals a laugh, and everybody always obeys the signal. Martin Hughes has a trick of ending a sentence – pausing a moment and then adding a few words that completely reverse it. Somehow or other, in his immortal presentation, "Madame Chairman," this itself becomes a signal to the audience and often they start breaking up before he even says the funny reversing words that everyone knows are coming.

It is a tricky business, few people can do it, but if you can research out a subtle signal system between yourself and your audience you can, like the old vaudeville comedians, establish a mood whether it is sadness, fear, sorrow, or humor by giving them the familiar signal and letting their conditioned reflexes do the rest.

The eleventh rule of speaking is: Do what every other top businessman does and join the professional organization of your trade. If you want to make speaking one of your professions, never let yourself forget that it is a *business to which most of the regular rules of business apply*. As with most businesses, success or failure depends upon one's ability to get repeat business by pleasing customers. Like most businessmen, you are selling a commodity, but the commodity is yourself and your speech. Like most businessmen, it is essential to have contacts, to meet people that can help you, to be in contact with people who can give you the correct advice, and above all, to establish a contact with those critically important people that can pay you money for your services.

Most successful businesses and professional men and women join the professional association of their business. A machine tool executive joins the

Machine Tool Manufacturers Association. A lawyer joins the Bar Association. A doctor joins the American Medal Association. A speaker joins the 152 year old International Platform Association, not only because his or her fellow speakers, those who have exactly the same problems and questions, also belong to it and can give critically important advice, but for a much more important reason. The International Platform Association is the only trade association in the United States in which the customers who have the money (the program chairmen who hire the speakers) are in the same professional association as those who are selling the product, who are of course the speakers themselves and their agents.

Organizations are always being started and invitations sent out to mailing lists of speakers inviting them to pay a fee of $150 or $200 dollars to attend meetings that will assure their success as a speaker. They get to the meeting only to find out there are many more speakers at the meeting than the program chairmen who can pay them fees for their speeches. Like the city that has more filling stations than automobiles, nobody makes any money. There are few greater wastes of a speaker's time and money than being inveigled into a meeting where there are more speakers than program chairmen. Unless there are three or four times as many program chairmen with money looking for speakers than there are speakers looking for program chairmen at such a meeting, it is a complete waste of the speaker's time.

At the annual meeting of the International Platform Association in Washington, D.C., the audience is packed with program chairmen who are there for the very purpose of signing up speakers for their home organizations all over the country. There are, in fact, many more program chairmen than there are speakers and there is no place where a beginning speaker can make more contacts, get more good advice, establish more valuable relationships, and make more money than by attending the five-day annual convention of the International Platform Association at the beginning of August. The address

of this association is 101 North Center Street, Westminster, Maryland 21157.

The twelfth rule of speaking is: Time your speech with your wrist watch. This is the next best thing to having a big clock in the hall. I have tried other timing devices, but the best has turned out to be an ordinary wristwatch. Inasmuch as only a swift glance is possible while the speech is in progress, it is best to have the minute hand of your watch painted black so that a lightning glance of the eye won't confuse it with the sweep second hand. The wristwatch is by far the most reliable timepiece to use because if it ever decides to stop the chances are overwhelming that it will stop sometime other than when a speech is being made. Even if a speech is made every day of the year, this gives one a 24-to-1 reliability advantage over something like a stopwatch.

The fourteenth rule of speaking is: Always remember that religious and racial faux pas are extremely touchy. Unless hired to speak on such a subject, never bring up any controversial political or racial problems. Again, you are almost certain to offend someone, and they may rightfully accuse you of using their money and time improperly to generate an unsolicited political effect.

Describing someone as "niggardly" or "Scotch" or using any word with an adverse racial connotation like "Dago," "Heeb," "Polack," "Coon," "Nig," or in fact, any adverse racial or religious handle, should be very carefully guarded against. A prominent speaker once practically emptied the hall at Howard University, the great Washington, D.C., Negro university, by inadvertently using the phrase, "but the nigger in the woodpile was . . ."

The only way to have any assurance of not making a slip is to monitor your everyday conversation.

The fifteenth rule of speaking is: Always try to minimize the use of "I." Emilie Jacobson, in a speech of advice to new talent at an IPA convention said: "No speaker should have his I's too close together."

The sixteenth rule of speaking is: Try to make every person in the audience feel you are talking to him or her personally. Continually look from face to face around the room. This eventually becomes a routine habit with most speakers and has an impact much greater than is usually realized. If a speaker looks at one member of the audience fifty feet away, a whole section of persons around him, which will be in the shape of an ellipse much deeper than it is wide, will each be convinced that the speaker is speaking directly to him. A few sweeps over the audience and everyone in it has this important feeling of connection with the speaker.

The seventeenth rule of speaking is: Always use a microphone and a podium, if possible, even if you feel you do not need them. This is so important that in the covering letter accepting the speech the speaker should request a podium and a microphone. Members of every audience vary widely in their keenness of hearing and this is particularly true in the case of the elderly. It is absolutely impossible, using only the natural voice, to make the volume just right for everyone in the room at the same time. The microphone, particularly if it has multiple outlets, tends to maintain an even volume of speaker loudness over the whole chamber. Without a microphone, an attempt to reach the person at the back of the room may make it unpleasantly loud for those in the first row. Some stages in auditoriums and theaters and churches are built specifically and very scientifically for use without a microphone, but even in these the microphone is an improvement.

The eighteenth rule of speaking is: Test the stage props. If something is wrong with the microphone, or the projector, or the lighting, or anything that contributes to the excellence of your performance, always stop and try to get it fixed before you proceed. You should always be exceedingly polite about this and make it clear that your only worry is to be sure that the audience gets its money's worth out of your speech. Try to do your testing before the program starts.

One serious fault that a podium can have is a slant so steep that the speaker's cards and props slide right off on the floor. This can ruin a speech if not corrected. The best way to fix it is to put a book on the podium and place your cards above the book so they won't slide off. All steeply slanted podiums should be sent to the city dump. Sooner or later every one of them is going to ruin some program chairman's meeting.

The nineteenth rule of speaking is: Use words that everyone understands. Big words are often a valuable shortcut to members of technical professions, but if they are not necessary and are not understood by his audience they tend to make the speaker look silly. James M. Landis, the Dean of the Harvard Law School while he was national director of Civilian Defense before World War II, advised the people of the United States over a national radio network, in case of enemy bombing to "extinguish the nocturnal illuminator." He didn't hear the end of that one for years.

The twentieth rule of speaking is: Use only humor that is appropriate to the occasion. Rufus Choate, the great trial attorney, was once giving a younger attorney some advice about handling a jury (which, of course, is a captive audience of twelve people). "The minds of the jurors need occasional resting places of light humor and irrelevant material so that they can relax momentarily and then get back to the subject."

This is an extremely important rule for any speaker with any audience. It is bad practice to force the humor in a speech and drag a humorous story in kicking and screaming unless the speaker has established a thorough connection between the story and the point he is trying to make. A speaker opened up an address to a mixed group of Catholic Navy chaplains and high Navy brass with the following story: Two school chums graduated. One went into the Navy and became an admiral. The other became a Catholic bishop. After not having seen each other for thirty years, they made an appointment to meet

in Grand Central Station. The bishop saw the admiral all covered by ribbons and gold braid, did not recognize him, and said, "Porter, will you please carry my bag." The admiral, taken aback, looked at the bishop who has grown so fat that he did not recognize him either, and said, "Lady, in your condition, you shouldn't be traveling." This story was probably ten times as funny to this particular group as it would have been to any other because both their professions were directly involved in the joke. They were laughing at each other as much as at the joke.

The twenty-first rule of speaking is: Don't oversimplify a complex situation and try not to undersimplify it either. Try to adapt your speech to what you have found out in advance about your audience. Many speakers, through long practice, have developed a capacity for changing their pitch to match their audience. They should be careful not to fall into the trap one speaker got caught in. Having lived through the Johnstown flood, he spent the rest of his life telling people about it. When he finally got to heaven and was granted one wish by St. Peter, he said he would like to have everyone in heaven called together so he could tell them his story of the Johnstown flood. St. Peter shook his head, "It's all right with me, but remember that Noah will be in the audience."

The twenty-second rule of speaking is: A preview can make or break you. If you are asked to preview your speech before an audience of booking agents or program chairmen, never take the invitation lightly, and never make the mistake of trying to summarize your speech. Select what you think is the most dramatic and interesting part of your speech and give only that. Pretend your audience has already heard what went on before, and is going to hear what comes after. The booking agents and program chairmen are experienced enough to spot someone they want to book by hearing a ten-minute slice of his regular performance. Giving them a summary merely tells them what sort of an outline you've got for your speech, and no one gives a hoot about that.

The twenty-third rule of speaking is: A beginning speaker should start by making speeches for free and should ask every program chairman before whose audience an appearance is made to write him a letter concerning the audience reaction. A bad letter will do him no good but a good letter is the gold of the platform. It should be saved and xeroxed and used for selling booking agents and program chairmen on the skill and effectiveness of the speaker. A speaker should never raise his fee until he or she is getting all of the speeches he or she wants at the present fee.

~ Conclusion ~

If you are really serious about making money speaking, the most important rules are numbers eight and eleven. Number eight says never forget that the more times you give a speech, the better it is. If you cannot practice with an audience, practice with a tape recorder. If you cannot practice with a tape recorder, practice with yourself and your 3" x 5" cards. Speaking is like tennis and playing the piano – the more you practice the quicker you get up to top form.

Rule number eleven says join the century old professional association of the lecture world, the one the pros belong to and the one the program chairmen who have the money to book the pros belong to. It is the surest and fastest and by far the least expensive way to learn the tricks of the trade of making real money speaking.

Requests for information about membership should be sent to: The International Platform Association, 101 North Center Street, Westminster, Maryland 21157.

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