



Unit 15

Public Speaking

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Apply quick and easy preparation methods that will work whether you have one minute or one week to prepare.
- ✓ Prepare for questions, even before you know what those questions will be.
- ✓ Overcome nervousness that you may have when speaking in front of a group, particularly if the group is not sympathetic to what you have to say.
- ✓ Use presentation techniques that establish your credibility and get people on your side.

Unit 15

Planning

Preparing to Plan

If your job requires you to speak under trying circumstances, or even if you just want to be able to say what is on your mind at a staff meeting, you need to plan to get good at this. Coming to this chapter is a beginning, yet only a beginning.

What can you do for better planning?

Be informed.

You can't do much planning if you don't know much about a topic. Learn all you can about the topics you might be expected to give an opinion on. Read your local newspaper and credible online resources. Read books (but be careful about reading just one book). Read magazines like Time and Maclean's that have some real content about the issues of the day. Talk to your manager, your colleagues, and your staff so you know their opinion or any expertise they bring to the table.

Don't make up your mind too early.

Keeping an open mind as you gather information is not easy, yet decisions we make in haste are ones that we often regret later. Try to keep analyzing the information as you get it. Is it accurate? Do you understand it? What can you do to be more informed?

Ask questions.

Don't assume that you have heard everything there is to hear, or that you understand a concept entirely the first time you hear it. Thoughtful people and critical thinkers will give themselves time to pause and reflect before commenting either positively or negatively on an idea. Asking questions and developing your listening skills in order to get all you can from the answers are two important communication skills to practice and develop.

Other Ideas

Be aware of your own biases.

We all have some so they are nothing to be ashamed of. However, if we know what our biases are, we can keep them from influencing our decisions too strongly.

Weigh opinions against the facts.

Try not to be influenced by others' opinions until you have considered all of the facts. This is another way our biases can trip us up: you like a person so you give their opinion more weight than you should, or more weight than the facts (which may contradict that opinion). Or, conversely, you don't like a person so you disregard their opinion even when it is supported by facts.

Keep the information you gather organized.

Write down all the information you gather, or at least make notes about what you still want more information on. Identify the criteria you will use for evaluating the information. List the pros and cons, the costs and benefits, or use force field analysis (which we will discuss later).

Watch for traps.

Be aware of these ways your transfer of ideas can be confused, if you aren't prepared:

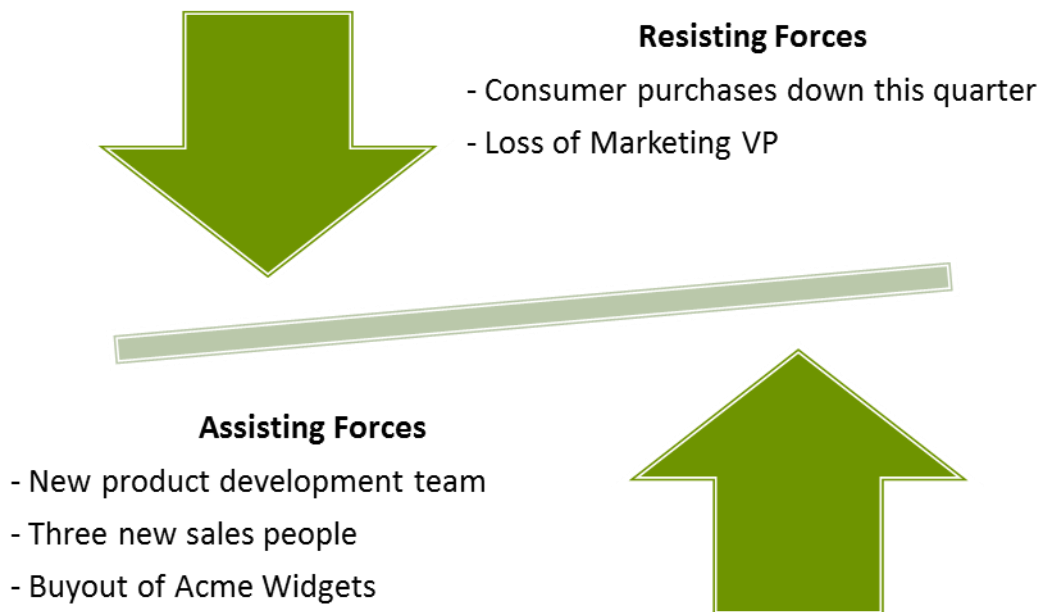
- **Derailment:** Somebody asks you a question and you lose your train of thought or head down another path, never to return to the path you originally were on.
- **Rocky Mountain Road:** Your presentation has no real theme or plan. You just lurch from point to point. Neither you nor your audience is sure whether you will arrive at the end of your presentation.
- **Roller Coaster:** You make a good strong point, followed by a more obscure point, back to a strong point again, rather than starting with your best shot and working down to the details, or starting with the details and working up to your main point.
- **Whirlpool:** You say the same things over and over again, without getting anywhere or presenting new information.

Force Field Analysis

What is Force Field Analysis?

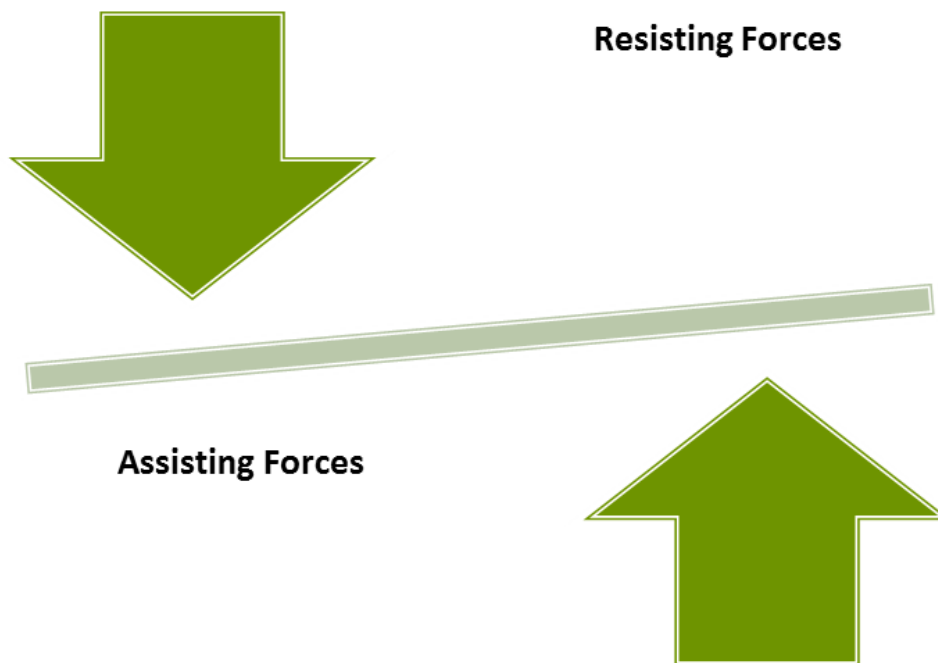
Force field analysis is a structured method of looking at two opposing forces acting on a situation. For example, let's say that an organization wants to increase its sales by ten percent. Draw a line (horizontal or vertical). This represents the goal the company is striving for. Above/to the left of the line are all the elements that are restraining or resisting forces that are keeping the company from reaching its goal. Below/to the right of the line are all the forces that are helping the organization move toward that goal.

Example



This can clarify an organization's resources and the obstacles that prevent it from reaching its goal, and make it easier to decide what needs to be done in order to move forward.

Group Exercise



Pros and Cons

Pros and cons are another example of a force field analysis. Often, you will draw a line down the middle of a sheet of paper, and list benefits to the topic on one side and disadvantages on the other.

Pros

- Positive outcomes
- Advantages
- Benefits
- Desired results

Cons

- Negative outcomes
- Disadvantages
- Costs
- Undesired results

Topic

Pros

Cons

Controlling Your Jitters

Overcoming Nervousness

Slight nervousness is normal for anyone, especially the first few times you make a presentation or speak in public. These jitters can actually help you and give you an edge when you take that nervous energy and deliberately use it as fuel for your presentation.

Nervousness has a way of spiraling, where you may notice all of a sudden that your heart is pounding, your knees are shaking, or your voice is trembling. Here are some helpful tips to get control back.

The **secret** you want to learn is not necessarily the confidence that comes from experience, although that helps, but a change in attitude. When you learn to shift your focus from yourself to the audience, you start to release the hold that fear has on you.

One of things that you will notice is that when you are well prepared for your presentation, you will feel less nervous about it.

While confidence can be built from repeated practice, a change in attitude also helps enormously. This requires that you shift your thinking from being all about you, to focusing on your audience. What are their needs? What is their agenda?

Nervousness can be attributed to many sources. These two are particularly important:

- One is the constant stream of **internal negative comments** that nags speakers when they begin to think about the presentation. (“I wonder how I’ll come across this time? Last time I made a presentation, I was sure everyone was laughing at me when I had so much trouble with the equipment.”)
- The other source of tension comes from **hyper-responsibility**. The presenter feels that he or she alone is responsible for the reactions and well-being of everyone in the room.

Think about it this way: you believe in what you're saying. You're prepared. In fact, for this presentation, you're the only person who is so well prepared. Your audience needs to know what you have to say.

Change the words you say to yourself from negative messages to more positive ones. List your concerns on a sheet of paper before the presentation. Then, for every negative message, substitute a positive one. For instance, if your negative message is, “I’m a nervous wreck,” write, “I can channel this nervous energy into the presentation and give a more enthusiastic performance.” This effort may take some repetitions, but if you give it a chance and believe in it, eventually it works.

Any tendency you have toward taking responsibility for everyone in the room can also be fought. Come to terms with the fact that everyone in the room will not necessarily accept your ideas. It's not your job to please everyone. **Your job** is to get your message across in clearly understandable terms to the people who must have the information. Concentrate on the decision maker and on those who respond positively to you. Ignore the others so that you can complete your presentation without their negative energy interfering.

It is hard to counteract nervousness if you do not feel in control of the situation, so take time before the presentation begins to put yourself in control.

- Allow plenty of time to check out the room and equipment.
- Start on time. Unless the decision maker in your audience is delayed, don't wait for stragglers. Delaying will make you and your audience fidgety.
- Greet people as they come in. Chat casually with people you know until it's time to start.
- Eliminate any physical barriers that stand between the audience and you. If you're behind a table or lectern, move away from it. Don't cling to the podium or your projector. It makes you look nervous, and it really is a physical barrier between you and your audience. Removing barriers opens the way to meaningful conversation.

Sequencing Ideas

By putting your ideas into some kind of order, it will be easier for you to remember and easier for your listener to grasp your ideas.

- **Study:** Break your ideas into simple, basic components.
- **Separate:** Present each component separately.
- **Move Forward:** By building momentum successively with each component, you gain and keep your listener's interest.

Making Your Listener Hear You

Use Nonverbal Communication

You're confident. You've rehearsed. You've got a powerful, logical argument. You're ready to take on the task of presenting your points in a way that does not distract from your argument. In management presentations, the drama should be in the content, not in the person. Once you're aware of the way people react to you, you can further refine the way you present yourself.

Leave the Appropriate Distance between You and the Audience

Although a public speaker may be 12 to 15 feet from the first row of listeners without being viewed as aloof and impersonal, a management presenter (who generally deals with far fewer people) should be no more than four to five feet away. If you're any farther away, the listeners

may regard you as either stuffy or fearful. If you get any closer, people will become uncomfortable.

When you're speaking to a group with whom you have had little or no personal or professional relationship, start speaking from a position farther away and move in slightly as the presentation progresses and as you establish rapport. But don't get too close. A tall presenter, for example, who approaches within inches of his listeners and leans forward, is expressing dominance more than friendliness. To judge whether you tend to invade others' personal space, recall whether people ever inched away from you when you were engaged in informal conversations.

Physical distance rules vary from one culture to another. Some people often want to be within inches of each other when they speak, whereas others expect even more distance than you might be used to. Make sure that you know your audience.

Stand Erect

Good posture gives the impression of authority. You can correct poor posture by standing against a wall and pressing your spine flat against it. Feel what it is like to be standing straight, and make the most of it.

While you're making your presentation, make a conscious effort not to fold your arms. Folded arms seem to encourage slouching, and it certainly sends a message of defending or protecting yourself. There is a difference between good posture and stiffness, however. If you march briskly to the front of the room and do not move for the rest of the presentation, you signal rigidity more than authority.

Consider Your Appearance

Psychologists have found that attractive people are more persuasive than unattractive people. Anyone can cultivate attractiveness through good grooming and clean, neat, professional dress. A presentation is not the place to make a statement with your clothes – flashy clothes divert attention from your argument.

The standard business dress is suits or jackets and a tie for men, and conservative suits or coordinated outfits for women. Although standards in non-traditional organizations may be more lenient, in general it is safer to stay on the side of conservatism. Anything too far from the norm will cause the audience to fix on the distracting feature rather than your argument. You want to convey competence in the subject matter, and what you wear can support you or undermine you.

Move About and Use Gestures

A presenter who stays glued to the overhead projector, the lectern, or any other one position is quite possibly terrified, and everyone soon knows it. To give the impression of self-confidence, move about the room and use your hands. Behaving like a confident presenter will help you to become more confident.

Take advantage of your natural gestures, but avoid using one over and over. Some presenters, when told that they need to add movement, adopt one gesture (raising an arm, for example) and use it repeatedly. At worst, such programmed gestures send the audience into a hypnotic state; at best, they're distracting. Tailor your gestures to reinforce your point. For instance, by bringing your hands together, you can assure your audience that your proposal "brings it all together." Similarly, you can refer to the ramifications of a problem by tracing ever-widening circles in the air.

Because most management presentations involve visual aids, you can add movement by simply pointing out the most important features on the visual. Moving around the room is helpful if it does not deteriorate into the measured pacing of a caged tiger. By pausing completely, you will emphasize the importance of what you are saying.

Control Your Facial Expressions and Mannerisms

Although we all know people who say, "If you cut off my hands, I wouldn't be able to talk," very few people actually overdo gestures. Facial expressions, on the other hand, are difficult to control and often give an embarrassingly accurate clue as to how you really feel. Beyond checking yourself on videotape, the best way to control facial expressions is to make sure you're comfortable with your material and prepared to respond honestly and openly to any questions.

Try to maintain an accessible, open presence. Remember that a smile breaks down barriers. When you smile at someone, they generally smile back. Also, as you talk, show interest in what you're saying. If you're not interested, how can your audience be?

Maintain Eye Contact

You will lose support faster by staring at your notes, looking only at the visual, or focusing on a spot high on the back wall than by any mistakes you may make in the content of your presentation. Similarly, if you direct yourself exclusively to the key decision maker in your audience, he or she will feel more uneasy than flattered, and others in the room will feel unimportant.

Try, at some point in the presentation, to look at each participant with the goal of giving each, in turn, the brief message, "I can see that you grasp what I'm saying." Then, for your own comfort, focus on people who respond with a nod or smile rather than on people who seem bored or hostile.

The Value of a Pause

If you are speaking within a negative or outright hostile situation, it is easy to become defensive and even angry. Instead of quickly answering every question (which increases the pressure and makes it difficult to maintain your composure), explore the value of a pause. A pause can give you a mini-break to collect your thoughts and deliver them well. It can also stop you from getting caught in an angry or emotional outburst.

Use pauses to your advantage. If someone asks a question and you need to collect your thoughts, you can take a moment to glance at your notes if you are using some, take a deep breath (not noticeable to anyone else), and then answer.

Structuring Ideas

Three Key Points

We have already been working on a three-part plan: opening, body, and closing for every presentation or response we make. However, now we are going to zero in on the body of your plan, to make your message as persuasive as possible.

Remember, the essence of Speaking Under Pressure is quick and structured thinking which allows you to persuade your listener. What you want is a memorable message conveyed quickly and clearly. You have defined your strategy and done some preparation work. You are now ready to create planned approaches and to practice some new skills.

Why Three Key Points?

We recommend that you outline three key points for the body of your presentation. Your introduction (beginning) and conclusion (ending) will be short additions to your key points. Let's talk about why we recommend three key parts.

Aim

In order to send a memorable message, you must aim your presentation in a logical and organized manner. You want to leave no doubt in your listener's mind what you are trying to say. He/she must be able to catch the essence of your presentation. So, let's stick to facts, ideas, and points of view that are best suited to your particular listener.

You want your listeners to catch the softball aimed at them. They should not have to duck out of the way of a muddy message. Having only three points will help you create a clear target for your presentation.

Make sure you have already found out what your audience wants to hear and figure out how you can give them at least some of what they want. Try to speak in clear, easy to understand words and sentences. We don't trust people we don't understand.

Concentrate

You must have a plan in order for you to concentrate on clear thinking. The stronger your sense of organization, the less likely you will become confused or hampered by emotions and personal opinions.

By using your pre-programmed plan, keeping it simple and direct, you make your point clearly. If your thoughts have been well organized, they will be clear and easy to present. This means that you can give your full attention to getting your message across and looking and sounding confident and sincere as you watch your audience.

Adapt

You must have a good grasp of the purpose of your presentation so that you are free to scan the situation repeatedly; to read and to react to your listener's needs and wishes. By having a plan, you will be free to adjust to and explain ideas which are aimed at your individual listener's needs.

Adapt when necessary. Watch for agreement: eye contact, a smile, a nod of the head. Watch for confusion: a wrinkled brow, a quizzical expression. Watch for disagreement: a scowl, folded arms, inattention. Then you can react as required. Get feedback. Add examples. Allow questions.

Depth

We learned that planning helps to cure jitters and that planning is simple. Planning involves the orderly sequence of ideas (study, separate, move forward). In order to create some depth to the study, there must be enough components or parts.

Two points are too few, yet five or six might be too many for people to consider at one time. Three or four points work best because they are simple, yet offer opportunity for analysis.

Move Forward

We noted that it is important to have a dynamic presentation, one that moves along. Three points offer enough components to create a sense of motion; perhaps even a sense of anticipation.

Ease

Three points are easy to remember; therefore, easy to present and convey.

Building a Three-Part Plan

My Key Theme

Opening

Body – Point One

Body – Point Two

Body – Point Three

Closing

Organization Methods

Using Time, Place, and Aspect

Experienced presenters and speakers often use file cards or sticky notes when they collect information, since they can be easily arranged and rearranged. By arranging them in piles, you can create an organizational plan and add or delete information without the need to redo the entire presentation. There are also software programs that enable this kind of simple reorganizing.

Here are the steps to organizing your information.

- 1) Write only one point on each card or sticky note.
- 2) Arrange the cards into piles, putting all closely related points together. For example, all evidence related to economic development goes in one pile, all evidence related to profiling the community goes in another pile, and so on.
- 3) Arrange the piles in one of the following basic ways:
 - **Time:** Organize information from past to present to future. The time plan is easy to picture (clock, day/night, etc.) and to create. Use of past, present, future can often

help make sense out of any jumble of facts, especially when you have little time to prepare.

- **Place:** Everyone can visualize a map or globe as you travel with your listener from place to place. The place plan lends itself to topics which are geographically separated. Remember to leave the most important place for last for maximum impact. You may want to create forward motion by arranging items in geographical direction.
 - **Aspect, factor, or focus:** Examining the topic from different perspectives. Visualize an equidistant triangle. You examine the key theme from three different points. You will find this plan especially helpful in serious situations when you want to create the impression of being fair-minded.
 - **Problem-analysis-solution:** Description of the problem, why it exists, and what to do about it.
 - **Order of importance:** From least important to most important, or from most important to least important.
 - The choice of sequence will depend largely on the logic of the subject matter and the needs of your audience.
- 4) Go through each pile and arrange the cards or sticky notes in an understandable sequence within your basic plan. Which points need to precede others in order to present a clear picture?
 - 5) Write out your organization plan to create an outline. Use it as your road map while you write your message.

Your Body Language

How the Listener Takes Control

What is the passage about?

What kind of bike was in the story?

What was the positive thought used in the example?

Bonus question for those assigned: How many times did I say the word “and”?

The Meaning behind Your Message

While our words deliver a significant message, our non-verbal signals also provide their own message. You know that you are in sync when the two are working together!

In significant (though often misinterpreted) research, **Albert Mehrabian** found that when it came to discussing emotions, only 7% of the speaker’s message was communicated by words, and that tone of voice was responsible for about 38% of the meaning and body language about 55%. This means that the words themselves played only a very small part in conveying meaning. In other conversations (not the ones about emotions), we know that tone of voice and body language have a large impact on what we are saying.

The face and the eyes are the most expressive means of body communication. Additional positive or negative messages are sent by your gestures, posture, and the space between you and the other person. Body language must be in tune with your words and tone or you send a mixed and often confusing message. Positive body language is important to supporting your words and ensuring complete understanding.

Remember, your attitude is projected through your voice as well as your body language. Make sure your body language always says, “I know what I’m doing and saying,” or, “I’m here to help as best I can.”

The speed or rhythm of your speech is important as well. Clear communication includes appropriate pauses and inflections to support your words.

Remember:

- Have a clear message
- Have a theme or key word for each point
- Create depth (points sufficiently different to be noticeable, yet still tied together)
- Create movement (advancing your case for a certain conclusion)

Beginnings and Endings

Some **general points** about beginnings and endings:

- You really do only get one chance to make a first impression, so make it good and make it count. If you lose their attention at the beginning, it's really hard to get it back. Make things easier on yourself with a good hook.
- The beginning and ending must be coherent with the content of your message; they must add to the unity of the overall presentation.
- The beginning and ending should be a brief indication of what is to come and a summary of what has been. You don't have to build in a surprise.
- The duties of the beginning and ending are to highlight your key theme, send out a mental picture of where you are going, and to make the plan move forward.

There are three purposes to a good beginning:

- **Orient** your listener to your key theme. State it directly and indicate exactly what it is you are going to talk about.
- Provide them with a sense of **direction** by summarizing your outline in the beginning.
- **Hint** to your listener what your conclusion will be.

An ending should:

- Summarize what you have just said.
- Finish by restating your key theme. You want to reinforce your message and leave your key theme as a residual element that listeners will continue to think about.

When writing an ending, you should:

- **Stop:** Pause. Take a moment to reflect on your message.
- **Think:** Study, compartmentalize, and analyze to ensure you are seeing things from the audience's point of view.
- **Plan:** Review your outline and then prepare an ending that wraps up your message. Consider whether you also need to tell them what their next steps are.
- **React:** Respond to your listener, audience, or customer to give them what's needed.

Go back to the topic that you most often speak on or which you plan to speak on. Thinking of all you have learned, is there more you can do to improve your beginning or your ending?

Expanding a Basic Plan

So far, we've concentrated most of our efforts on very short, two minute responses, because these are the opportunities to speak that most often come our way and that we want to use to our advantage. Generally, longer presentations are not spontaneous. You've been forewarned of longer presentations, so you have time to prepare.

However, you may want to take what we've discussed and use those ideas to make a longer presentation. This session will give you some ideas on how to fatten up your basic plan by filling in the subsections and reinforcing your argument. In this process, you can include evidence that supports your key theme. The results of your audience analysis should allow you to pick examples and illustrations at the listener's knowledge level which will clarify your points. The listener's attitudes will also influence what evidence you use to prove your points.

Some techniques that can help you build on your basic plan are listed below.

Symbols

Use fat words that paint pictures, rather than thin words that leave no impression on our minds. Find the most striking circumstances involved with whatever you are describing. A well-chosen example can be so powerful that it becomes the focus for the point being illustrated.

Opposites

Compare and contrast. Getting a solid idea of similarities and differences can make decision making easier. For example, if you are debating what kind of coffee to have in the office, you can compare fair trade with open market coffee by assessing their similarities. If you wish to provide contrast, you have to assess the differences between two things.

Statistics

Statistics can be rounded off or made specific. When rounded off, they are easier for the audience to remember. When they are more specific, the audience gives the stats more credibility but may have difficulty remembering the figures. What method will best work for your audience, give you credibility, and be remembered?

Tips and Tricks

Be sure that any extra content **strengthens** your conclusion or recommendations.

You can **vary the type of plan you use** to create interest and maintain your listener's attention. If your boss has heard your short presentation once or twice and has invited a few guests in to hear your full idea, remember that you have to keep him engaged as well. This can be especially important when they are considering several presentations and will select what projects will get priority, for example.

You can **vary the number of subsections** to create movement. Review but don't restate too often or you run the risk of becoming boring. Sometimes we get into a rhythm where we put a new slide up, say five sentences, and move onto the next slide. Mix it up and be memorable. Your presentation needs to focus on your message, not the number of slides you can pack together.

People love stories, and a story helps us to remember the point, as long as it is memorable and connected to your presentation. Resist the temptation to use other people's stories and look at your own. See if you can adapt it to fit your point, and add some variety and/or meaning to your presentation.

Presentations

Preparation

My Topic (Key Theme)

Opening

Body

Closing

Evaluations

Speaker: _____

	Yes	No	Notes
Theme for message			
Theme for points			
Depth			
Movement			
Beginning strong			
Ending summarized			
Illustrative devices			
Speaker poised and confident			
Sounded sincere, credible, knowledgeable			
Convinced me			

Personal Action Plan

I am already doing these things well:

I want to improve these areas:

I have these resources to help me:

As a result of what I have learned in this Lesson, I am going to...	My target date is...	I will know I have succeeded when...	I will follow up with myself on...

Further Reading:

- ✓ Boothman, Nicholas. *How to Make People Like You in 90 Seconds or Less*. Workman Publishing Company, 2000.
- ✓ Carnegie, Dale. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Pocket Books, 1998 (Reprint).
- ✓ *The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking*. Pocket Books, 1990.
- ✓ Cialdini, Robert. *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. Collins, 2006.
- ✓ Guffey, Mary Ellen. *Essentials of Business Communication*. South-Western College Pub, 2006.
- ✓ Hamilton, Cheryl, and Cordell Parker. *Communicating for Results*. Wadsworth Publishing, 2007.
- ✓ Humes, James. *Speak Like Churchill, Stand Like Lincoln: 21 Powerful Secrets of History's Greatest Speakers*. Three Rivers Press, 2002.
- ✓ Osborn, Michael, Randall Osborn, and Suzann Osborn. *Public Speaking (8th Edition)*. Allyn & Bacon, 2008.