public speaking

BY MARK LUCE

Dazzling your audience (or at least surviving the moment) depends on pace, practice and simplicity

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1. KISS - As in all things, keep it simple, stupid. In speeches and presentations, less is more. Make a list of the three things you need/want to accomplish in the talk. Stick to it.

2. Golden Throat - Do not read your speech, as it will sound cold and distant. You want your audience to respond with interest, not slumber. Speak with confidence, and use your arms for emphasis.

3. A-ha-ha-ha - The universal winner remains humor. If you can keep it light and make sure to make fun of yourself, you'll be much better off. People like to laugh, especially in serious situations.

4. The death factor - Contrary to popular belief, making a mistake will not send you to the gulag or the hangman. Remember, your speech will be over (hopefully in 20 minutes or less), and while a lot may be riding on it, it will not, by itself, cause your death.

5. Hit the brakes - Many speeches fail because the speaker talks a million miles an hour. The key to effectiveness is to enunciate each word and pause between points. To help, write SLOW DOWN on the top of each page of your presentation.

6. Practice - Whether in front of the mirror or your spouse, practice the speech. The more comfortable you are with the language, the more confident you will sound.

7. Be yourself - No one really wants you to bomb, nor does anyone expect that you will have the rhetorical flourishes of a Kennedy or King. Instead, concentrate on speaking like you normally do, saying things that you would normally say. Remember, play to your strengths — and you are your best strength.

Oh, and slow down, you are speaking too fast.