

# Culture of Speak

## **SIX STEPS TO PREPARE A HIGH- PRESSURE SPEECH FOR EXECUTIVES**



# Why should you care?

So I'm looking down, reviewing my scrappy notes scribbled for my speech tonight on a Starbucks napkin.

The perfect narrative symphony I had envisaged is now a patchy cloudscape of ideas.


None of which last more than 30 seconds.

Awkward.

Most of us **don't memorize speeches** anymore – US audiences find this style **less 'real' and not 'natural'** – so they can't relate to us.

We always get this advice about speaking from the heart- and again, that's good to a point.

Culture of Speak



So, why not just, like, talk?  
Fair point, but what if you needed to:

**Stick to Specific Key Phrases?**  
**State Complex Information?**  
**Meet a time limit?**

The alternative of scribbling ideas down and 'winging it', esp. if you're a pro, is a valid one for low-attendance or low-risk situations.

But, if you're Keynoting, Making a Pitch for Funding, at a TED conference, launching an IPO or the like, there's too much to lose.

Time for a format to fit your awesome ideas in, and a training regimen to rehearse with.

**So let's get a  
Five-Step Plan  
in action to save  
the day and make  
you a Hero!**

# Battle Stations!



You will need: Pen, Paper, a Recording Device or App, a Stopwatch or App, a Quiet Room and a Half/Full size Mirror.

Write the whole thing out one time. Yes, the **WHOLE** thing. Don't worry though, it's okay if you stray from the *\*exact\** wording in small, grammatical ways when you say it out aloud on the big day, just so long as we do this step-by-step the first time.

Use your own vocabulary, what you're comfortable with. Oh, and you'll probably read it a couple of times, change a few phrases, cut entire paragraphs, or even entire pages out. That's okay. Keep at it till you have it written out, with all the information you need in it, a solid intro and conclusion.

## Sample outline: Startup Pitch Preparation

In 2013, As-Seen-On-TV products like The Snuggie, the Shamwow, P90X and others earned over \$5 billion, and many of us are their happy customers!

If the promotion is so terrible, why does it work? And what can we learn from them?

Simple.

They use a time-tested Model of Persuasion called Monroe's Motivated Sequence that **YOU** can use to make effective Pitches for Startups, Products, or any Idea at any meeting you'll ever attend.

Any idea you communicate on policy requires someone's agreement, which is like making a sale. So if consensus is sales, your persuasiveness is marketing – attain their attention, solve their problem and use push/pull mechanisms to induce action... all in Five Easy Steps.



# STEP 1: STRUCTURE



**Attention:** First of all, get my attention on the Problem immediately.

Your audience is distracted with many competing thoughts, so the first challenge is to break distraction and create focus on one idea, which is this looming Problem that can't be ignored.

The Most effective way Infomercials do this is give is a strong, strident visual – a mess that needs cleaning, distressed people, and lack of happiness.



**Need:** People hate change. So you have to argue for it.

Even if you focus on the Problem, getting movement on it is hard, because our habits and behaviors are so entrenched we will make adjustments to lessen the Problem, not major changes that eliminate it completely.

So elaborate the problem by telling me why it can't wait.  
And why it is harmful to myself and others I care for.



**Satisfaction:** Now I am aware of the problem, and want to fix it, what can i do about it?

Remember #1 – there are competing thoughts, so with a problem, there are competing solutions. Give your audience a complete action plan, with all contingencies planned for.

It is easier to give people a complete plan to react to, like checking off a box on a survey rather than write a full answer.  
For some, agreement is easier than debate.



### **Visualization: Don't tell, show.**

Describe this Solution in the most vivid terms. Infomercials do this by showing the various uses of their product, comparing options and competitors, prices and showing your lifestyle improve. Your idea shouldn't just fix a problem; it should underscore some mission in keeping with the Culture of the Organization.

More importantly, I should see this clearly and memorably.



### **Action: Close the Deal!**

OK, you have my tacit agreement; now force my hand to vote for your plan.

Make a proposal in concrete terms – give me a timeline, numbers, charts, projections, anything that will make me devote my time and/or money. Infomercials show how quick action (BUY NOW!) can improve results, and give incentives like free gifts as well. Reward me for quick and decisive action, and make the plan time-sensitive. That's the only way to get someone to sign on the dotted line!

***By now you have: A fully written Draft for you Speech (Feel free to re-write if needed)***

# STEP 2: MAP IT

Read it out aloud from the paper several times. This not only places it clear in your mind (we often have a photographic input- however slight) but helps you create a mental order of things.

As you do, make a note of the 1st word or key phrase in each paragraph, try to associate that word/phrase to the whole paragraph. Eventually, put each key phrase in sequence on a single piece of paper in bullet-point form. Add any further words you may need with any/all of the bullets that make them flow in your mind.

***By now you have: A fully written (re-written) Draft for your speech, AND 1 single sheet of paper with the Speech in Bullet Form.***



# STEP 3: MIC CHECK



Use a sound recorder device, perhaps a smartphone app (usually pre-installed), and record yourself reading it aloud. Use a pair of good headphones (sound-blocking if possible) to check your voice quality.

Ask yourself:

1. Am I loud enough?
2. Am I pronouncing each word right?\*
3. Is my Tone pleasant and appropriate to the Context?

Fun Tool: Try [HowJSay.com](http://HowJSay.com) or one of their smartphone apps to test your UK or US pronunciation.

When you hear the audio file back, stop whenever you hear an error, read that sentence out aloud once again into a separate recording file. Once you've read through the whole thing and practiced each error out aloud, we're ready to proceed.

***By now you have: A fully written (re-written) Draft for your speech,  
1 single sheet of paper with the Speech in Bullet Form,  
AND an Audio Recording of your Speech.***



# STEP 4: MEMORY CHALLENGE

## ONE STEP AT A TIME

Take one paragraph at a time; try to say it aloud without looking down.

Then add another, and another, see how many you can say without forgetting. It will take a while, sure, but you'll really get it!

**Tip:** *You might find yourself ad-libbing a little around here, that's okay. Keep recording to be sure you're only ad-libbing for fluidity, not losing content or context.*



# STEP 5: TIME CHALLENGE

## GET THE STOP WATCH READY!

So by now you have your speech written, vetted for errors, checked for pronunciation, and even partly memorized (it's okay if you have 1-2 problem spots, that'll only go with repeated practice). Most speeches have a time limit – and if they don't, you should make an estimate and set one. Depending on your information and it's complexity, the degree of awareness/interest/expertise your audience has on the topic and the occasion itself, I'd say Ten Minutes is safe for most occasions, less if possible. More than ten minutes is fine if the amount of information is too great and requires further explanation.

This is the final lap- now we repeat #4, except we're not only trying to get more and more of the speech through without error while watching for time (get a friend to do the timing so as to not distract from your speech).



# STEP 6: LOOK IN THE MIRROR


## PRACTICE EXPRESSIONS

Your face is paramount for a speech- each expression conveys an emotion, adds to the tone of the Context, and through Eye Contact you include the audience and make them part of the speech.

So now we repeat #5, but while looking into a Mirror (you should at least be able to see your torso). Practice your smile, you're happy to be here! Move your hands around just a bit so we can illustrate our ideas – careful to use open palms and not extended fingers or fists, moved in slow, gentle motion. Add them in thoughtfully at the right points in your speech, where movement of your hands adds emphasis to the idea.

Practice your entire speech now, recording (video if available) and timing, remembering the expressions and gestures as well.





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**Remember always - whatever happened today,  
tomorrow is a beautiful day!**