



Inspiring an audience begins with the speaker's vision

by james desena

anyone can demand change. But what makes a true leader is the ability to inspire people to change.

How does a presenter inspire an audience to action? It's a question all speakers wrestle with and one that cannot be ignored. Every presenter must remember that at the moment they begin to speak, they are a leader. And the job of a leader is to communicate and influence others with his or her message.

goal happen. And you want them to take initiative, think creatively and band together to achieve what they could not achieve alone.

When laying out the roadmap for reaching your goal, you need to look forward and be able to describe a clear picture of your vision for the future. What benefits will it bring to the collective whole? What problems will it solve? There are plenty of inspirational business stories and metaphors that presenters can choose

It's equally important to show that you value the experience of the audience. By validating the everyday experiences and collective knowledge of an audience, you build a sincere connection with them. All of us are more receptive to leaders who show genuine appreciation for our work, knowledge and accomplishments.

Finally, if you are speaking within your organization, you need to remember that people give weight to what you say only if it is consistent with what you do on a daily basis. If your message is inconsistent with your behavior, the audience will sense the disconnect and hypocrisy.

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Tapping into the areas that build inspiration within people is never easy. But from my experience, it pays to have a clear message, a vision and a connection with your audience.

A clear message

As a leader, you should have a clear goal of what you want to accomplish and how you will accomplish it. All your communicative efforts should be linked to furthering that goal. That's why it's important to be able to sum up the goal at any time during your speech. The goal should be one sentence and easy to understand — even to someone outside of the organization or industry. Short and sweet goes a long way in conveying confidence to an audience.

The message should be communicated in ways that speak to the audience. Take the time to ensure that the message speaks to the collective "we" and "us," not to the "you" and "me." You want audience members to know they play a role in making that

from, but the best come from past successes in one's own experience. Seek out these examples and use them to acknowledge the power of working together to achieve a vision and a goal.

Remember, people want to be part of something meaningful and significant. While money is important, it doesn't inspire people to keep going in the face of stubborn obstacles. A compelling purpose does.

Building a people connection

If you give your audience little thought, they will repay the favor in kind. That's why it's important not only to know your goals, but to take the time to answer these questions: Who is the audience? Why should the audience listen to you? Why is your message meaningful to their lives? What do you want them to do differently?

Next, consider the emotions that surround the issue at hand. You can't inspire people with facts only. It's what the facts mean, and especially what they mean to audience members and the people they care about. That's why it's important to acknowledge these emotional ties and answer them within your speech.

The rallying cry

One of the most important things I've learned is to end my presentations on an uplifting note. Rephrase and sum up the message and the vision, and take the time to answer audience members' questions. Be sure to give the audience ideas and tasks that they can do immediately — goals they can begin working toward the minute they walk out the door.

If you take your duty to inspire to heart, and make a sincere effort to persuade your audience, chances are your message and vision will quickly become a reality. ■

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