

Chapter 15: Business Presentations in Action

Personnel directors have described their needs in prospective employers as follows:

“Send me people who know how to speak, listen, and think, and I’ll do the rest. I can train people in their specific job responsibilities, as long as they listen well, know how to think, and can express themselves well (Seiler and Beall, 2009).”

“For better or worse, our culture relies on quotations—literary passages, Bible verses, movie lines, song lyrics, catchphrases, proverbs—to transmit the wit and wisdom of the past and the present and to lend resonance to our everyday discourse. Perhaps the most important are the political quotes, the sound bites, slogans, zingers and bloopers that can win or lose elections and shape our arguments and opinions. —Fred R. Shapiro (Shapiro, 2008).”

Getting Started

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISES

1. Prepare a short summary of your experience in public speaking. Include one example and one goal you would like to set for yourself for improvement. Share and compare with classmates.
2. Who is your favorite speaker? Write a brief introduction for them and include why you find them particularly talented. Share and compare with classmates.

No matter what career you pursue or what level of success you achieve, on some occasions you will certainly find it necessary to introduce yourself or another speaker, accept an award, serve as master of ceremonies at a meeting, or make a comment to the media. Each task requires preparation and practice, and a solid understanding of the roles and responsibilities associated with the many activities you may perform as a successful business communicator. In this chapter we explore many of these common activities with brief discussions and activities to prepare you for the day when the responsibility falls to you.

References

Seiler, W., & Beall, M. (2000). *Communication: Making connections* (4th ed., p. 7). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Shapiro, Fred R. (2008, July 21). *Quote...misquote* [Commentary]. *New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/21/magazine/27www1-guestsafire-t.html?pagewanted=all>

15.1 Sound Bites and Quotables

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss elements that make a sound bite effective.
2. Choose a sound bite or quote from a written or verbal message.
3. Prepare a quote that is memorable.

Sometimes the words with the most impact are succinct, memorable statements. **Sound bites**, brief statements that zero in on the point of a larger or longer message, are often excised from interviews and articles, and presented apart from the context in which they were originally written or spoken. **Slogans** are phrases that express the goals, aims or nature of a product, service, person, or company. **Quotes** are memorable sayings extracted from written or verbal messages. Some move armies, while others make armies laugh. All are memorable and quickly become part of our cultural literacy, expressing a common sentiment or perception, and reinforcing our image of the speaker, business, product, or service (Taylor, I., 2004).

Common Elements of Effective Sound Bites

Whether you are writing a document, preparing a presentation, or both, you will want to consider how others will summarize your main point. If you can provide a clear sound bite or quote, it is more likely to get picked up and repeated, reinforcing your message. By preparing your sound bites, you help control the interpretation of your message (Kerchner, K., 1997). Here are four characteristics of effective sound bites:

1. Clear and concise
2. Use vivid, dynamic language
3. Easy to repeat
4. Memorable

Your goal when writing a sound bite or quote is to make sure your idea represents all four characteristics. You won't always be creating the message; in some cases you may be asked to summarize someone else's written or verbal message, such as an interview, with a quote or a sound bite. Look for one or more sentences or phrases that capture these elements and test them out on your classmates or colleagues. Can the sound bite, slogan, or quote be delivered without stumbling? Is it easy to read? Does it get the job done?

Key Takeaway

Sound bites are brief statements that are often quoted.

Exercises

1. Choose a product or service that you find appealing. Try to come up with several sound bites, slogans, or quotes that meet all four criteria. You may look to company sales materials or interviews as a source for this exercise, and if you pull a quote from an online interview, please post the link when you complete your assignment. Discuss how the sound bite, slogan, or quote meets all four criteria in your response.

2.

Match these phrases with their sources.

Product, Business or Person	Sound Bite, Slogan, or Memorable Quote
A. Nike	1. Where's the beef?
B. Barack Obama	2. Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.
C. Homer Simpson	3. Huge. That's huge, or huge.
D. Wendy's	4. Just do it!
E. John F. Kennedy	5. It's amazing how much you can get done when you're not trying to take credit for it.
F. Neil Armstrong	6. D'oh!
G. Paris Hilton	7. That's one small step for a man; one giant leap for mankind.
H. Franklin D. Roosevelt	8. A diamond is forever.
I. De Beers Consolidated	9. The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

Answers: A-4, B-5, C-6, D-1, E-2, F-7, G-3, H-9, I-8

3. Indicate at least one sound bite or memorable quote and who said it. Please share your results with classmates and compare your results.

References

Kerchner, K. (1997). *Soundbites: A business guide for working with the media*. Superior, WI: Savage Press.

Taylor, I. (2004). *Mediaspeak: Strategy. Sound-Bites. Spin: The plain-talking guide to issues, reputation and message management*. Toronto, Canada: Hushion House Publishing.

15.2 Telephone/VoIP Communication

Learning Objectives

1. Demonstrate the five stages in a telephone conversation.
2. Understand delivery strategies to increase comprehension and reduce misunderstanding.

Talking on the phone or producing an audio recording lacks an interpersonal context with the accompanying nonverbal messages. Unless you use vivid language, crisp, and clear descriptions, your audience will be left to sort it out for themselves. They may create mental images that don't reflect your intention that lead to miscommunication. Conversations follow predictable patterns and have main parts or stages we can clearly identify. While not every conversation is the same, many will follow a variation of a standard pattern composed by David Taylor and Alyse Terhune:

1. Opening
2. Feedforward
3. Business
4. Feedback
5. Closing

[Table 15.1 “A Five-Stage Telephone Conversation”](#)¹ provides an example of how a conversation might go according to these five stages.

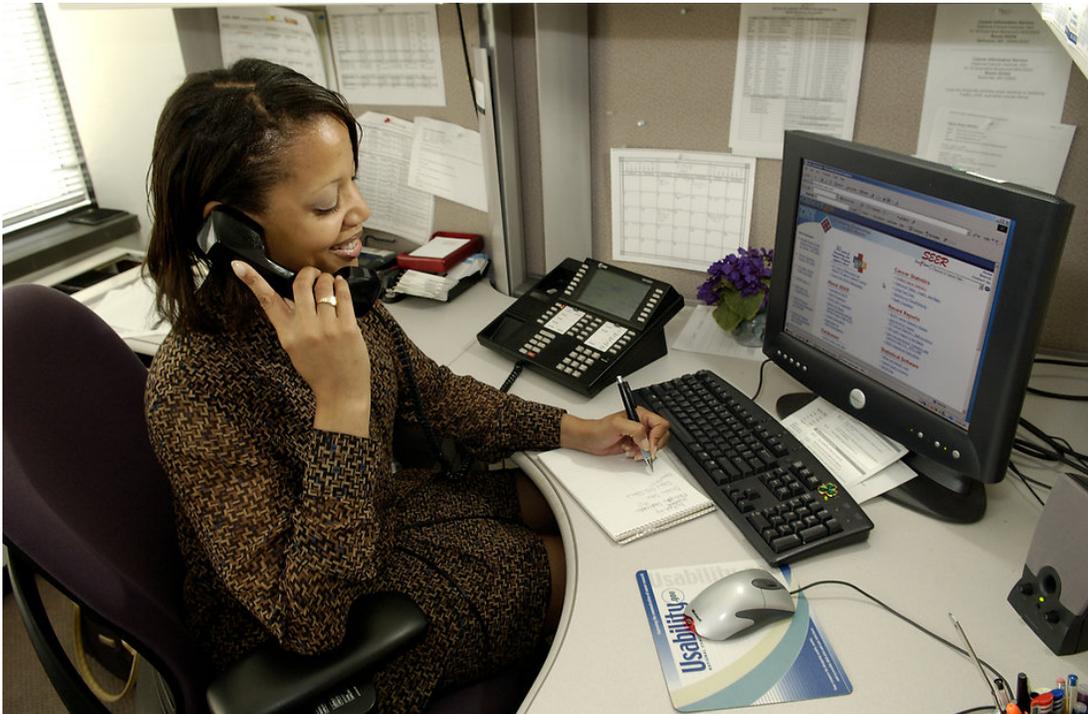
Table 15.1 A Five-Stage Telephone Conversation

Stage	Subevents	Example
Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parties identify themselves • Greetings are reciprocated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [phone rings] • Ken: Hello, Ken Reilly. • Val: Hi, Ken. This is Val Martin from [company or department]. How are you? • Ken: Fine, and you? • Val: Fine, I'm doing great.
Feedforward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and tone of conversation are established • Permission is given to continue (or not) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Val: I hate to bother you, but I wonder if you have five minutes to give me some advice. • Ken: Sure, Val. What's happening? • [or: I'm tied up right now. Can I call you back in an hour?]
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance of conversation • Parties exchange roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Val: Here's the situation. [explains] I know you are good at resolving these kinds of issues, so I was wondering what you think I should do. • Ken: Wow, I can understand how this has you concerned. Considering what you've told me, here's what I think I would do. [explains]
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signal that business is concluded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Val: Hmm, that makes sense. I'll certainly keep your ideas in mind. Thank you so much, Ken! • Ken: Hey, you're welcome. Let me know how it turns out.
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parties say goodbye 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Val: Yes, I will. Have a good weekend, Ken. • Ken: You too, Val. Bye. • Val: Bye. • [they hang up]

Cell phones are a part of many, if not most, people's lives in the industrialized world and, increasingly, in developing

nations as well. Computer users can also utilize voice interaction and exchange through voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) programs like Skype. With the availability of VoIP, both audio and visual images are available to the conversation participants. But in our discussion, we'll focus primarily on voice exchanges.

Figure 15.1



Telephone conversations in business require skill and preparation.

Bill Branson – [Business Woman](#) – public domain.

Since you lack the nonverbal context, you need to make sure that your voice accurately communicates your message. Your choice of words and how you say them, including spacing or pausing, pace, rhythm, articulation, and pronunciation are relevant factors in effective delivery. Here are five main points to consider:

1. Speak slowly and articulate your words clearly.
2. Use vivid terms to create interest and communicate descriptions.
3. Be specific.
4. Show consideration for others by keeping your phone conversations private.
5. Silence cell phones, pagers, and other devices when you are in a meeting or sharing a meal with colleagues.

You don't have to slow down your normal pattern of speech by a large degree, but each word needs time and space to be understood or the listener may hear words that run together, losing meaning and creating opportunities for misunderstanding. Don't assume that they will catch your specific information the first time and repeat any as necessary, such as an address or a phone number.

Feedback, the response from the receiver to the sender, is also an essential element of phone conversations. Taking turns in the conversation can sometimes be awkward, especially if there is an echo or background noise on the line. With time and practice, each "speaker's own natural, comfortable, expressive repertoire will surface" *Mayer, K., 1980).

Key Takeaway

A telephone conversation typically includes five stages: opening, feedforward, business, feedback, and closing. Because telephone conversations lack nonverbal cues, they require additional attention to feedback.

Exercises

1. Write an outline of a script for a telephone conversation that introduces a new product or service to an existing client. Partner with a classmate to role-play the conversation and note points that could use improvement. Compare your results with classmates.
2. Think of a phone conversation you had recently. Write a brief summary and include at least one example of what worked or what did not. Share and compare with classmates.
3. Take notes during a telephone conversation and write a brief description, labeling the parts of the conversation and providing examples. Share and compare with classmates.

¹Adapted from Taylor, D., & Terhune, A. D. (2000). *Doing e-business: Strategies for thriving in an electronic marketplace*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0471380652.html>.

References

Mayer, K. (1980). Developing delivery skills in aral business communication. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 43(3), 21–24.

Taylor, D., & Terhune, A. D. (2000). *Doing e-business: Strategies for thriving in an electronic marketplace*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved from <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0471380652.html>.

15.3 Meetings

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss meetings and their role in business communication.
2. Describe the main parts of an agenda.
3. Discuss several strategies for effective meetings.

Figure 15.2



Meetings are group communications in action around a defined agenda, at a set time, for an established duration.

Baltic Development Forum – [Kristovskis-meeting-94](#) – CC BY 2.0.

A **meeting** is a group communication in action around a defined agenda, at a set time, for an established duration. Meetings can be effective, ineffective, or a complete waste of time. If time is money and effectiveness and efficiency are your goals, then if you arrange a meeting, lead a meeting, or participate in one, you want it to be worth your time (Mosvick, R. K., 1996).

Meetings can occur face-to-face, but increasingly business and industry are turning to teleconferencing and videoconferencing options as the technology improves, the cost to participate is reduced, and the cost of travel including

time is considered. Regardless how you come together as a team, group, or committee, you will need to define your purpose in advance with an agenda (Deal, T., and Kennedy, A., 1982). The main parts of an agenda for a standard meeting are listed in [Table 15.2 “Meeting Agenda Elements”](#).

Table 15.2 Meeting Agenda Elements

Term	Definition
Title Header	Title, time, date, location, phone number, e-mail contact, and any other information necessary to get all participants together.
Participants	Expected participants
Subject Line	Purpose statement
Call to Order	Who will call the meeting to order?
Introductions	If everyone is new, this is optional. If even one person is new, everyone should briefly introduce themselves with their name and respective roles.
Roll Call	This may quietly take place while introductions are made.
Reading of the minutes	Notes from the last meeting are read (if applicable) with an opportunity to correct. These are often sent out before the meeting so participants have the opportunity to review them and note any needed corrections.
Term	Definition
Old Business	List any unresolved issues from last time or issues that were “tabled,” or left until this meeting.
New Business	This is a list of items for discussion and action.
Reports	This is optional and applies if there are subcommittees or groups working on specific, individual action items that require reports to the group or committee.
Good of the Order	This is the time for people to offer any news that relates to the topic of the meeting that was otherwise not shared or discussed.
Adjournment	Note time, date, place meeting adjourned and indicate when the next meeting is scheduled.

Strategies for Effective Meetings

You want an efficient and effective meeting, but recognize that group communication by definition can be chaotic and unpredictable. To stay on track, consider the following strategies:

- Send out the last meeting's minutes one week before the next meeting.
- Send out the agenda for the current meeting at least one week in advance.
- Send out reminders for the meeting the day before and the day of the meeting.
- Schedule the meeting in Outlook or a similar program so everyone receives a reminder.
- Start and end your meetings on time.
- Make sure the participants know their role and requirements prior to the meeting.
- Make sure all participants know one another before discussion starts.
- Formal communication styles and reference to the agenda can help reinforce the time frame and tasks.
- Follow Robert's Rules of Order when applicable, or at least be familiar with them.
- Make sure notes taken at the meeting are legible and can be converted to minutes for distribution later.
- Keep the discussion on track, and if you are the chair, or leader of a meeting, don't hesitate to restate a point to interject and redirect the attention back to the next agenda point.
- If you are the chair, draw a clear distinction between on-topic discussions and those that are more personal, individual, or off topic.
- Communicate your respect and appreciation for everyone's time and effort.
- Clearly communicate the time, date, and location or means of contact for the next meeting.

Key Takeaway

With good planning and preparation, meetings can be productive, engaging, and efficient.

Exercise

1. Create a sample agenda for a business meeting to discuss the quarterly sales report and results from the latest marketing campaign. Decide what information is needed, and what position might normally be expected to produce that information. Note in your agenda all the elements listed above, even if some elements (such as "good of the order") only serve as a placeholder for the discussion that will take place.
2. Write a brief description of a meeting you recently attended and indicate one way you perceived it as being effective. Compare with classmates.
3. Write a brief description of a meeting you recently attended and indicate one way you perceived it as being ineffective. Compare with classmates.

References

Mosvick, R. K. (1996). *We've got to start meeting like this: A guide to successful meeting management*. New York, NY: Park Avenue Productions.

Deal, T., & Kennedy, A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

15.4 Celebrations: Toasts and Roasts

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the role, function, and importance of a toast.
2. Discuss the elements of an effective toast.

Toasts are formal expressions of goodwill, appreciation, or calls for group attention to an issue or person in a public setting, often followed by synchronous consumption of beverages. Examples often include a toast at a wedding congratulating the couple, toasts at a bar after a tournament win to congratulate the team or an individual player, or a general toast to health for everyone on a holiday or other special occasion.

Toasts serve to unify the group, acknowledge a person or event, mark a special occasion, or simply to encourage the consumption of alcohol. These can range from serious to silly but are normally words that point out something that is commonly known. For example, a toast to the most valuable player in a game may serve to publicly acknowledge him or her for achievements that are already known by the community. The verbal recognition, followed by ritualistic drinking, serves as a public acknowledgement. Belonging is a basic human need that requires reinforcement, and a toast can be characterized as a reinforcement ritual, acknowledging respect for the individual or team, and also reinforcing group affiliation, common symbols and terms, beliefs and values, goals and aspirations (McLean, S., 2005).

Toasts, while common in many societies, are relatively rare in daily life. They are normally associated with informal and formal gatherings of the group, team, or community. Since you may only perform a couple of toasts in your lifetime, you no doubt want to get them right the first time. We will address toasts and one variation in particular, the roast.

Proposing a Toast

One proposes a toast, rather than “making” a toast or simply “toasting,” because for it to truly be a toast, everyone in the group, team, or community must participate. If you propose a toast to someone and no one responds, even if you raise your glass to them as a nonverbal sign of respect and take a sip, it doesn’t count as a toast. Only the community can publicly acknowledge someone with a toast, but it takes an individual to make the proposition.

Sometimes the person who is supposed to make that proposition is already known by function or role. The best man and maid of honor at a wedding, the host of a party, and the highest-ranking manager at a business meal are common roles that are associated with ritualistic toasts.

Standing with proper posture to address the group is normally associated with acts of public speaking, including toasts. If you are understood to be a person who will be proposing a toast, you may not need to say anything to get the group’s attention. As you rise and raise your glass, the room will grow quiet in anticipation of your words. If the group does not expect you to propose a toast, you may need to say, “May I propose a toast?” in a voice above the level of the group. Nonverbal displays also work to capture attention (McLean, S., 2005), such as standing on a chair. While that may be nonstandard, your context will give you clues about how best to focus attention. Striking a glass with spoon to produce a ring, while common, is sometimes considered less than educated and a poor reflection of etiquette. The group norms determine what is expected and accepted, and it may be a custom that is considered normal. **Etiquette** is a conventional social custom or rule for behavior, but social customs and rules for behavior vary across communities and cultures.

You will raise your glass, raise your voice, and make a brief statement complimenting the person being honored. Your toast should be brief. If you write it out in advance, use thirty words as your upper limit. Common mistakes are for toast-givers to ramble on too long and to talk about themselves instead of the honoree. The toast is not as much about the words you use, though they carry weight and importance, but it's about the toast ritual as a group expression of acknowledgement and respect. People then raise their glasses to indicate agreement, often repeating "hear, hear!" or a word or phrase from the toast, such as "to success!" They then sip from their cup, possibly touching glasses first.

One common toast that always serves to unify the group is the toast to health. To propose a toast to health is common, well understood, and serves both the role and function of a toast. "Live long and prosper" is a common variation of "to your health" in English. [Table 15.3 "Toasts to Health"](#) lists toasts to health in other languages.

Table 15.3 Toasts to Health

Language	Toast
Chinese	Wen lie
French	A votre santé
Gaelic	Sláinte
German	Zum Wohl
Greek	Stin ygia sou
Hebrew	L'chiam
Italian	Alla salute
Japanese	Kanpai
Polish	Na zdrowie
Portuguese	Saúde
Spanish	Salud

Sometimes a best man at a wedding will be expected to tell a short story as part of their toast. A common story is how the couple met from the best man's perspective. While this may be your choice, remember to keep it quite brief, positive, and focused on the honorees, not on yourself. Important occasions require you to play your part like everyone else, and your role is to focus attention on the individual, team, couple, or group as you honor them.

Alcohol is not a requirement for a toast, nor is draining one's glass. The beverage and the quantity to be swallowed are a reflection of group norms and customs. Often alternatives, such as nonalcoholic sparkling cider, are served. If you are expected to perform a toast, one that requires tact, grace, and a clear presence of mind, you should refrain from drinking alcohol until after you've completed your obligation. Your role has responsibilities, and you have a duty to perform.

Roasts

Roasts are public proclamations that ridicule or criticize someone to honor them. That may sound awkward at first, but consider the targets most commonly associated with roasts: those in positions of power or prestige. Knocking someone off their pedestal is a special delight for the group or community, but it requires special care and attention to social dynamics, sensitivities, rank, and roles.

A common context for a round of roasts, or a series of public statements intended to poke fun at someone, is at a retirement party. Individuals in the room tell brief stories that may have some basis in truth, but which through word choice and clear communication of exaggeration, allow everyone to look back upon the episode with light humor and laughter. Time has passed and the absurd is worthy of group laughter.

A roast is not an opportunity to say something mean. If you don't think the target will laugh it off, don't say it. Roasts can hurt feelings, and that misses the point. A roast honors someone in a position of power or influence by allowing them to demonstrate they can take a joke at their own expense gracefully. It is not intended to do harm to the individual or create divisions in the community. Ritual public speaking is supposed to unify groups, teams, and communities, and not create division or rival internal groups.

Key Takeaway

Toasts and roasts honor a member of the community.

Exercises

1. You are called upon to propose a toast to your team leader after your group has just completed a large contract. Work on this project wasn't always easy, but now is the time for celebration and recognition. Write a sample toast in no more than thirty words. Compare your results with your classmates.
2. What should someone propose a toast to? How should they propose it? Write your response and include an example. Compare with classmates.
3. If you were the subject of a roast, what would you feel comfortable having people say, do, or show to make fun of you in public? Write your response and include an example. Compare with classmates.

References

McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

15.5 Media Interviews

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the purpose of the media interview.
2. Understand ways to prepare for the media interview.

At some point in your business career it's likely that you will be interviewed by a representative of the media. It may be a camera and microphone in your face as you leave a building, or a scheduled interview where you have an opportunity to prepare. A press interview is both a challenge and an opportunity. Like a speech, it may make you nervous, but you have the advantage of being the center of attention and having the opportunity to have your say. This chapter addresses the basics for preparing and participating in a press interview.

A [media interview](#) is a discussion involving questions and answers for the purpose of broadcast. It is distinct from an informational interview (McLean, S., 2005), where you might be asked questions to learn background on a story, but you will still need to observe the three hallmark rules of interviews:

1. Anything you say can and often will be used against you.
2. Never say anything you would not feel comfortable hearing quoted out of context on the evening news.
3. Be prepared for the unexpected as well as the expected.

At first, those rules may sound extreme, but let's examine them in the context of today's media realities. In a press interview setting you will be recorded in some fashion, whether audio, video, or handwritten notes on a reporter's notepad. With all the probability for errors and misinterpretation, you want your words and gestures to project the best possible image to the press. There was a time when news programs didn't have to justify themselves with advertising dollars, but today all news is news entertainment and has to pay its own way. That means your interview will be used to attract viewers. You also have to consider the possibility that the person interviewing you is not a trained professional journalist, but rather an aspiring actor or writer who happened to land a job with the media. From their perspective, your quote in an audio, video, or print content package is dinner. It may also serve the public good, and inform, or highlight an important cause, but news has a bottom line just like business.

Because of these factors, you need to be proactive in seeing the press interview as part of the overall spectacle that is media, devoted to revenue. The six-second quote that is taken from the interview may not represent the tone, range, or even substance of your comments, but it will have been chosen to grab attention. It will also go viral if it catches on. Your interviewer may ask you a question that is off-the-wall, inappropriate, outside the scope of the interview, or unusual just to catch you off guard and get that attention-worthy quote. Independent journalism with a nonprofit, inform-the-public orientation still exists in some forms, but even those media outlets have to support themselves with an audience. So consider your role in the interview: to provide information and represent your business or organization with honor and respect. In sports, business, and press interviews, a good defense is required.

That said, a press interview is a positive opportunity, whether it is planned in advance or catches you off guard in public. You are the focus of the interview, and many people believe that if you are on television, for example, that you have something to say, that you have special insight, or that you are different from the viewing audience. That can give you an edge of credibility that can serve your business or company as you share your knowledge and experience.

When asked to give an interview, before you agree, learn as much as you can about the topic, the timing, the format, and the background. [Table 15.4 “Interview Preparation Factors”](#) summarizes how to approach these factors.

Table 15.4 Interview Preparation Factors

Topic	What will be the range or scope of the interview? How can you prepare yourself so you are better able to address specific questions? Ask for the list of questions in advance, and anticipate that you will be asked questions that are not listed. Prepare for the unexpected and you won't be caught off guard.
Time	What's the time frame or limit? A 15-minute interview may not require as much depth as one that lasts an hour or more.
Format	How will you be interviewed? Will it be through audio or video, over the Internet, over the telephone, or in person?
Background	What's the backstory on the interview? Is there a specific issue or incident? Is there a known agenda? Why is the interview now and not earlier or not at all? Why is it important?

These four areas will serve you well as you begin to define the range and content of the interview for yourself. You will also need to pay attention to the setting and scene, how you want to present yourself (dress or suit?), and how well you answer anticipated questions. Mock interviews with colleagues can help, and a comprehensive knowledge of your talking points is essential.

You want to be well rested, if at all possible, on the day of the interview. With a clear mind you will be agile and responsive, and you will be able to present yourself well. You'll be calm in the knowledge of your preparation, and not be thrown if an unexpected question comes your way. You'll be ready on time, understanding that most journalists have to package the story as quickly as possible, demonstrating respect for the interviewer. You'll also know that it is not just about what you say but how you say it. Audiences respond to emotional cues, and you want to project an image of credibility and integrity. You'll anticipate the question-and-answer pattern and limit your responses to ones that are clear and concise. You'll have visual aids ready if needed to make a point.

Naturally, however, you may not have the luxury of time to prepare. Press interviews are often requested at the last minute, and you may not be the first person this reporter asked for an interview that day. They have a story in mind, and they are looking for you to be part of that story. If the opportunity to be interviewed arises on the spur of the moment, you will need to make a quick judgment on whether to agree or decline. Your decision will rest on a multitude of factors, such as how much you know about the topic, whether someone else in your organization is better qualified to answer, whether your employer would appreciate your agreeing to speak to the media, and so on. If something newsworthy occurs at your workplace, start thinking about how you would make this decision before you are put on the spot. Finally, if the topic of the media inquiry is not time urgent, remember that you can always ask to postpone the interview to allow time to prepare.

Key Takeaway

A press interview is both a challenge and an opportunity.

Exercises

1. How does the press interview serve the business or organization? List two ways and provide examples. Discuss your ideas with classmates.

2. Consider the following scenario. Your large company is opening a new office in a new town and you have been designated to be part of the team that will be on the front lines. You want to establish goodwill, but also recognize that, being an outsider, you and your company may not be welcomed with open arms by the local business community. Your company produces a product and provides a service (feel free to choose; a coffee shop for example) that is currently offered in the town, but your organization perceives room for market growth as well as market share. Describe how you would handle relations with the local media. Compare your ideas with those of a classmate.

3. Form a team in class of interviewee and interviewer. Take ten-minute turns, having one person play the role of interviewee and the other the interviewer. Record your exchange and post as a file attachment in your class (if applicable), or post to YouTube or a similar Web hosting site and post the link. Write a report of your experience in no less than two hundred words.

Exercises (cont.)

4. Observe a press interview. How do they take turns? Does the interviewee ever look nervous? What could he or she have done to improve their performance? Write a brief suggestion and provide the link to the interview.

5. Find a sample press interview on a video Web site such as YouTube and evaluate it based on the guidelines in this chapter. Was it effective? Why or why not? Present your findings to the class.

6. Find at least one example of an interview gone bad. It may involve a misquotation, expressions of frustration or anger, or even an interview cut short. What happened? Provide a brief summary and provide the link to the interview.

References

McLean, S. (2005). *The basics of interpersonal communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

15.6 Introducing a Speaker

Learning Objective

1. Understand how to introduce a speaker in a courteous and professional manner.

A [speaker introduction](#) involves establishing the person’s credibility, motivating audience interest, and saying what the speaker could not say. Not many speakers will jump to the stage and share their list of accomplishments, as this would appear arrogant and could quickly turn off an audience. At the same time, if you are able to share that they have turned two companies around and would like to share lessons learned, your audience may see the value in giving their attention. Being designated to introduce a speaker is an honor and an important duty that requires planning and preparation.

Scot Ober states, “Remarks should be directed at welcoming the speaker and establishing his or her qualifications to speak on the topic” (Ober, S., 1995). You may start with a quote from their work, or a quote from a publication or colleague describing them. You may decide to use humor. All these options are available, but whatever you choose, let respect and dignity be your overriding goal. The function and role of the introduction is to focus the spotlight squarely on the speaker. You should not distract the audience from that task with your dress, gestures, antics, or by talking about yourself.

The person you are introducing may already be well known to the audience, but you can always find some new information to share. You may need to consider the unusual, or the little known, when introducing someone who is famous. You may also consider mentioning their most recent work or activity as it relates to the topic of the presentation. Avoid the “laundry list” approach to a summary of their education and experience, as this may bore the audience. Instead, focus on something specific and relevant. Your range of options is almost limitless, but your time frame and overall function are not. You need to be brief, and you need to establish the speaker’s credibility while motivating interest.

According to Bonnie Devet, “Performing the role of introducer also reinforces the rhetorical principles seminal to any business writing course: the need for ethos (credibility of both speakers and introducers), for audience-based discourse, and for accuracy” (Devet, B., 1995). Think of an introduction as a speech in miniature. Your purpose is to inform, your time frame is (typically) one to three minutes, and your specific purpose is to inform the audience about the speaker’s qualifications, credibility, and enthusiasm for the topic he or she will cover.

Key Takeaway

To introduce a speaker is an honor and requires preparation and practice.

Exercises

1. Introduce a classmate who is about to present a report, document, or speech to the class. You can draw information from the Web (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter), the person's résumé, or even a personal interview. You will need to prepare your introduction in advance and may want to consider incorporating a quote from the document they will discuss. Keep your remarks to thirty seconds and your written introduction to no more than a hundred words.
2. Watch an introduction of a speaker—televised award ceremonies offer plenty of examples—and note one example that you consider effective, and one that you consider ineffective. Explain why you rated them this way. Report your response and the Web links.
3. List five facts, points, or things about yourself and your career that you would want an audience to know. Post your results and compare with classmates.

References

Devet, B. (1995). Introducing a speaker: An assignment for students in business communication. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 58, 57–58.

Ober, S. (1995). *Contemporary business communication* (2nd ed., p. 478). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

15.7 Presenting or Accepting an Award

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the purpose of an award.
2. Describe the process of presenting an award.
3. Describe the process of accepting an award.

There is nothing more gratifying than recognition from your peers and colleagues for a job well done. We all strive for acceptance, and recognition is a reflection of belonging, a basic human need (Schutz, W., 1966). In this chapter we will discuss how to present or accept an award tactfully, graciously, and professionally.

First, make sure that you have all the information correct before you get up to speak: the honoree's correct name and how it is pronounced, the correct title of the award, and the details about the honoree's accomplishments that you are about to share. The spotlight will be on you, and your accurate delivery will be crucial to the happiness of the occasion.

When presenting an award, the key is to focus attention on the honor and the person receiving it—not on yourself. You may have been part of the committee that chose the winner, or involved in some other way, but your role should never upstage that of the person being honored.

You can focus the attention on the recipient in two ways: surprise or direct acknowledgement. In the surprise approach, you mention characteristics of the person receiving the award without initially mentioning their name—allowing the audience to start guessing who it might be. You may mention a list of accomplishments, or perhaps a positive story. With the surprise approach, you share the information that is sure to reveal the recipient's identity right before you present the award.

You may prefer, however, a direct acknowledgement of the honoree's performance or service and simply announce his or her name. The direct acknowledgement approach is typically followed by the reasons for choosing this person to receive the award, or include his or her past accomplishments. This direct strategy may be preferred if the audience is not familiar with the recipient.

[Table 15.5 "Presenting an Award"](#) summarizes the process of presenting an award.

Table 15.5 Presenting an Award

Preparation	Verify the recipient's name, the correct title of the award, and details about the recipient.
Focus	Keep the focus on the honoree, not on yourself or the awards committee.
Surprise Approach	Build suspense by listing the winner's accomplishments from general to more and more specific; end by disclosing a unique accomplishment that identifies the winner, and finally announcing his or her name.
Direct Approach	Announce the award winner and follow with a list of his or her accomplishments.
Exit	Step aside and let the honoree have the spotlight.

If you are the award recipient, be aware that the acceptance of an award often provides a moment of influence on the audience that can serve to advance your position or cause. Use of the limelight is an important skill, and much like any speech or presentation, it requires planning and preparation. You don't want to be caught speechless, and you want to project a professional presence that corresponds to the award or recognition.

If you know you are being considered for an award, first consider what the award recognizes within your professional community. An **award** is a symbol of approval, recognition, or distinction that honors the recipient in public. As the recipient, it is your role to convey recognition of that honor with your gracious acceptance.

Perhaps you have seen an awards ceremony on television, where a producer, composer, actor, or musician has received public recognition. Sometimes the acceptance unifies the community and serves as an inspiration to others. Other times the recipient stumbles, talks as fast as they can to list all the people who helped them reach their goal (often forgetting several, which can hurt feelings), or they use the spotlight to address an unrelated issue, like a political protest. They may mumble, and their nervousness may be so obvious that it impacts their credibility. Accepting an award is an honor, an opportunity, and a challenge.

The first step in accepting an award is to say thank you. You can connect with the audience with your heartfelt emotional displays and enthusiasm. Raised arms, clasped hands, and a bow are universal symbols of respect and gratitude. Note that rambunctious displays of emotion such as jumping up and down or large, sweeping gestures are better left for the athletic fields. An award ceremony is a formal event, and your professionalism will be on display for all to see.

Next, you should consider giving credit where credit is due, noting its relevance to your field or community. If you name one person, you have to be sure to not leave anyone out, or you run the risk of hurting feelings and perhaps even making professional enemies. If you confine your credit list to a couple of key people, it is wise to extend the credit beyond the individual mentions by saying something like, "There are so many people who made this possible. Thank you all!" You should link your response to the award organization and your field, industry, or business. Don't apologize or use terms that can be interpreted as negative. The acceptance of an award is a joyous, uplifting affair, and your role is to maintain and perpetuate that perception.

You may also consider linking your award to a motivational anecdote. A brief, personal story about how a teacher or neighbor in your community motivated you to do better than you thought you could and how you hope this can serve to motivate up-and-coming members to strive for their very best, can often stimulate an audience. Don't exaggerate or stretch the story. The simple facts speak for themselves and the award serves as a powerful visual aid.

Say "thank you again" as you leave the stage, facilitating the transition to the next part of the ceremony while acknowledging the honor. You may need to take note where previous recipients have exited the stage to proceed without error, or simply return to your seat. Your brief comments combined with a graceful entrance and exit will communicate professionalism. **Table 15.6 "Accepting an Award"** summarizes the steps we have outlined.

Table 15.6 Accepting an Award

Acceptance	Say “thank you.”
Relevance	Indicate where credit is due, what the award means to you, and how it relates to the awarding organization or your community.
Acknowledgment	Show your honor with dignity and respect as you say “thank you” again and exit the stage.

Key Takeaway

Awards are public recognitions of success, and tact and grace are required both in presenting and receiving them.

Exercises

1. Who needs to be prepared to present an award in a business and why? Discuss your ideas with the class.
2. This can be a fun two-minute oral communication exercise. In the exercise, you will alternate between the role of the award announcer and the recipient. You will be paired up into teams where you will need to create a business or industry award, prepare a brief script and notes on acceptance, and then demonstrate your results for your class. The introduction of the speaker should last no more than thirty seconds and the acceptance should also be completed in less than a minute. If you are at a distance from your class, you may be assigned a particular role that fits your situation. Record your performance and post it in class.
3. Find one example of an award acceptance speech that you perceive as particularly effective. Indicate why and share the link. Compare with your classmates.
4. Find one example of an award acceptance speech that you perceive as particularly ineffective. Indicate why and share the link. Compare with classmates.

References

Schutz, W. (1966). *The interpersonal underworld*. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

15.8 Serving as Master of Ceremonies

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the role of master of ceremonies.
2. Understand the responsibilities of the master of ceremonies.

A [master of ceremonies](#) is the conductor of ritual gatherings. The master of ceremonies (or MC for short, often written as “emcee”) has the poise and stage presence to start, conduct, and conclude a formal ceremony for a group or community. Typically emcees will be full members of the community, recognized for their credibility, integrity, service, and sense of humor. The emcee sets the intellectual and emotional tone for the event.

At a conference or other business function, the master of ceremonies is often the first person to take the stage and the last one to leave it. They come completely prepared to make sure the agenda is followed, nothing is forgotten, all transitions go smoothly, and the event starts and ends on time. While many business conferences are not humorous affairs, a sense of humor can go a long way in helping defuse tension when unavoidable delays, problems, or errors occur. The emcee is required to help an unprepared speaker accept an award, move to their conclusion, and exit the stage. While a shepherd’s crook might seem like an attractive tool for that role, often eye contact and a nonverbal gesture, such as a couple of steps toward the podium, will do the trick. If not, a gentle hand on a shoulder might be required, or even an interjected word about the schedule. The speaker knows and the audience expects the master of ceremonies to keep the ceremony on track with honor and respect.

If you are assigned to act as emcee for an event, you should have an agenda that includes all the components of the event, from start to finish, with estimations of time, roles, functions, and notes concerning responsibility. If this is not provided for you, you will need to compile it yourself. In either case, make sure the agenda is available far enough in advance that you can study it, become familiar with the key components and transitions, and anticipate any challenges that are likely to arise. If possible, you should also communicate with the people who will be joining you on stage: featured speakers, award presenters, and the like. You need to confirm their availability and understanding of their roles, with special attention to reinforcing time commitments.

One trick of the trade is to incorporate time as transitions. If you have a one-hour ceremony involving several awards and one featured speaker, indicate on the agenda that the speaker has seven minutes for their presentation. Communicate this to them before the event so they can prepare their remarks around this time frame. Then budget three minutes as a transition to the next event. It won’t take you three minutes to make the transition, but by building this time window into the schedule you allow for a degree of overlap that may be required to keep the event on track in case the speaker speaks for nine minutes.

It is especially important to observe the schedule if you are emceeing a multipart event with breakout sessions and/or segments on different topics of interest to different audiences. Imagine an all-day conference for which some attendees registered only for the afternoon session and some only for the morning. Now imagine that the morning speaker was delayed due to a travel mishap. As emcee, would you decide to postpone the morning topic and have the afternoon speaker give his presentation in the morning? If so, you would need to be prepared to give refunds to afternoon attendees who missed the speaker they signed up to hear—and even if their registration fees were refunded, they might still be upset about having spent time and money traveling to the event. The solution? Have a “Plan B,” such as a substitute speaker who is qualified to present on the topic of the “top billed” speaker.

A professional master of ceremonies is expected to keep the event running on time while “making it look easy.” The audience will appreciate the seamless progression as the event proceeds.

Key Takeaway

Serving as the master of ceremonies is an honor that involves a great deal of responsibility and preparation.

Exercises

1. Create a sample awards ceremony that incorporates the acceptance speech assignment as well as the introducing a speaker assignment. This assignment then combines three functions into one, where each person plays their role. One person will need to serve as master of ceremonies. If the class is large enough, you may be able to subdivide into groups and hold separate ceremonies in more than one classroom. Planning and preparing a ceremony takes time and attention to detail. It also never goes as planned. Remain calm and relaxed as you perform your awards ceremony.
2. Evaluate a master of ceremonies and post your results. Share and compare with classmates.

15.9 Viral Messages

Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the elements of viral messages.
2. Understand strategies to develop effective viral messages.

What was once called “word of mouth” advertising has gone viral with the introduction of social marketing via the Internet. What was once called a “telephone chain,” where one person called another in order to pass along news or a request in a linear model, has now gone global. One tweet from Twitter gets passed along and the message is transmitted exponentially. The post to the Facebook page is seen before the nightly news on television. Text messages are often real time. Radio once beat print media to the news, and then television trumped both. Now person-to-person, computer-mediated communication trumps them all at the speed of light—if the message is attractive, relevant, dramatic, sudden, or novel. If no one bothers to pass along the message, or the tweet isn’t very interesting, it will get lost in the noise. What, then, makes a communication message viral?

Let’s look at the June 2009 death of Michael Jackson for an example of a viral message and see what we can learn. According to Jocelyn Noveck, news of his death spread via Twitter, text messages, and Facebook before the traditional media could get the message out. People knew about the 911 call from Jackson’s home before it hit the mainstream media. By the time the story broke, it was already old (Noveck, J., 2009).

People may not have had all the facts, but the news was out. Communities, represented by families, groups of friends, employees at organizations, had been mobilized to spread the news. They were motivated to share the news, but why?

Effective Viral Messages

Viral messages are words, sounds, or images that compel the audience to pass them along. They prompt people to act, and mobilize communities. Community mobilization has been studied in many ways and forms (Freire, P., 1970). We mobilize communities to leave areas of disaster, or to get out and walk more as part of an exercise program. If we want people to consider and act on a communication message, we first have to gain the audience’s attention. In our example, communities were mobilized to share word of Jacksons’ passing. Attention statements require sparks and triggers. A spark topic “has an appeal to emotion, a broad base of impact and subsequent concern, and results in motivating a consensus about issues, planning, and action” (McLean, S., 1997).

In the example of Michael Jackson, the consensus may be that he died under suspicious circumstances, but in other examples, it could be that the product or service being discussed is the next cool thing. The message in social marketing and viral messages does not exist apart from individuals or communities. They give it life and attention, or ignore it.

If you want to design a message to go viral, you have to consider three factors:

1. Does it have an emotional appeal that people will feel compelled to share?
2. Does it have a trigger (does it challenge, provide novelty, or incorporate humor to motivate interest)?
3. Is it relevant to the audience?

An **appeal to emotion** is a word, sound, or image that arouses an emotional response in the audience. Radio stations fill the airwaves with the sounds of the 1980s to provoke an emotional response and gain a specific demographic within the listening audience. The day after the announcement of Michael Jackson's death broke, you could hear his music everywhere. Many people felt compelled to share the news because of an emotional association to his music, the music's association to a time in their lives, and the fact that it was a sudden, unanticipated, and perhaps suspicious death.

A **trigger** is a word, sound, or image that causes an activity, precipitates an event or interaction, or provokes a reaction between two or more people. In the case of Michael Jackson, the triggers included all three factors and provoked an observable response that other forms of media will not soon forget. His death at a young age challenged the status quo. In the same way, videos on YouTube have earned instant fame (wanted or unwanted) for a few with hilarious antics, displays of emotion, or surprising news.

The final ingredient to a viral message is relevance. It must be immediately accessible to the audience, salient, and important. If you want someone to stop smoking, graphs and charts may not motivate them to action. Show them someone like them with postsurgery scars across their throat and it will get attention. Attention is the first step toward precontemplation in a change model that (Prochaska, J. and DiClemente, C., 1982) may lead to action.

Key Takeaway

Viral messages are contagious.

Exercises

1. Design a viral message about a hypothetical product or service you would like to promote. Incorporate the elements listed above in no more than a hundred words. Post your viral message in class and compare with classmates.
2. Identify a company that is relevant to your major or interests and locate an example of their marketing material about a specific product or service. Write a viral message as if you were an employee presenting to a potential client. Share and compare with classmates.
3. Consider a message you passed along recently. Write a brief description and include discussion on why you passed it along.
4. What motivates you to pay attention? Make a list of five ideas, images, or words that attract your attention. Post and compare with classmates.

References

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.

McLean, S. (1997). A communication analysis of community mobilization on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. *Journal of Health Communication*, 2, 113–125.

Noveck, J. (2009, June). *Jackson death was twittered, texted, and Facebooked*. Retrieved from http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090627/ap_en_ot/us/michael_jackson_the_media_moment.

Prochaska, J., & DiClemente, C. (1982). Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 19(3), 276–288.

15.10 Additional Resources

Visit this site for an “elevator speech” template. <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/files/163926.pdf>

Hark.com provides videos of current popular soundbites <http://www.hark.com/>

“Good quotes/sound bites are the salsa on the nacho chip of our narrative.” <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Choosing-Good-Quotes-Soundbites.pdf>

“Getting Maximum Value From The Six Touch Points Of Communications” by Nancy Friedman. <http://www.networkingtoday.com/article/Getting%20Maximum%20Value%20from%20the%20Six%20Touch%20Points%20of%20Communications-175>

Visit this Wall Street Journal site for information on succeeding in an employment interview. <http://guides.wsj.com/careers/category/how-to-succeed-in-a-job-interview/>

“How to conduct a meeting.” <http://managementhelp.org/misc/meeting-management.htm>

The Official Robert’s Rules of Order Web Site: Robert’s Rules Association is an unincorporated membership association representing Robert’s Rules of Order, the guide to parliamentary procedure. <http://www.robertsrules.com>

A ten-step article from eHow on how to propose a toast. http://www.ehow.com/how_1383_propose-toast.html

Read an e-zine article by the Advanced Public Speaking Institute. “Being roasted is an honor, but you must be careful to honor people while you are roasting them during a public speaking engagement.” <http://ezinearticles.com/?Public-Speaking:-Roast-Humor-and-Insults&id=100203>

“Preparing For Your Media Interview” by Judy Jernudd. http://www.streetdirectory.com/travel_guide/1578/business_and_finance/preparing_for_your_media_interview.html

“7 Tips on How to Prepare For Mainstream News and Feature Media Interviews” by Amelia Brazell from EzineArticles.com. <http://ezinearticles.com/?News-Media-Interviews—7-Tips-on-How-to-Prepare-For-Mainstream-News-and-Feature-Media-Interviews&id=1178440>

Read the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists. <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

How to introduce a speaker — the art of giving (and receiving) a great introduction, by Nick Morgan. <http://publicwords.com/how-to-introduce-a-speaker-the-art-of-giving-and-receiving-a-great-introduction/>

“How to Give an Acceptance Speech” by Patricia Fripp from The Sideroad. http://www.sideroad.com/Public_Speaking/acceptance_speech.html

Visit this site for a pamphlet on how to serve as a master of ceremonies. <http://www.usda.org/trifold/IS04503.pdf>

“Why Pass on Viral Messages? Because They Connect Emotionally,” a *Harvard Business Online* article by Angela Dobebe, Adam Lindgreen, Michael Beverland, Joelle Vanhamme, and Robert Van Wijk. <https://hbr.org/product/why-pass-on-viral-messages-because-they-connect-emotionally/BH239-PDF-ENG>