



No.2: Developing & structuring your messages

Effective communication depends on structure. The best speeches concentrate on two or three key messages that make the audience see the world your way, and act differently once they've heard your presentation. Many professional speechwriters say that the best way to structure a presentation is simply to 'tell them what you're going to tell them (the subject), then tell them, (the subject in detail), then tell them you told them (the subject summarised and linked to actions)'. It works.

- Start by writing down your top key messages using clear, concise sentences. Create a presentation that flows. Think of the six P's: preface, position, problem, possibility, proposal, and postscript.
- Think about what your audience knows and doesn't know: do they have a detailed knowledge of the subject you're going to talk about? If they don't, then lay out the subject simply and effectively.
- What are the key facts that support your key messages? Brainstorm these and think carefully about what facts your audience **MUST KNOW**, the ones they **SHOULD KNOW**, which you can include if you have time, and the ones that would be **NICE TO KNOW**, which you should probably leave out!
- Order your presentation using your key messages (supported by the most relevant and powerful facts) and remember the old cliché, 'Less is More'. Effective politicians (and there are some!) use facts and figures very sparingly.
- Make everything you say relevant to the audience before you. Put any drawbacks they might have in the first half of your sentences, and then turn them into advantages or positives if possible.
- Have you kept it 'Simple and Straightforward'? Don't baffle your audience with jargon or convoluted thinking. Simple language always works. Remember, they are not **READING** your presentation, they are **HEARING** it. It's as if you are **TALKING** to them in a conversation. It is **NOT** a lecture.