

CHEAT SHEET

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Leadership Skills: The 5 Essential Speaking Techniques

"I see it is said that leaders should keep their ears to the ground. All I can say is that the British nation will find it very hard to look up to the leaders who are detected in that somewhat ungainly posture."

Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill knew a thing or two about leadership. He not only acted like a leader, he spoke like one. Here are five ways to strengthen your own ability to speak for leadership:

- 1. Know Your Audience's Needs.** Ordinary speakers deliver information; leaders marry information to needs and desires. Persuasion and inspiration require engaging not only the minds but also the hearts of followers. Every true leader knows that the desire to lead is the desire to *serve*. For a powerful example of meeting the needs of listeners, look to Barack Obama's 2008 "Hope and Change" message.
- 2. The 3 Cs: Have a Clear, Concise, and Consistent Message.** On November 19, 1863, orator Edward Everett spoke for two hours in dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery. Next, President Abraham Lincoln spoke for two *minutes*, uttering only 271 words. And yet Lincoln's address is the one we remember. A clear, concise, and consistent message—the Gettysburg Address fits the bill perfectly.
- 3. Improve Your Voice.** The voice of a leader may or may not be beautiful, but it's usually powerful. In Martin Luther King, Jr., we heard the power and cadence of a preacher. You may not come from that tradition, but you have raw talent. Pay attention to the ways you can create your own vocal style. Be honest and reach listeners on your own terms. Have faith in your voice, and it will truly be yours alone.
- 4. Use Nonverbal Communication.** Why does a speech from a dynamic leader impress? What you hear matters—but so does what you *see*. Leaders look and sound at ease and powerful at the same time, and know how to use their physical presence. A leader who was masterful in these terms was Ronald Reagan. He wasn't much of a movie actor, but he honed that highly visual presidential role to perfection.
- 5. Be Action-Oriented.** During America's "space race" with the Soviet Union, President John F. Kennedy declared, "[T]his nation should commit itself to . . . landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the Earth." It was an audacious statement considering that we lagged behind the Soviets. Yet in July of 1969, Neil Armstrong walked on the moon and changed history. Like Kennedy, aim for *action* as a result of what you say. It's a great way to measure the success of your presentations.

For more insights on speaking to influence get Dr. Gary Genard's free e-book
12 Easy Ways to Achieve Presence and Charisma.

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