

The **Genard** Method

PERFORMANCE-BASED  
PUBLIC SPEAKING TRAINING



# HOW TO SPEAK AS A LEADER

## THE POWER OF PERFORMANCE

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# How to Speak as a Leader: The Power of Performance



Do you employ the power of performance when you take the stage? Here's how to achieve true leadership in your next high-stakes speech or presentation.

Leadership is performance. And nowhere is this truer than in public speaking.

In the drama observed by stakeholders in your organization or industry, you have

the starring role. The most successful leaders have an intuitive sense of theater, performing many roles and convincing others to play their parts.

But your ability to perform well doesn't only matter when you're on a stage! Whenever you interact with others, you're in the spotlight. People make judgments about you based on the way you speak, sound, move, and interact with the world.

Want to increase your ability to speak as a leader? Learn how to shape your message, connect with audience members, and use your body language and voice to speak with increased impact. Download my **essential cheat sheet**, Leadership Skills: The 5 Essential Speaking Techniques.

So, are you ready to speak to lead?

## Tapping Into Your Natural Talents as a Speaker

Learning to speak as a leader will transform the most important component of your personal and organizational success: effective communication. In a recent survey conducted by the presentation software company Prezi, 70 percent of working Americans agreed that presentation skills are critical to their career success. [1] And a *Harvard Business Review* survey showed that communication and presentation skills are among the C-suite level competencies that companies prize most.[2] Another *HBR* article said it all in the title: "Leadership Is a Conversation." [3]

The good news is that to embody the qualities of a leader when you speak, your most powerful strategy is a simple one: tapping into your natural talents. Public speaking, that is, reflects who you are.

Should any role be easier for you?

What can send you down the wrong path where public speaking is concerned, however, is the idea that giving a speech is something *special*. You may see it as an out-of-the-ordinary event, a moment of high visibility in which you need to rise above your ordinary competencies. But the truth is, you're always performing!



## Public Speaking Is Just One More Performance

You know the phrase, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”? Well, you’re already doing it. Throughout each day, you adjust your demeanor and behavior based on the needs of the people and situation you’re facing. The “you” presenting to your board is different from the you at home with loved ones, out with old high-school friends, or trying to talk your way out of a speeding ticket!

The sooner you realize that even a high-profile speaking event is just another opportunity to perform, the more readily you’ll let yourself be yourself. That’s important, because audiences just want the real you. Any attempt to look and sound “excellent” will advertise itself as that. Listeners truly want to know you and to connect with *you*. Here are 5 ways to find out if you’re an authentic speaker and boost your credibility.

You already have the knowledge, expertise, and experience that got you to this place. Now, all you need is to let your natural talents come through—perhaps with some help from the best practices in spoken performance.



## Raising the Bar on Your Speeches

It's time, then, to recalibrate: to consider how you'll reach the next level and truly speak as a leader. To do that, you need to understand the presentational art. More about that in a moment. But first, here are three “mantras” you can keep in mind to give yourself a winning ticket in the Public Speaking Memorability Sweepstakes:

- **Pay more attention to your purpose than your content.** Chances are, you already have subject matter expertise coming out of your ears. But do you know how to conduct an audience analysis for business presentations, to be clear on your purpose?
- **Establish rapport and connect with audiences.** Do you give some thought and practice time to accomplishing this essential act of speaking for leadership? Do you know, for instance, how to master a conversational style with a large audience? Have you watched videotaped speeches you've given to observe whether it's happening? (If you don't routinely have someone videotape your speeches, start now!)
- **Be action-oriented.** At the height of America's “space race” with the Soviet Union in May 1961, President John F. Kennedy boldly declared: *“I believe*



*that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth.”* We achieved that goal on July 20, 1969, the day Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. As a speaker in your own profession, you should follow Kennedy’s lead by learning how to woo an audience and move people to *action*. It’s one of the best ways—sometimes the only way—to measure the success of your speeches.



## Take a Page ... and Take the Stage!

But your best guide for raising the bar in speaking for leadership, is to take a page from the actor’s art. Stage actors (as opposed to movie and TV actors) must project their persona across a considerable amount of space to achieve stage presence.

Consider this: the distance from the front of the stage to the last row of the orchestra in a Broadway theater may be 150 feet—and even longer when one or more balconies are included!

What’s your on-stage “size?”

Looking and moving confidently in public speaking is a clear mandate for leading others. Whatever the content of your message, your physicality needs to match your material in terms of impact. Make your movement, gestures, and overall level of energy *exactly large enough to reach the person farthest from you*. You'll create just the right "size" for your speech in terms of the audience and venue.

Okay, you may not be acting a role with the need to be heard in the last row without a microphone. But you may be amazed at the ways acting and business speaking are similar. For instance, the stage art and speaking to lead share this important fact: To communicate with your audience in public speaking, you must cultivate the ability to reach all the members of a large group. That means developing and projecting *physical presence*.

Whether it's gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, or your use of the stage, you need to become comfortable in the art of presenting not just information, but yourself. Yes, you will need to become larger than life. But you'll embrace your listeners, every one of them in the space you're speaking in, by doing so.

Finally, as a leader, you have a need to persuade and activate key stakeholders and "tough crowds," from employees to boards to external audiences. Clearly, this requires more than great platform skills. Public speaking audiences have sensitive antennae when it comes to a leader's authenticity and credibility. That's when *your* qualities as a selfless leader who's concerned with giving listeners his or her best will increase your power in the public speaking arena.

[1] Carmine Gallo, "New Survey: 70% Say Presentation Skills Are Critical for Career Success," *Forbes*, September 25, 2014.

[2] Boris Groysberg, "The Seven Skills You Need to Thrive in the C-Suite," *Harvard Business Review*, March 18, 2014.

[3] Boris Groysberg and Michael Slind, "Leadership Is a Conversation," *Harvard Business Review*, June 2012.

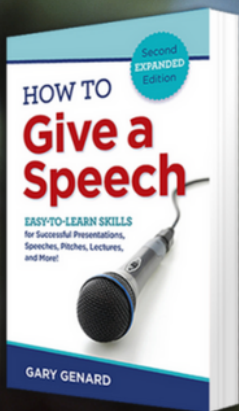
GARY GENARD

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Gary Genard, Ph.D., founder of [The Genard Method](#), is an expert in theater-based public speaking training.** As an actor and speech coach, he uses performance techniques to help executives and leadership teams speak with confidence and influence. Dr. Genard consults and trains for corporations, governments, nonprofits, and individuals worldwide. He is the author of the books *How to Give a Speech* and *Fearless Speaking*, and the blog *Speak for Success*.

To learn more, visit [the website](#) and connect with Dr. Genard on social!

