



# Say It Clearly

Speaking with confidence and authority is grounded on preparation and planning. Going in without a **plan** is scary even for the most self-assured presenter. Fortunately, you don't need to be a natural leader to speak with authority, or the queen of self-esteem to speak with confidence. With a little **practise**, anyone can begin to speak with authority and confidence. Whether you hope to ace a meeting, improve your presentation skills or project more power and authority when speaking, consider the following tips.

## 1. Take ownership of the room

Speaking from a place of strength and authority is mostly a mental game. Once you are in the room, recognise that you belong there. When you feel confident and comfortable, it's infectious.

## 2. Stand like a champion

Giving presentations and making speeches is very physical. When on stage or standing before a group of people, use the champion stance: position one foot in front of the other, place your weight on the back foot, hold your head up, drop your shoulders back, lean your torso slightly forward and smile.

## 3. Tailor your message to the audience

When approaching a presentation, a common mistake is to focus on exactly what you plan to say, with little consideration of the audience. Consider what the audience needs to hear, and how much they already know about the topic first. By understanding your audience and telling stories in a way that transports them, they can experience and visualise the impact of the message.

## 4. Get to the point

Your competition is the attention span. Rambling, unfocused speeches will earn you few supporters. A powerful presentation stays on message, is made up of short sentences and few asides, and gets to the point quickly.

## 5. Replace "um" with stronger filler words

In the moment, it's hard not to say "uh, um," while you try to gather your thoughts. Instead try to replace it with stronger filler words. When you need to gather your thoughts, use words such as "Now; You See; However," etc. The sentence, "Um, I was thinking..." suddenly sounds much more definitive and powerful when slightly adjusted to "You see, I was thinking...". It sounds intentional, and intention instills confidence.

## 6. Don't overcomplicate it

The quickest way to know whether or not someone knows what they're talking about is to pay attention to how many industry-specific words they use. If their vocabulary is a fashion show of insider adjectives, chances are they are speaking more from a place of theory and less from a place of experience. Great speakers and people who carry themselves well know how to get to the point, they don't dance around it. They say what needs to be said and leave it at that. If you use language that leaves your audience confused, you aren't impressing them, you are frustrating them. Keep it simple.

## 7. Don't swear

Unless you've built a reputation or a persona around your "edgy" delivery, nine times out of ten it's best to leave the potty mouth at home. When it comes to leading a room, it is in your best interest to keep the energy and the flow as positive as possible. Unless you know your audience very well, you never know where a misplaced word could lead. Don't add in an extra variable that doesn't need to be there. This doesn't mean you have to keep your language G rated. Say what you need to say, in the way it needs to be said.

## 8. Tell a story – if this fits your style

A well told story can turn a room. Stories are how we relate to each other. Stories are what ignite our imagination and turn a thought into a feeling, or an idea into reality. Whether you are explaining a data point, or hinting at the outcomes of a campaign, whatever the case may be, be descriptive. Bring what you are talking about to life, and let the people in the room be part of it. A presentation, or a speech, or even a single sentence with an added element of story becomes an experience.

Speaking with confidence and authority is not always easy. Even if you have the perfect stance, a well-planned speech and weeks of practice under your belt, you will probably still feel butterflies in your stomach. So warm up with your quick card exercises.