

"This powerful, practical book is loaded with vital ideas and insights that help you become an outstanding speaker and presenter on any subject. Having given 5,000 talks, I am delighted to see how much more I still have to learn."

• **BRIAN TRACY**, speaker, writer, business advisor



PAID TO SPEAK

Best Practices for Building a
Successful Speaking Business





THE ELEMENTS OF ELOQUENCE

Glenna Salsbury, CSP, CPAE

Eloquence. We know it when we see it—or when we hear and feel it. But defining eloquence may be a different endeavor. Pascal said, “Eloquence is a painting of the thoughts.” Webster’s dictionary defines it as “the fluent, skillful use of words to persuade or move hearers or readers.”

Those definitions certainly capture a speaker’s goal. The question remains: How does one achieve eloquence on the platform? What are the essential ingredients that produce a powerful, eloquent presentation?

Perhaps we must first agree that the audience intuitively recognizes eloquence. Hence, the essence of eloquence may be best explored from the listener’s viewpoint.

There are five elements that come together to create eloquence.

ELEMENT #1: THE ATMOSPHERE

Create an atmosphere of friendship and intimacy. This task is the presenter’s responsibility.

The room setup is critical in creating a friendly environment. Ideally there should be no empty seats. If the room is arranged theater-style, be sure there are fewer chairs than anticipated attendees. Stacked chairs nearby can be kept for any overflow. If the seats are stationary, as in an auditorium, then rope off the back of the room. Room setup is an essential part of coordinating with the meeting planner. For example, the event may be a dinner with round tables. It is important to request that the tables be placed as close to the presentation stage as possible and as close to one another as possible.

Finally, it is critical for you as the presenter to arrive early enough to verify the room arrangement. If changes need to be made, they need to be handled in cooperation with the meeting planner. Speakers should not direct the venue's staff to make the changes.

You may be wondering *why* the seating issue is so critical. The answer? The *energy* is lessened or even lost entirely wherever there is "dead" space in a room. Energy is sustained and even increased when people are shoulder to shoulder—warmth and friendship are enhanced by physical closeness. This is also why center aisles are not ideal. A speaker's energy dissipates when he or she speaks into that empty aisle.

Meet and greet participants personally as they arrive.

When feasible, a speaker should request that attendees have nametags, with the first name especially large and readable.

Then, as people enter the room, greet them warmly. Ask meaningful questions that relate to the presentation. For example, if the theme or objective of the meeting is enhancing customer service, a good question might be, "What is the biggest challenge you face in meeting customers' expectations?"

During your presentation, honor those you have met by referencing their wisdom or answering their questions.

Practice self-revelation, even self-deprecation, as you begin your program.

An audience wants to know you are authentic and genuinely present with them.

One of the best ways to demonstrate this is to poke fun at yourself early in your presentation. If you have a habit of speaking rapidly, for example, set up a humorous disclaimer. Or you may have an obvious challenge, like a broken leg, for example. Make fun out of what may be a potential distraction.

Remember, other than food and shelter, human beings' greatest needs are love and appreciation. By tuning in to your listeners you honor them. And by creating a sense of intimacy in the physical room arrangement, you will enhance the camaraderie from the outset.

ELEMENT #2: THE SPEAKER'S COMFORT

Create a climate of comfort for yourself.

When the speaker is nervous, tentative, or uncomfortable in any way, the audience senses this. There is an invisible, yet very distracting, tension that prevails.

Presenters need to create a relaxed, secure environment for themselves on the platform. When you are at peace, comfortable, and free from personal preoccupations or concerns, the energy in the room becomes relaxed and free.

The stage setup is critical in determining your comfort level. Ideally, you and the meeting planner have agreed upon your needs and preferences. Typical considerations may include:

- Do you want a lectern?
- Are you expecting to be on a riser?
- Who else is speaking, or what is happening before and after your presentation?
- What are your lighting preferences?
- Do you need special equipment?
- Does the emcee have a copy of your introduction? (Be sure you have an extra copy.)
- How will you access the stage? From your seat in the audience or from a green room area?
- Do you have a timer, or is there a timer in the audience?
- Do you know the meeting planner's timing expectations if the schedule is off-track when you begin to speak?
- What is your personal microphone preference? A cordless handheld? A lavalier? An ear/mouth piece? A corded handheld? You will always be much more at ease when you work within your comfort zone.

It is important to be in the room well before your scheduled presentation to make any essential changes. This also gives the meeting planner a sense of comfort, knowing there won't be any hectic last-minute adjustments. The goal is to create a peaceful environment for everyone involved!

ELEMENT #3: THE SPEAKER'S CONTENT PREPARATION

Your content should reflect the purpose, objective, or desired outcome of the meeting planner.

When you prepare your presentation, ask yourself these questions:

- What have I been asked to achieve? (The expectations of the meeting planner will provide your answer.)
- Who will be in the audience? (Clarifying every aspect of this question is critical to your content.)
- How much time will you have?
- What other speakers are on the same agenda? (Be clear about their subject matter to avoid duplication.)
- What research do you need to do to understand the history and purpose of this organization, industry, or topic?
- What *personal* experiential knowledge do you have that would fit the needs of the audience?
- What personal stories do you have that illustrate the knowledge you plan to share?

ELEMENT #4: THE SPEAKER'S MESSAGE

Listen to yourself. Listen to your audience, and be aware of their values.

There is an effective pattern that will enhance your eloquence. I call it the PSA—point, story, application—pattern.

Certainly your purpose will vary based on your reason for being there. Are you entertaining? Educating? Inspiring? Training? Motivating? Informing? Regardless of your purpose, your content is best created around the rhythm of PSA: point, story, application.

What are the main truths you want to convey? These will be your *points*. What *story* or illustration will you use to paint a picture that explains these thoughts for your audience? Each point should have at least one story to underscore your message.

Finally, you must determine how an audience member can *apply* what you

have said. Every point and story must have an application that will provide value for your audience long after they've left the room.

The PSA approach is bookended by a strong opening and conclusion. Here's a basic outline for your reference:

- **Your opening** is your opportunity to set up the theme or overall direction of your message. (You should have created a snappy or informative title that has given your listeners a sense of your content.)

The opening can be powerful when you begin with a great story, self-deprecating humor, or a meaningful question. Your purpose is to give the audience time to feel the completeness of your presence with them. Be fully conscious of connecting—with your eyes, your voice, your heart, your purpose for being there.

- **Your primary truths**—your points, stories and application—will be the body of your message. The controlling factors are your underlying purpose and how much time you have.
- **Your closing** wraps up your message. During the conclusion, your goal is to affirm the overall take-away message. This is part of the pattern of eloquence. You are creating an echo, leaving behind a message and value for listeners. One of the most effective means for achieving this is to refer back to your opening story or illustration. This reference then allows you to summarize your key points.

ELEMENT #5: THE SPEAKER'S CONFIDENCE

The greatest element in eloquence is intangible. And that is confidence.

True eloquence is often a by-product of a person's deep awareness of a subject or issue and his or her knowledge of its value and import. This knowledge gives you confidence. And this heightened sense of self can protect you from exhibiting arrogance, egotism, and self-promotion—all antagonists to eloquence.

In addition to your inner confidence, there is tremendous power in being free from preoccupation with yourself. In his book, *The Second Force*, Gary Emery discusses the essence of free-flowing rhythm in any undertaking. He suggests the need to "fall in tune with whatever you're doing." Emery goes on to say that people lose their "natural rhythm" when they get "reversed." He writes, "Look

for a feeling of love in whatever you are doing. Love has natural harmony and forward movement to it.”

There is tremendous freedom in focusing on connectedness, love, harmony, and being fully present. This is a critical aspect of eloquence through one central focus: Dare to be fully present and connected *off* the platform, every single day, and in every single relationship. Eloquence is a way of living, not simply a way of speaking. To be an authentic, eloquent platform professional requires speakers to focus on being authentic, eloquent human beings.

Known for her spontaneity, humor, and high energy, Glenna Salsbury, CSP, CPAE, Cavett Award recipient, speaks on leadership and customer service in the corporate world. Virtually all of her business is repeat and referral clients. Glenna also coaches professional speakers on how to tap into their authentic voices and deliver their material with eloquence. A graduate of Northwestern University, Glenna holds master's degrees from UCLA and Fuller Seminary. A member of the National Speakers Association since 1980, she received the CPAE Speaker Hall of Fame award in 1990 and was the recipient of NSA's highest honor, the Cavett Award, in 2005. Glenna served as the national president of NSA in 1997-1998. She resides in Paradise Valley, Arizona. Contact her at Glenna@glennasalsbury.com.