



# FIVE TIPS TO OWN THE STAGE



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You have a presentation coming up and you want to nail it? Never been good at speaking and you're ready to change that? Or, are you good and want to become great? Here are five absolutely essential tools

## 1. GET THEIR ATTENTION IN THE FIRST THIRTY SECONDS.

Start with something intriguing, invitational, or surprising to demand their attention right away.

- A. **The opening line of a short, applicable story:** "As her car careened off the road in a blinding storm she thought, 'Well, this is it!'"
- B. **A startling statistic:** "In three years, two-thirds of our sales force will have retired, along with all their knowledge."
- C. **A point particular to the group:** "You did it! You just surpassed our goal for the year and it's only November!"
- D. **Ask a question they will all want to know.** A medical professional opened with this question: "*What is the most dangerous substance? Is it alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription drugs, or hard drugs?*" [That held my attention to the end thinking, "You better pay this off." She did. The answer was, "*The one you like the most.*"]
- E. **Use a unique ability.** Can you juggle or do something amazing with a yo-yo? Seriously, if you can do it in a few seconds and relate it to your subject that's a great way to pull everyone in. I begin with guitar by "tapping" (playing with both hands on the fretboard) which few have seen or heard. I have a friend, a former gymnast, who opens with a backflip.

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**CAUTION! The most common mistake almost every amateur makes** is opening with a greeting. Do NOT open with: “Good morning.” “How are you?” “How’s everyone doing?” or any of those tired, cliché greetings that just scream “AMATEUR.” And please, unless you are a bonafide standup comic, do not open with a joke.

## 2. CHOOSE THE ONE THING YOUR SPEECH IS ABOUT.

If you could leave your audience with just *one* point, if they remembered only *one thing*, what would it be?

For instance, my signature keynote presentation is called “**The What IF? Keynote Experience**,” and the one thing it is about is: asking “What IF?” to generate possibility thinking. That’s it. If, like most amateurs, you attempt to jam too much into the time you have, your audience will remember nothing. On the other hand, if you choose one point - the most important point - and say and illustrate it over and over, they will remember it.

## 3. DON’T MAKE YOURSELF THE HERO.

Use stories of the audience, your teams, your mentors, or current events.

It is difficult to tell stories about yourself and your own achievements without coming off as over-proud and self-aggrandizing. Always make it about the audience, or the tool (or concept) you want them to get. Use stories that illustrate this without talking about yourself. There are ways to tell your own story in a self-effacing way, but it usually takes years to develop that ability. We will cover this in my Virtuoso Speaker program.

## 4. ALWAYS LAY IT IN THEIR LAPS.

Don’t expect them to just “get it.”

Always explain why this is important *for them*, how they can use it, or what’s so cool about the point for their lives or their businesses. You can even say it literally, “This is important for you because next time you.....”

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Or say, “You can apply this every time you...” Or relate it to something they’ve all experienced, “From now on, when this happens you can...” Especially, point out abilities they don’t know they have, but sense on some level. “And think about it... you know this already, you have the ability, you just haven’t tried it yet.” Everyone knows inside they have more potential than they’re using, more creativity than they’re using. Always come back to why and how your point is important for your audience. Take your point and lay it in their laps

## 5. USE THE FEWEST WORDS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR POINT.

Brevity is everything.

Ernest Hemingway once won a bar bet when someone challenged him to write a novel in six words. He paused for a moment and then said: “For sale. Baby shoes. Never worn.” Whoa.

Editing is the real work of masters. It is the essence of every great speech, comedy routine, song, story, newscast, movie, TV show, or presentation. I regularly re-write and tighten/shorten all my content, even that which I have used for years. A few times a year I cut out *all* my content and make it audition it’s way back in.

The simplest example of this is when people say, “She called at 3AM in the morning.” “...in the morning” is redundant and completely unnecessary.

As a comedian I was once advised by a fellow comedian to go home, write out my entire show, and then take out anything that’s not funny. It was the best presentation advice I ever got. It turned out I was often using two and three lines to set up a joke when I only needed one. I cut a full ten minutes out of a 60-minute show. But when I performed the new streamlined show, it took off!

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So, look at every sentence and ask, “Do I need all these words, could this be tighter?” Look at every paragraph and ask, “Do I need each sentence or will it work with fewer? Is there an easier way to say this? Look at every story and ask, “Can I make the point just as strongly with fewer details?” And finally, look at the overall presentation and ask, do I need every point. The weekend before creating this I delivered the sermon in our church, three services, and between the second and third I cut a full two minutes which I realized after two presentations were not necessary.

“I HAVE A DREAM.”

Dr. Martin Luther King wanted to say, “When I think about America I imagine and hope that things can be better.” That’s what he meant and what we heard. But what he said to make us hear that was, “I have a dream.” Let’s walk our way from what Dr. King meant, to what he said.

First, we know he’s thinking about America so we can cut four of the first five words “When, think, about, America.” Keep “I.”

Second, “...imagine and hope” are what he’s doing and a quick way to say that is, “dream.”

Third, “...that things can be better” is implied by it being a “dream.”

At that point he could have said, “I dream...” but that’s very general and open ended. Dr. King knew as a speaker the power of owning it and making it specific, “I have a dream.”

So, he said, “I have a dream...” eight times, filling it in each time with different hopes and you can see here how they said so much more.

## SUPERCARGE YOUR CAREER BY MASTERING THE STAGE

Whether you are a professional speaker who wants to get better, a leader in any field, or a savvy professional who sees how speaking mastery could ignite your career - which it most certainly will - I have a unique system which includes the tools, practices and secrets you need to become stellar from the platform in just three months.

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