

Life Of A Speech Club, Contest or Everyday Life

I delivered this speech to the Hanoi Toastmasters club in August, 2015 while in Vietnam for my 2nd volunteer mission as videographer with NOJFoundation and doing video for my documentary “Untold Story – Return to Tra Vinh”

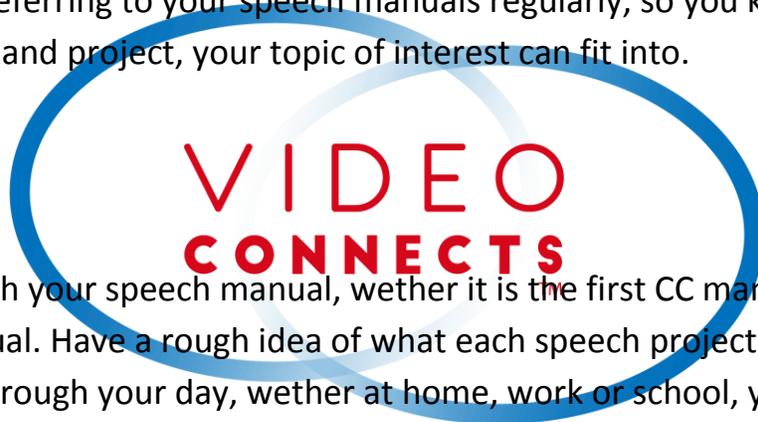
Intro

A new member told me once, the biggest challenge for them is finding topics to write a speech about. Stretching my memory, I vaguely remember being in a similar situation. I think it was more because I was afraid to talk in front of an audience. Today, I can easily find 2-3 topics to talk about , each & every day ! They key is to keep referring to your speech manuals regularly, so you know what speech manual and project, your topic of interest can fit into.

Body

Get familiar with your speech manual, wether it is the first CC manual or an advanced manual. Have a rough idea of what each speech project requires so that when you go through your day, wether at home, work or school, you can keep in mind the speech topic so when you hear or see a topic, you can quickly put together a “mental map” of what you can talk about. Maybe events of your day get you fired up about some “current issue of world news” or a personal interest story.

Always keep a pen and paper with you. Even a voice recorder on your smartphone is good to quickly record notes and thoughts about an idea for a speech and some content. Today it isn't as conspicuous talking into your phone, as bystanders will think you are on a phone call. True story – there are several topics that came flying through my mind while I was either driving that I thought I would remember when I got to work 15 mins later ? Never happened ! To this day I have no idea what my idea was and I know it was good. These “moments of bliss” are invaluable, come unexpectedly when our mind is free of current



thoughts and last only a fraction of a minute, if not less. I always have a pen and paper in most every pocket I have to jot down even a few words to help jar your memory later when you can fully write your thoughts down.

Writing your speech – What is your speech purpose? Entertain, inform?, call to action?, - start with a simple short opening line. Have a clear idea of what your purpose is. This will help shape your words and your actions while delivering, like stage use, pauses and body language.

Timing – I have seen several competition speeches go overtime & be disqualified – even at the TI Convention several years ago. Remember if you get more laughs, you must wait till the laughing subsides before continuing to speak. In total, that could add 1 minute to your speech of 7 mins maximum. So be ready to omit parts as your progress. This is an acquired skill and cannot be learned in 1 delivery.

Clock – always watch your clock – if not the club clock then use your smartphone or iPad clock. Never stop using as a backup. Over time you will notice how close you can “feel” the time by comparing your “feel estimate” to what the clock actually shows.

Ending – When you see the red light come on, you know you only have 30 secs left before going overtime & even being disqualified if you are competing. Craft your ending to be about 20-30 secs. So when you see the red light, no matter where you are in your speech, transition & go straight to your 20 sec ending. It may not be that smooth, but atleast you will keep yourself in the race. Over time with practise, this transition will be smoother.

“Once is Not Enough” - Practising & Delivering – I find that when I am practising to deliver a speech for competition, the fun really begins on the 3rd or 4th delivery. You begin to be comfortable with your speech and you are starting to have fun with it also. You may start to be so confident, you start throwing in new things to try and challenge yourself. The speech begins to take on its own character. You

actually start to feel you have a relationship with it. It begins to personify another person that you are connecting with. It takes on a life of its own, that you are a key player in.

After you deliver a speech, don't throw it away. Set it aside, printed & bound in a binder. Also store electronically in your "Speech Vault" – like Elaine's vault in Seinfeld. Create a folder on your computer and store the written speech there. There are always opportunities to present your speech again. Of course, you can only get credit once in your speech manual. Each time you present your speech, especially if it involves a topic of general interest, you can refine it and try new things in it. Eventually, you will have a library which is nice when you do club visits or have special events in Toastmasters.

Every several months, revisit your printed collection of speeches to see if you want to rewrite and present again elsewhere – maybe at your work or your volunteer location. If you write, you can extend your 7 min speech into a longer short story? If you blog, you can even extend into your blog? If you video (like I do) you can video yourself and attach to your website or your YouTube channel. This helps in promoting yourself as a speaker hopefully for \$\$\$\$

When you look at the evolution of an idea – a thought, it really is a complex, growing and evolving entity with a character and mission all its own.

It starts with;

- a brief thought (5-10 secs) – can I ?
- turns into a phrase – a sentence – maybe ?
- now you can converse with it
- turns into a table topic – 2 mins – even a short blog post
- turns into a speech – 7 mins – even a competitive speech
- turns into a longer blog post – full length 800 words
- evolve into a 45 minute educational or keynote

Conclusion

Thoughts of a “blink of an eye” can turn into several words over 5 secs, then a table topic for 2 mins, then a speech of 6 minutes, then an educational presentation of 30 to 45 mins, then a written short story of 20 pages. When you have a brief thought, don’t put it down. Keep it growing – start doodling and taking notes – give shape to your mission you want to achieve in the end.

