

# *Inspire Your Audience*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

An inspirational speech motivates an audience to improve personally, emotionally, professionally or spiritually and relies heavily on emotional appeal. It brings the audience together in a mood of fellowship and shared desire, builds the audience's enthusiasm, then proposes a change or plan and appeals to the audience to adopt this change or plan. This speech will last longer than your previous talks, so make arrangements in advance with your Vice President Education for extra time.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- To inspire the audience by appealing to noble motives and challenging the audience to achieve a higher level of beliefs or achievement.
- Appeal to the audience's needs and emotions, using stories, anecdotes and quotes to add drama.
- Avoid using notes.

Time: Eight to 10 minutes

In Project 9 you learned about the three types of persuasive speeches: those that inspire, those that convince and those that call listeners to action. This project focuses on the first type, speeches that inspire.

The purpose of an inspirational speech is to motivate an audience to improve personally, emotionally, professionally or spiritually. It encourages listeners to experience greater success, adopt higher goals or ideals, or contribute to the success or goals of an organization. The most common inspirational speeches are commencement addresses, speeches to motivate business or sports teams, political rally speeches and religious sermons.

An inspirational speech brings the audience together in a mood of fellowship and shared desire, builds the audience's enthusiasm, then proposes a plan and appeals to the audience to follow this plan. The inspirational speech relies more heavily on emotional appeal than on the logical appeal found in the other types of persuasive speeches. It strives to:

1. Connect with listeners' feelings, fears or goals at this particular time and occasion.
2. Explain why and how the situation is changing or why these feelings, fears and goals may be inadequate or counterproductive.
3. Motivate and challenge listeners to adopt higher, nobler feelings, values and goals, including the benefits of doing so.

## **Connecting with the Audience**

To inspire listeners, you must speak to a desire, need or concern that they already feel or one that they may not have yet recognized. Psychologist Abraham Maslow identified five human needs:

- Physiological needs - air, food, drink, sleep, shelter, warmth
- Safety needs - security, stability, protection from harm, structure, orderliness
- Belongingness and love - acceptance and approval, affection, part of a group
- Esteem-self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, achievement, reputation, prestige, recognition, status, competence, independence
- Self-actualization – realization of potential, self-fulfillment

If you tap into and build onto these needs in your speech, you will be able to inspire your audience.

For this type of speech, a thorough understanding of the occasion and listeners is essential. What is the purpose of your talk? What message do you want to convey? What are the listeners' backgrounds? What needs do they have? What is unique about them? What are they thinking? What do they want to hear? Using this information, you can better address their needs and concerns and develop a plan to inspire them.

Suppose you are a corporate executive and your company is undergoing a major reorganization. You want your presentation to inspire employees to embrace the changes and help the company become even better than its competitors. Employees will be concerned about their jobs (*Will I have one? How will it change? What about pay?*) - the "Safety" level in Maslow's hierarchy. They will be concerned about being part of a team (*Will I fit in with a new group of people and a new work environment? Does the company like me?*) - the "Belongingness and Love" level in Maslow's hierarchy. They will be concerned about their value to the company (*Will I keep my current position or be demoted? Are my skills still important?*) - the "Esteem" level of Maslow's hierarchy. They will be concerned about their personal growth (*Will there be opportunities for promotion? Will I be able to achieve my goals?*) - the "Self-actualization" level of Maslow's hierarchy.

Before you can inspire these people to welcome the changes ahead and strive to perform to the best of their abilities, you must address these concerns at each level. After all, an employee will have difficulty embracing a noble cause like helping the company to become more productive if he is worrying about losing his job in the process. You want to assure employees first that their jobs are secure, that they are valued as a team and individually and that the company recognizes their many contributions and wants them to achieve their potential.

Once listeners realize that you understand their concerns and recognize their accomplishments, they will be more receptive to your message.

## Changing the Status Quo

After connecting with the audience, your next step is to explain why and how changes will be occurring, or why listeners' current attitudes, feelings, values, concerns, hopes, desires, fears and goals may be inadequate or counterproductive.

For example, in a commencement speech you could discuss how students are leaving the safety and security of their school, their friends and families to enter the business world or university life, the ways in which their lives will change, and the challenges they will encounter.

In an inspirational speech at a political rally, you could discuss how and why the current political leadership came into power, their mistakes, how these mistakes have affected the community and listeners themselves, and how listeners' complacency will allow more mistakes to happen.

## Inspire Them

The last portion of an inspirational speech is devoted to the need for change, what listeners can do to bring about this change, and the benefits this change will bring for everyone. You motivate and challenge listeners to adopt higher, nobler attitudes, feelings, values, hopes, desires, behaviors and goals and elaborate on the advantages changes will bring to listeners. In some situations, you may want to mention the struggles that will be encountered in the process and what will happen to those who don't cooperate or who try to prevent the change from happening.

For example, if your purpose is to motivate a sales team to achieve new goals, you could explain why the goals are necessary and introduce the new sales plan. Then you could explain the advantages of this plan. Appeal to their pride and professionalism toward their work and toward the company. Point out that those who don't help the company move forward will not have a place in the organization, but those who do will have new opportunities and will experience the excitement of being part of a winning team. Then reenergize their enthusiasm and commitment to the company and to the sales goals.

## How You Say It

You can add drama and impact to your speech if you:

- **Use quotes, stories and anecdotes throughout the speech.** Human interest stories and anecdotes about overcoming adversity and achieving success attract the audience's interest and add meaning to your message.

- **Use language that unites listeners and establishes a bond** between you and them, such as you and we.
- **Use vivid words** that allow listeners to visualize all of the good things that will happen if they do what you say needs to be done.
- **Use action verbs** to convey power.
- **Use positive words**, not criticism, to stir them to action.

This type of speech, more than any other, depends on the quality and style of your delivery. Your presentation should be direct and urgent, showing that you really care about how your listeners react. You must prove to listeners that you are sincere and believe in your message. Be confident and forceful, and show enthusiasm and vitality. Use body language to demonstrate your conviction. Your gestures should convey energy and power.

Your conclusion should be emotionally powerful and dynamic. It should challenge listeners or demand that they commit to your cause, and the conclusion should dramatize the benefits of doing so. Finish with a memorable final statement.

## Your Assignment

This project emphasizes speaking to inspire. You are to:

- Select an occasion for which an inspirational speech would be necessary or appropriate. It could be something suitable for your club members, such as a speech about the importance of doing your best when preparing for meeting assignments. Or your talk could be for an imaginary occasion, such as a team pep talk or a commencement address. If you plan to present a talk that would fit a hypothetical special occasion, tell the Toastmaster of the meeting what occasion you are assuming, so it can be announced to the audience.
- Appeal to noble motives and challenge the audience to achieve a higher level of beliefs or achievement.
- Appeal to the audience's needs and emotions, and use stories, anecdotes and quotes to add drama.
- Avoid using notes, since they may cause the audience to doubt your sincerity and conviction.

Your speech also should include what you learned in previous projects about purpose, organization, word usage, body language, vocal variety, research, visual aids (if appropriate) and persuasive techniques. Incorporate appropriate suggestions from the evaluations you received in previous speeches. Review the Speaker's Checklist in Project 1 as you prepare your speech.

## Evaluation Guide for

# Inspire Your Audience

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE TO THE EVALUATOR:** *The speaker is to inspire the audience to improve personally, emotionally, professionally or spiritually, relying heavily on emotional appeal. The speech should appeal to noble motives and challenge the audience to achieve a higher level of beliefs or achievement. The speaker is to use the skills learned in previous projects and not use notes. In addition to your verbal evaluation, please complete this evaluation form by checking the appropriate column for each item. Add comments for those items where special praise is warranted, or where you can offer specific suggestions for improvement.*

	EXCELLENT	SATISFACTORY	COULD IMPROVE	COMMENTS/ SUGGESTIONS
• Was the speech topic relevant to the occasion selected?	_____	_____	_____	
• Did the speaker understand and express the feelings and needs of the audience?	_____	_____	_____	
• Was the speaker forceful, confident and positive?	_____	_____	_____	
• Did the speaker effectively use stories, anecdotes and/or quotes to help convey his or her message?	_____	_____	_____	
• Did the speaker's words convey strong, vivid mental images?	_____	_____	_____	
• Did the speaker's use of body language enhance his or her message?	_____	_____	_____	
• Did the speech uplift the audience and motivate them as the speaker intended?	_____	_____	_____	

What could the speaker have done differently to make the speech more effective?

What did you like about the speech?