

# powerful presentations



Though sometimes considered an activity to avoid at almost any cost, in reality, public speaking is something that almost everyone encounters at some point, regardless of career choice. In this issue of the Christian School Finals Competition Newsletter, ORU Oral Communication instructor Matt Olsen shares his top three tips for giving powerful presentations. While geared toward the Competition Oratory – 1005 event, participants entering any of the Competition Dramatic Arts events 1005-1065 will find these tips beneficial.

## POWERFUL PRESENTATIONS

*By Matt Olsen*



There are many technical aspects of public speaking, and many lists have been generated to assist with giving great speeches. However, there are three areas, that when taken care of, will provide a solid foundation for any presentation:

- Know and love your topic
- Speak to your audience
- Have fun with your topic

### KNOW AND LOVE YOUR TOPIC

Various exercises are available to guide you in your selection of a speech topic. However, in a nutshell, when the topic selection is your choice—pick a topic that you enjoy; a topic about which you can be passionate. At times you will encounter a situation where the option to select your speech topic is out of your hands. For example, in the Competition Oratory event students are given a choice of three topics for presentations. Select the topic from the three options that moves you

the most. You must enjoy your topic to present well. If you enjoy a topic you will be passionate about it.

After topic selection, turn your focus to preparation. There are two main parts of preparation—research and practice.

### **RESEARCH: KNOW YOUR CONTENT—DON'T MEMORIZE YOUR CONTENT**

Research is essential. Research enables you to know your topic, and knowing your topic is the foundation for a solid speech. Every other part of your speech, including your presentation, will be affected by how well you know your topic. Find out everything you can on your topic. Don't forget the human interest angle—interview people who are experts or have experiences related to the topic. The more you know about your topic, the broader your knowledge base becomes. A broad knowledge base provides the confidence to speak extemporaneously and with passion. Now when you speak, you engage the audience instead of simply providing them with a list of memorized facts.

### **PRACTICE: DO NOT LET THE FIRST TIME YOU GIVE YOUR SPEECH IN FRONT OF AN AUDIENCE BE THE TIME YOU ARE PRESENTING FOR THE JUDGES AT COMPETITION.**

There is an art to effective practice. Following these steps will help you make the most of your practice time.

1. Start with practicing in front of a mirror. Watch your expressions. Practice your vocals. During this step become a different person—you must become the animated expert on your topic that your research has made you.
2. Next, give your speech in front of one friend. (Find a friend that will let you practice in front of them a few times).
3. Practice with time cards using the following time guideposts for sections of your speech:  
Intro: 45 seconds  
Body: 1 -2 minutes per topic  
Conclusion: 30-45 seconds
4. Progress to presenting in front of a group of friends. Listen to their feedback.
5. Present in front of a class or youth group. Look at this presentation as a live dress-rehearsal.

As you can see, completing this number of practices requires starting early! Give yourself the time needed to fully complete each step. To a judge, it will be obvious who has practiced and who has not.

### **SPEAK TO YOUR AUDIENCE**

If you want your speech to be one that people remember and talk about well after it is finished, you must speak to your audience. They must be the focus of your attention, not the judges. Of course, this is easier to do if you know your topic. Here are a few basic things



you can do to dazzle your audience:

**Exude confidence:** Remember, you have done your research and practiced. You know your topic.

**Use an attention-getter:** Great attention-getters include anecdotes or stories (possibly gained from your research interviews), asking a question or providing startling statistics. A more creative example is singing a few bars of a related song.

**Nail your intro:** As mentioned earlier, though you should not memorize your speech word-for-word, you must know your introduction. It is important to nail the first few sentences of your speech.

**Set and adjust your pace:** It is customary for speech rates to be faster when talking in front of a group. Know this. Set your rhythm by deliberately slowing down your speech and setting a slower speaking rate as you nail your intro.

Additionally, take advantage of having a friend in the audience hold up time cards. This will help you be aware of where you are in relation to the guideposts you set in practice (see step #3) and allow you to make time adjustments if needed.

**Tell your story:** Remember you love this topic. This topic moves you. You do not want to mechanically recite facts; you want to convey your message to your audience with enthusiasm. You are eager to let them know why this topic moves you and additionally why it should move them.

## HAVE FUN WITH YOUR TOPIC

This is your time, you have researched, you know your topic, you have practiced and you have tactics for engaging your audience, now own the stage.

Whenever possible visit the area in which you will be giving your speech prior to the event. Time permitting, walk through every part of your presentation.

- Practice walking on stage, giving your name and speech topic.
- Look out over your audience; visualize where the judges will be sitting.
- Take a deep breath.
- Next, give an impromptu speech about anything (except your upcoming speech topic—this is not the time to practice it).
- Now, own the stage. Walk around the stage as you talk extemporaneously. Remember good speakers are not tied to a podium. You have done your research and practiced. Knowing your topic gives you the freedom to have fun with your speech and move around. Practice moving to a different part of the stage for each point of your speech. Engage and make eye contact with each section of your audience. Practice voice inflections and projection. Add an element of suspense as you speak by using appropriate



pauses. Make good use of upper body energy.

- Finish your speech. Hear the applause.
- Walk off the stage and take your seat again.
- You have just had a positive experience in the presentation environment. You had fun with a topic. Take this moment and build on it for the real event—Own the stage.

Working collectively, these steps provide the foundation for a very powerful presentation. Research provides the knowledge base needed to know your topic; knowing your topic brings the freedom to own the stage and to speak directly (almost extemporaneously) to your audience; knowing your topic and engaging your audience allows you to enjoy and have fun with your presentation. Remember if you are enjoying your presentation, your audience will feel it, and consequently so will the judges.

***The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. - Isaiah 50:4.***

Bio: Matt Olsen is the Dean of Men and adjunct professor at Oral Roberts University where he teaches Oral Communication. Olsen was instrumental in the planning, coordination and implementation of ORU's new Harbor event that connects incoming students with student leaders at registration each semester. He currently is working toward his Doctorate in Education at ORU.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

### **Competition Dates**

The Christian School Finals Competition 2009 is approaching fast. Be sure to mark your calendar for May 17-22, 2009.

### **Handbook**

Remember, the 2009 Competition Handbook is available online at the Competition Web site at <http://competition.oru.edu/> The password to access the Handbook is **faith2live**.

### **Cost to participate**

- Student or sponsor \$250.00. ORUEF member student or sponsor receives a \$25.00 discount per participant
- Deposit of \$75.00 per person due on April 1st or March 1st for Early Registration.
- Balance due at time of registration. See Early Registration Information below.
- Athletic Team event entry fee \$50.00 per team
- Academic Bowl Team entry fee \$50.00
- Track and Field Team entry fee \$75.00
- Room key deposit \$25.00 per room key due at Registration

An **Early Registration Discount** of \$250 is available to schools that fully register (submit appropriate deposit and all Group 1 forms) by March 1, 2009. The \$250 discount will be subtracted from the total deposit due.

### **Forms**

All forms are now online. To access the forms, you must use your school's unique password. New schools must request their password. This is a different password than the one used to access the Handbook. Please contact the Competition office if you do not have a password.

### **Competition Deadlines**

Please take note of the deadlines for Competition:

- March 1, 2009 - Early Registration Discount of \$250 per school (including deposit and all Group 1 forms)
- April 1, 2009 - Deposit and Group 1 forms
- April 15, 2009 - Event entries for the following categories:
  - Essay Writing - 115
  - Poem Writing - 120
  - Short Story - 125
  - Yearbook – 146
- April 1, 2009 – Registration forms for Science projects (Physical Science – 130 and Biological Science– 135) due (These forms are available online at [www.sciserv.org](http://www.sciserv.org). See handbook for a detailed description of the forms needed.)

### **Time Limits**

Various Competition events have time limits. When preparing for such events, make sure to stay within the constraints established for each category as there are penalties assessed for going under or over the time limits.

### **Bible Memory – 105**

- Remember that each student must quote two consecutive verses from the same chapter per round.
- Versions that can be used:
  - King James Version
  - New King James Version
  - New International Version

### **Contact Us**

International schools needing invitation letters to obtain Visas to attend Competition should contact us by February 2009.

We would love to hear from each of you as your school is making arrangements to attend Competition 2009. We are available to assist you with your preparations. Please feel free to call our office at 918.495.6856 or e-mail us at [competition@oru.edu](mailto:competition@oru.edu).

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