



# Succeeding at Your Next Speaking Engagement

Women in leadership roles face many challenges and many firsts. Depending on the industry and organization, there are different requirements, opportunities, and challenges for senior leaders, but there is one expectation that is universal—making presentations.

Senior leaders can be expected to speak in a variety of settings and to various audiences from community members and employees to boards of directors and investors. Understanding some basic, but important, public speaking tips can help make your time at the podium a success.

Even the most seasoned speakers say that they are never completely relaxed and ready before making an important presentation. Many say that a certain amount of nervousness gets the adrenaline going and even helps to make a better presentation. How can you build your skills and confidence to ensure that every speaking engagement is a success? The following public speaking tips can help.

## Learning from others

One exceptional source of input as you think about your presentation are speakers who have impressed you. These may be individuals you have heard in the past or those whose presentations you can readily access online or through a variety of podcasts. Reviewing these podcasts or recordings and considering how these speakers are able to connect with their audiences can provide some valuable insights.

## Key takeaways



Every speech provides an opportunity to improve your abilities.



Observe how others perform at the podium and incorporate the best of them into your next engagement.



Be cognizant of your inner dialogue and how you present yourself.



Knowing what you want is key, but equally important is knowing how not to present yourself. Seek out local events, such as business networking events and educational seminars, that you can attend to experience a wide variety of speakers. Make notes during the speeches and presentations regarding what you like and do not like so you can incorporate or avoid those behaviors.

## Understanding your audience

Another critical step in your preparation process should be gaining a thorough understanding of the audience you will be presenting to and the goals of the presentation. For instance, if you are speaking to a group of potential investors, the goal of the presentation would be to get investors interested in supporting your organization. Doing some background research on potential attendees could give you some insights into what's important to them, other companies they have invested in, as well as any potential concerns or barriers that may exist that you could address in your presentation.

Or, perhaps you will be speaking to a group of employees about how your company is performing. Your goal would be to ensure their continued commitment

and engagement with the organization. Employees might be interested in learning more about how company performance may affect their job security or future opportunities with the company, changes that may be coming that could impact their jobs or work environment, whether raises or bonuses may be part of their futures, and so on.

The more you understand what matters to your audience, the better equipped you will be to make a presentation that resonates with them and keeps them engaged.

## Balancing logos, ethos, and pathos

The philosopher Aristotle coined the terms ethos, pathos, and logos centuries ago, but they are still relevant today and can help speakers ensure a good balance between key elements of a presentation built to move or persuade an audience.

- Ethos involves convincing an audience of your credibility.
- Pathos is an appeal to emotion which can often be best achieved through compelling stories.
- Logos is an appeal to logic which can often be achieved through facts and data.

While senior leaders are often focused on facts and data, they should also be able to appeal to emotion. Stories or examples can be a good way to achieve this, whether personal stories or stories of others who are relevant to your topic. For example, a story about how former investors or employees had personally benefited from their relationships with your organization can be compelling. Personal stories can be even more impactful and also serve to strengthen the ethos element of your presentations by providing a sense of your personality or character.

## Developing a commanding presence

Delivering a powerful presentation is about more than what you say—your impact is also affected by how you deliver your presentation. Professional speakers offer the following tips:<sup>1</sup>

- **Be mindful.** Maintain awareness of your body language, your inner dialogue, and your emotions while you are at the podium or interacting with others.
- **Be clear** about your purpose and include how you want your audience to relate to what you're presenting and how they can envision incorporating the knowledge into their day-to-day lives to help them reach their goals.

- **Be focused** on your emotional tone. The energy you carry onto the stage and while interacting with others can make or break your message. Be cognizant of how you present yourself.

Finally, be open to opportunities to learn from each and every speaking experience. You will not get it perfect every time and, in fact, most expert speakers continue to learn and grow throughout their careers. Every new opportunity will glean new insights and best practices—both from what you do well and areas of opportunity for improvement.

### Steps to consider

- Record a meeting in which you are presenting. When listening or watching it afterward, make a note of any words or phrases that you use repeatedly and work to use alternatives or avoid them altogether.
- Ask peers for honest feedback in regard to your body language and your personal energy.
- Take advantage of opportunities to practice speaking by joining Toastmasters® or other groups that allow people to hone their skills.

---

## The support you need

For more Key4Women resources to help you reach your goals, [visit key.com/women](https://key.com/women) or [email us to learn more.](#)

Would you like to weigh in on future topics? Please take our [survey](#).



<sup>1</sup> Marcia Reynolds. "Powerful Presence: What You Deliver Beyond Your Words." Speaker Magazine. <https://speakermagazine.com/powerful-presence-what-you-deliver-beyond-your-words/>  
Toastmasters is a registered trademark of Toastmasters International.