



# **HEROIC PUBLIC SPEAKING**

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Guide To Making World Saving  
Speeches

**50 Tips You Can't Afford to Ignore if You  
Want to Wow Your Audience and Win Praise  
and Plaudits Every Time**

# We can make you a better speaker

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**100% guaranteed**

Hello, we are Amy & Michael Port; we can make you a better speaker.

When you elevate your public appearances from “speeches” to “performances,” then you save the world and change lives.



It doesn't matter whether your performance is in front of your future boss, your current team, your lover, a prospective client or a full house at Carnegie Hall; being able to perform with power will improve your life and the lives of those around you.

For a long time we studied drama, performance and theater.

We each spent three years earning our MFAs (Master of Fine Arts): Michael at NYU's Graduate Acting Program, and Amy at the Yale School of Drama. Both programs are arguably the two best acting programs in the country.

Our schoolmates included Oscar, Emmy, and Golden Globe winners like Michael Hall (star of *Dexter* and *6 Feet Under*), Tom McCarthy (director and writer of the film *Spotlight*), Daniel Dae-Kim (star of *Lost* and *Hawaii 5-0*), Billy Crudup (star of *Almost Famous*, *Mission Impossible*), Svetlana Efremova (*The Americans* and *The West Wing*) Debra Messing (star of *Will & Grace* and *Smash*), Sanaa Lathan (star of *Love & Basketball*) Wood Harris (star of *The Wire*), James Shanklin (*Hell on Wheels*) David Costabile (*Breaking Bad*, *Billions* and *Low Winter Sun*) to name just a few.

Yes – we're name-dropping. But our point is that you've got to give your audience the same experience they get at the movies, or on Broadway.

We did everything from David Mamet to Shakespeare. Michael guest-starred in shows like *Sex & The City*, *Third Watch*, *All My Children*, *Law & Order*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Down to Earth*, *Another World*, and more. Amy performed at some of the top regional and repertory theaters in the country. We both did countless TV commercials and voice-overs for companies like Budweiser, eTrade, AT&T, Sprint, Coors Beer, Pizza Hut, MTV ... the list goes on.

After our years in performance, we earned our way to success by building companies with great content, stellar presentation skills, and smart branding.

Michael's been called an "uncommonly honest author" by the *Boston Globe*, a "marketing guru" by *The Wall Street Journal*, a "sales guru" by the *Financial Times*, "a public speaking phenom" by Jonathan Fields and "the best public speaking coach in the world" by Lewis Howes. The founder of MastermindTalks, Jayson Gaignard, declared, "Michael Port is the best speaker I've ever seen." He writes for the biggest publications including Entrepreneur Magazine and Forbes and appear on major television networks from MSNBC's *Your Business* to *One-on-One* on PBS. Hundreds of thousands of audience members have given Michael the highest overall speaker ratings at conferences around the world.

But now we do something different. Now, we dedicate ourselves to making you a better speaker. 100% guaranteed. It's a simple but big promise. And we're delivering. In fact, Geoffrey H. Garrett, a senior attorney at Byrd Garrett Wealth Preservation, said: "As a military pilot and B-747 captain over a forty-year career, I received every kind of skill-specific training and encountered every sort of teacher. I consider Amy to be, hands down, the best trainer-coach I have ever met. I cannot recommend her services highly enough."

This guide is our gift to you. It's just a tiny fraction of what we teach in our Heroic Public Speaking training programs.

It's our hope that you'll read this and – one day soon – raise your hand and say, "I'm ready to perform."

Michael and Amy Port  
Co-Founders, Heroic Public Speaking

# 50

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## Public Speaking Tips You Can't Afford to Ignore

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**If You Want to Wow Your Audience and  
Win Praise and Plaudits Every Time**

**1**

**You don't have to tell them what you're going to tell them.**

You've probably heard it before: "*Tell them what you're going to tell them. Tell them. Tell them what you've told them*" That's not bad advice. But it's not always the case. It doesn't have to be that way. After all, every other speaker is doing it. If you're going to make your audience sit up and pay attention, wouldn't it be worth doing something that every other speaker *isn't* doing? Try a *pattern-interrupt* instead. Open with a surprise, a shock, or an interaction. Open with something that makes a connection, or something that entertains, or something that leaves you exposed. Be different. Be memorable. Often, it's the journey that's exciting. If you already know where you're going, you might not pay as much attention along the way.

## 2

### **Cut. Cut. Cut.**

I often see (and you often see) extraneous detail added into stories and speeches that disrupt the flow. Cut to the meat. Cut to the chase. Include specifics at critical parts of the story. You don't need to pad out your speech to make an impact. Instead, you need to focus—with intention—on what's important. Your audience needs a lot less information to get to the “aha” moment than you might think.

## 3

### **An entire story is designed to serve the end.**

Whatever precedes the punch line must serve the pay-off. See Tip 2. Does the audience need to know what color socks you're wearing or how long it took you to get to the venue? The only things that matter are things that serve the story.

## 4

### **Establish right away that you know what the world looks like for them—and what it could look like.**

Vividly paint the picture. Meaningful speeches are transformational experiences for your audience. Start out by showing “This is what you've got today, and this is how it could be.” This builds immediate rapport and hooks the audience's interest. You know them. You understand them. You've got their back ... and you've got a better way.

## 5

### **Reward them for contributing in some way.**

Don't encourage interaction just to ignore it. Your audience isn't made up of chimpanzees: they don't need treats. They're intelligent beings who do, however, need some acknowledgement.

Imagine being asked to participate in something—whether it's holding a door open for a friend or running a project—and not even getting a nod of thanks in return. You start to feel bad right away.

## 6

### **Use open hands with your palms up instead of finger-pointing.**

Sometimes the finger looks like a gun. It also feels accusatory even if you don't mean it to be. Instead, extend your hands with your palms up as if offering up alms. It's more gracious, more inclusive, and more giving.

## 7

### **People say “yes” when we've affected them intellectually, emotionally, or physically.**

Can you include those three elements in your presentation? Can you give your audience intellectual gristle to chew on? Can you make them gasp or cry or laugh with an emotional connection? Can you get them physically engaged (you can tell by the way they're sitting)

with your ideas and message? If not, learn how and start today.

8

### **Outline your content, then unpack it.**

If you're teaching a curriculum like, say, *Book Yourself Solid*, which is distinct from a message-based speech like my Think Big Revolution keynote (you can see a 16-min trailer of it on YouTube), outline first, then go back and unpack it. This isn't the same as "tell them what you're going to tell them." It's a learning plan for what's coming next. It serves as both high-level overview before you get granular, and a teaser for the exciting content still to come.

9

### **Use props.**

What can you show or demonstrate or depict with objects rather than words? Can you stimulate your audience visually as well as auditorily? Props aid recall: If you want to be remembered, you can be visually arresting (without dying your hair) by using props to drive your points home. Most speakers don't do this. That's just one of the reasons why you should.

10

### **Use contrast and extremes to create excitement and keep attention.**

Contrast can be emotional, physical, and structural. This basic technique is integral to every great play and film, and every great piece of music. Consider your performance like a roller-coaster ride. Can you take me to the edge of a cliff before artfully lowering me, with love and care, to a safe place? Can you make the highs higher and the lows lower?

## 11

### **Keep moving forward.**

Never let your energy drop. You're on stage to take your audience to their final destination. Keep your foot on the gas pedal. You'll have uphill moments when your speed slows but the power and intensity increase. You can be both calm and energetic simultaneously. The great actor does this brilliantly. You, as a speaker, need to do this as well. The best way to be effortlessly spontaneous is to rehearse to the point of mastery. How often do you have to stop and think about "spontaneously" adjusting your shoelaces? Never. When you know your material, you can deliver it like it's the first time every time you perform it.

## 12

### **Stand & land.**

Let your punchlines, point lines, and purpose lines land. That means you don't move while you're delivering them. You remain physically rooted to the spot so that your body reinforces the gravity of your words.

**13**

**You can move and talk at the same time.**

People do it all the time in real life. The idea that you can't walk and talk at the same time is ridiculous. But don't sway, and don't move when you're landing your most important points (see number 14 above).

**14**

**Don't say "I'm glad to be here."**

Show them that you're glad to be there instead. Your audience should see it in your actions and hear it in your words. Besides, what's the alternative? That you're pissed off that you're there?.

**15**

**Don't tell them you're going to tell a story.**

Just tell the story.

**16**

**Be conscientious about connecting the dots or you'll lose your audience.**

If you're presenting a series of interconnected concepts or stories or characters, make it as simple as possible to understand. Remember: even though you know your story inside out, your audience is hearing it for the first time.

**17**

### **Give them time.**

If you like to encourage note-taking during your performance, make sure you give people enough time to write down what you want them to write down. Spell things out if necessary. You'll lose your audience very quickly if they've got their heads stuck in their notebooks or laptops and you're already on to your next point.

**18**

### **Never apologize for the amount of time you don't have.**

The minute you apologize for what they're not getting, your audience will start to feel that they're missing out on something. They should feel that the amount of time you have is the perfect amount of time. You can blow their minds in just a few minutes. Look at all those great TED talks for inspiration.

**19**

### **Let them go early.**

Audiences always like to be let out a few minutes early – even if they love your performance. There are no prizes for endurance in performance. Let them leave a few minutes ahead of schedule; they'll thank you for it.

**20**

### **Enlist the self-proclaimed experts in the room.**

There's often somebody in the audience who knows more than you – or thinks they do. Get them on your side. Talk them up. Kill them with lavish praise. It'll help knock the chips off their shoulders and get them to support you and your message.

**21**

### **Embellishment is positively OK**

You'll paint a more vivid picture with brighter colors. It's a performance, a show. Be honest, but embellish for the sake of your performance. You can combine multiple stories into one story if it produces a better result. Go for what is most dramatic and effective to get your message across. This is different than lying. Lying is something you do to make yourself look better.

**22**

### **Remember that they don't know what you know.**

It's the first time they've heard your info. Don't assume prior knowledge. It can only help

your message if you're comprehensive and to the point.

**23**

### **Don't use acronyms.**

Or, if you do, explain them the first time around. Take the time to make them clear.

**24**

### **Show them what the world will look like if they don't change.**

Make it clear that if they don't follow your advice, or come with you on your journey, their world will probably remain the same as – if not get considerably worse than – it is today. Just do this respectfully and without hyperbole.

**25**

### **Study stand-up comedy.**

Watch stand-up comedians for their approach. Watch their setup, delivery, and payoff. See how they own the stage. Standup comedians can even turn a water bottle into a tool for creating magic moments.

## 26

### **Be careful using idioms.**

Across cultures – even cultures that share a language – there are big idiomatic differences that can turn your message opaque for an audience that doesn’t “get it.” If you’re an American talking to a British audience about bangs, bleachers, boondoggles, or fanny-packs, you’ve likely lost them already.

## 27

### **Don’t make jokes about difficult topics.**

Stay away from jokes that are awkward, insensitive, or otherwise confrontational. If you want to make yourself the butt of your jokes, that kind of self-deprecating humor can work very well. This doesn’t mean you can’t lighten up the mood when talking about difficult subjects, but that’s different than poking fun or making jokes at other people’s expense.

## 28

### **If you tell them you care about something, you also need to tell them why.**

It’s not good enough to say, “I’m a strong proponent of women’s rights.” It may seem obvious but you’ve got to hook them in with your reasons. Your why is what makes your beliefs more powerful and your case stronger.

**29**

### **Boom, boom, BANG.**

The rule of three is one of the most important performance techniques you can use to grab attention and make people laugh. It's powerful, it's potent, and it packs a punch. (See what I did there?)

**30**

### **Understand stage blocking.**

You need to remain physically open so everyone in the room can see you at all times. That means you don't hide or turn to face anybody other than your audience ... unless for dramatic effect.

**31**

### **Deliver big moments center stage (usually).**

Centering yourself physically on the stage is the same as bolding and centering a headline in a newspaper. It says: "This is important – pay attention." When you designate center stage as the pivotal place for your performance, you can more effectively use the rest of the stage to support your main message. There are always exceptions to this concept, so be sure your blocking works before the big day.

**32**

**That said, don't head straight for center stage.**

When getting onstage for the first time, avoid making a beeline directly to the center before starting your speech. It looks stiff and clunky.

**33**

**Learn how to rehearse.**

Rehearsal is the key to a successful performance. It's also the most effective method for reducing anxiety and calming pre-performance anxiety. If you know what you're going to do because you're well rehearsed, you'll feel more prepared and, thus, less anxious. It's not just repetition, but training. If you have to stop a rehearsal, start back up at the exact same emotional, physical, and energetic state. Otherwise, you'll lose the through-line and arc of the speech.

**34**

**When you land a joke, bask in the glory.**

If public speaking is notoriously difficult, making people laugh when you're performing is devilishly tough. So, when you nail a joke, be sure to bask in the moment.

**35**

**Voice & speech training are not something you master in an hour.**

It takes some time. I studied voice and speech daily for three years at NYU's Graduate Acting Program, and I'm still learning. Voice and speech training can make you sound more substantial so people will pay attention to you. It can also help you manage your nerves.

**36**

**Don't push.**

Pushing is a theater term for overacting. When you push, you can't show emotion. When you push, the work feels false and self-absorbed. It's insincere. Insincerity is the enemy of truth. Truth is integral to performance.

**37**

**Just because you're feeling it doesn't mean they are.**

Major emotion for you as the speaker doesn't always translate to major emotion for your audience. It's only in rehearsal and practice that you find out what works and what doesn't. You might be moved to tears while your audience is bored to tears. Big difference. Your job is getting the audience to think differently, feel differently, and/or act differently. How you feel doesn't matter. Achieving your objectives for the people in the audience does.

**38**

**Get everything in before the audience claps.**

Then, get off the stage quickly. Don't let them see you doing housekeeping or making routine announcements. It breaks the theatrical experience.

**39**

**You can also stay onstage at the end if you invite them to join you there.**

That way you're hosting the party. You don't want them grabbing you in the restroom: nothing dissipates magic like a damp handshake in the gent's.

**40**

**Anyone can make a sexy sizzle reel.**

Meeting planners want to know you can hold the stage for an extended period of time. Make sure you can show them video of five to fifteen minutes of continuous performance where you deliver a strong message and truly engage the audience. Any good editor can piece together a bunch of good lines from different speeches but it doesn't tell the viewer that you can hold and own the stage.

**41**

### **Get right to it.**

Most speakers waste time on too much exposition and preparation and the audience starts thinking, Let's go already. Instead, hit the accelerator hard and launch straight on. Let them know what they're in for by what they experience from you in the first thirty seconds.

**42**

### **Stop using the storyteller voice.**

It's false. Tell a story to ten thousand people the same way you'd tell the story to your best friend. Don't use some dramatic made-up voice. Study your favorite speakers. They make you feel like it's just you and them in the room.

**43**

### **Simplify.**

You have no time for self-indulgence. You must be clinical and surgical with your material and your message. Don't use overly obfuscating verbiage when you can say things simply. See what I did there? We get attached to bits that really don't further the story or resonate with the audience, perhaps because they're funny or easy for us or have a special meaning to us. But it's not about us. It's never about us. It's always about them.

**44**

**You don't need to slow down.**

Most speech teachers tell you to slow down. Sometimes that makes sense. But if you're worried about speaking too quickly, you're focused on the wrong thing. Instead of slowing down, focus on pausing. Speakers who speak too slowly have a soporific effect. Sometimes, I speak quickly. But I pause at the right places. That creates rhythm. Sometimes, I slow down when it serves the speech to slow down. Audiences can easily absorb the important points if you give them pause time.

**45**

**If you have to explain a joke, it's just not funny.**

No joke gets funnier with explanation. Choose a better joke or let it go altogether.

**46**

**Never turn your back to the audience.**

Unless it's intentional to make a point or convey an emotion, of course.. When you need to move upstage (that's toward the back of the stage, away from the audience), walk backwards if possible. Try not to turn your back on them.

47

### **Never yell at your audience.**

This shouldn't need saying, but we sometimes we get so fired up about what we believe in, that we start shouting at the audience. Be aware of how you're coming across. Additionally, if you need to get everybody's attention after a coffee break, for instance, simply raise your hand and stand silently. People will get it and follow. If you yell at an audience to come back to their seats, you'll lower your status and potentially create some animosity with the audience members.

48

### **If you think you're going to rise to the occasion, don't bet on it.**

Under pressure, you don't rise to the occasion; you fall back on your training. If you think you're going to somehow be inspired to come up with the right material during the speech without significant preparation, don't bet on it.

49

### **Have fun.**

Often, people will book a speech and then worry about it that they don't work on it and wind up frustrated that they're doing it. That's not a particularly powerful place to be when performing. The more fun you have, the more fun the audience will have. If you enjoy giving the speech, they will be much more relaxed. You can make mistakes, lose your place, and even trip all over yourself, and still steal the show.

## Read *Steal the Show*.

Read [\*Steal the Show: From Speeches, To Job Interviews, To Deal Closing Pitches, How to Guarantee a Standing Ovation For All the Performances In Your Life\*](#). It's a Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and Publisher's Weekly bestseller. And, the President of Starbucks, Howard Behar, said, "*Steal the Show* is the most unique and practical book on public speaking ever written." So, there's that.

## Many Rules Are Made To Be Broken

But to break the rules of performance, you need to know what the rules are. You need to know why they exist and exactly why you're breaking them. When you break the rules with a real purpose, you can produce a better and more effective result.

Be prepared if you want to make life-saving, world-changing speeches. That's what *Steal the Show* can do for you: make you a much, much better public speaker and performer in all aspects of life.

A performance can be about wowing an audience, but it can also be about simply connecting with one person. Most importantly, you don't have to be an entertainer to be a performer. And you don't have to think of yourself as a performer today to use what I teach here and in *Steal the Show* tomorrow.