



**Toastmasters International  
District 71 Conference  
4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 2005**

*Seminar Option A*

The Power of the Pen  
Or  
The Will of the Quill

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

11<sup>th</sup> May 2002 was one of the happiest days of my life until about 10 past 5. You can imagine what its like. I had just won the District International Speech contest and I was basking in the glory. Now you may know that I'm one of the biggest advocates for the benefit of competition. Whether you win or lose it pushes you harder and develops you further than any other activity – but winning is better. So I was allowing myself to bathe in the limelight when someone – who will remain Phillip Khan-Panni – came up to me and said – you realise you need two more speeches now – two more speeches – you have to be joking. Did he understand that this winning speech was bourn from a brilliant flash of inspiration, had been lovingly polished for almost six months and now he tells me that I need two more! Could I write them of course I could in fact I wrote about 8 but none had the pizzazz and feeling that my original speech had. It led me to advise anyone who was considering winning the District championship to start with 3 speeches ready at the club level because 3 months a'int enough to generate 2 new speeches. I did that the following year and then lost in the Division contest ah well at least I had 2 ready for next year.

## 2. MY EARLY EXPERIENCE

This experience merely confirmed my earlier findings that content is everything. When you get to the district level contest I suspect there are at least a dozen speakers who will be every bit as good as you at delivering a speech so the only thing that divides you is the content and to me this is the key skill of public speaking. I know we think a lot about platform mechanics but I've been in both speeches – one where a speaker from the bank of England started to speak and he was one of the worst technical speakers I've heard and yet his story was so spellbinding that nobody cared all they talked about was the power of his message. I've been to other presentations where a very polished performance has been given but the audience have muttered I didn't get much out of that . So this reinforced what I learnt after 6 months at Toastmasters. I went there to become more confident in front of an audience – you see I was the shy retiring type – anyone else do that ? After 6 months I felt so confident I thought well that's Ok you can stand up and say anything – but of course the point is you can't .

## 3. THE GREATEST SKILL

And to me writing is one of the most difficult skills in public speaking . Not just public speaking but in all formats of communication – Actors don't have acting doubles but they do have script-writers. When people at work have a wedding speech they come and see me – any of you get that too. In 15 years no-one has asked me how to perform a wedding speech, they all ask the same thing – what do I say?

In a recent tribute to Peter Cook, John Cleese marvelled at Peter's ability to write and confessed it took him a week to write a six minute sketch. So there's no doubting how hard it its os I 've come up with a method to encourage me to follow a process that helps speed up writing.

## 4. WHY ARE 5-7 SPEECHES SO VALUABLE

We're going to concentrate on the 5-7 minute speeches we use in Toastmasters but I know many of you will be making longer speeches. I am skipping along the boundary of professional and amateur speaking and all the speeches are longer than that but an old and wise toastmaster (I can say that because he's not here) once said to me never write a 30 minute speech write 5x 7 minute speeches (he couldn't count by the way).

But the 5-7 minute speech is universal building block that will allow you to write anything. Also there's so many networking functions now with 1 minute 5 minute talks to sell yourself that the art of writing concise communications is a real gift for business people.

## 5. THE MAJOR BENEFIT OF GOOD SPEECH WRITING

One final benefit to me the hardest part of speaking is when people know you're a good speaker and they come up to you during coffee and they say. "When you've finished would you just say a few words" we mirror that at Excalibur by giving people hot speeches so they don't know the title of their speech until they meeting starts. Using a process allows you to structure information very quickly and the more you use it the easier it becomes.

## 6. AVAILABLE NOTES

I've made the notes for this talk available on my web-site [www.bobferguson.biz](http://www.bobferguson.biz) in pdf format. Just go to the "downloads" page and click on Toastmasters Conference Nov 05.

## 7. DEFINING THE SUBJECT

So let's start writing the speech. What do we need to get going – a subject yes and that 's the hardest part – that's what I struggle with all the time I was getting ready to go to America.

Now they say that speech writing is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration but what's the hardest part – the 1% inspiration isn't it and of course if you don't have it you end u with a perspirational speech.

To me subjects should be something you care about, a passion or a real source of annoyance because those are the subjects that make the communication emotional and I always believe communication with emotion is far more powerful. I suggest that the more emotionally attached you are to your subject the more deeply you'll connect with your audience

## 8. A SUBJECT DATABASE – CATCHING THE BUTTERFLY

So if you're going to get inspiration it's only logical that you should know – how to catch a butterfly. You've heard people talk of the elusive butterfly – isn't that what inspiration is like illusive.

If you want to catch a butterfly you need two things – a net and a butterfly. Getting your net is the easy bit but once you've got it you've got to find the butterfly and there's two ways to do that – you can go where butterflies normally lurk and catch what's there or you can permanently march around with a net on the off-chance that a butterfly will go past. And that's just how inspiration works – In my case the net is a database. Every time I get a bright idea for a speech I write it down in my database – hundreds of them with no speech to go to – yet. And when I write I trawl through them to see if any ideas are relevant to the speech I want to do. One group who are excellent at this – who's that – Comedians – Bob Hope – Bob Monkhouse joke libraries.

And two ways I get my ideas. Either I go where the inspiration is – I take time to sit and write funny things that happen and hope that the burst of creativity produces something funny then I record it ion my database. Alternatively I carry my net with me (Phone or voice recorder or notepad) You've just got o decide what your net is and where you come across butterflies.

## 9. DEVELOP A THEME OR MESSAGE

So lets say you've got your idea at last. I always suggest that you only have one theme per speech. You may make a number of points but everything should support a single theme. Otherwise the audience get confused and they may lose all the messages.

Your message may be a call to action or it may be expressing your opinion but what ever it is it must be clear to you before you start writing because your theme is a journey leading the audience to the destination you want.

So you know what you want to talk about - so where do we start?

## **10. BEGIN WITH THE END IN SIGHT.**

If you don't think of your end first you're likely to miss the target. Everything should be a series of steps that leads the audience nearer and nearer to your objective and I personally like to think of it as a series of steps and my objective is to think of them as steps leading up to a cliff edge so we can take the audience up there and push them off!

## **11. MAKE LOGICAL STEPS**

Now you know where you want your audience to end up I suggest you think of a number of steps you want them to take to get there. These may be the key points in your argument or a logical progression to get from your start to the conclusion you want. Either way each step is likely to be a mini-speech on its own so you need to work out what steps you want the audience to take.

## **12. SELECT A SUITABLE STRUCTURE**

I suggest you always use a speech structure as the skeleton for your writing. They're good because they make it easy for you to write you to remember and your audience to understand.

There are seven main ones but I recommend A.I.D.A. (which stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action) for anything where you're trying to sell ideas, products or gain committeemen to a cause. These are the four steps of getting people to appreciate and commit to buying into your proposition.

A summary of them is shown in Figure 1.

## **13. ADD FLESH TO YOUR STRUCTURE – THE DRAFT**

Go through the structure and add the detail to the main points. This is starting to build the bulk of flesh onto your skeleton and may contain examples, analogies and stories.

Your talk will be better if you use personal stories to illustrate the points. Again if you have recorded your database faithfully you will have plenty of each to build your talk with.

Personal stories are particularly good for speeches. They get the audience fully involved, they can be humorous, and they're easy for you to remember.

## **14. KISS**

This is where the art of the wordsmith comes in – making each word punch its weight and phrasing things so that they carry maximum impact.

Once you have all your information you need, you have to get it to a minimum time and yet still very clear to understand.

The way I do it is to type or dictate the document out verbatim so that I can work with the words to get exactly the phrases I want. I may not remember them all but I'll remember a lot of them.

Once I've got it fully typed out in words I use File/Properties/Statistics to find the total number of characters and words in the document.

Most people speak around 100-120 words per minute so if you divide your words by 110 you'll get the approximate time of your talk. Over a period of time you can adjust the 110 to 100 or 120 whatever suits your style and you'll become more accurate.

Time = Number of words/110

Similarly you can divide the number of characters by the number of words and get the average characters per word.

Average characters per word = Total Characters/Total words

A score of 4 is roughly a reading age of 13 and a score of 6 is about graduate level. I always aim for five and below so you're sure your talk is clear.

By the way if your score is too high, the answer is not to pack it out with 4 letter words!

You can see that this takes a lot of time but it is always the way that concise communication takes a lot of time. Woodrow Wilson said "If I am to speak ten minutes, I need a week for preparation; if fifteen minutes, three days; if half an hour, two days; if an hour, I am ready now."

### **15. ADDING IMPACT**

Just when you thought you've finished there are two more versions to produce. I suggest you make big margins down both sides of your paper and then go through another three passes through to add body language, vocal variety and humour prompts. This attention to detail will pay dividends in the overall quality of your talk. It is important to do this before you start rehearsals so that you rehearse words and body language together. Not only will that make the actions occur more fluidly but also helps you remember what your saying as the actions add to the memory process.

### **16. SPEECH MAP - BACK TO THE STRUCTURE**

Having got the speech to its fullest extent there are two things to do with it. One you can make it into a comprehensive set of notes so that you have a little booklet available for the audience.

But secondly we have to start reducing it to a skeleton again. We don't want to use our notes as a prompt because we'd be forever trying to find where we are. So we need to reduce it back to some key words and phrases. I use a modified form of mind-mapping which I call a speech map. It has the same benefits of colour and picture but runs in a linear fashion rather than a circular fashion. I use words and colour for speed and diagrams if I've got time. Figure 2 shows the map of this speech.

### **17. REHEARSE**

Finally when you're happy with the content I suggest you "write" it by recording it into a tape or digital voice pen. This will allow you to transfer it to CD or onto your phone in MP3 format and play it back in quiet moments in the car etc. As well as being the most effective way for most people to learn material it allows you to think of additional material while listening.

I suggest you learn (but not word for word) your speech in Blocks. This will become useful if you keep a copy of all your speeches. When you're asked for a speech on a related subject you can pick and mix relevant blocks. This is a lot more effective than writing a new speech every time and allows you to customise and keep your talks fresh without re-learning them

Darren le Croix (The Public Speaking World Champion of 2001) told me he believed the difference between amateur and professional speakers is that amateurs write more speeches. This way you can have fewer speeches but still plenty of variety.

Structure	Key Points	Purpose
<b>PREP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position/Proposition</li> <li>• Reason</li> <li>• Example</li> <li>• Position/Proposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persuading</li> <li>• Committed to cause</li> <li>• Selling</li> <li>• Q/A &amp; Interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Past/Present/Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How we got to where we are</li> <li>• Where we're going</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronological</li> <li>• Visionary statement</li> </ul>
<b>Problem/Cause/Solution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the problem</li> <li>• How did it come about</li> <li>• What is the solution (Actual or proposed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business or technical reporting</li> <li>• Problem solution records</li> <li>• Selling (not strong)</li> </ul>
<b>AIDA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grab Attention</li> <li>• Build Interest</li> <li>• Generate Desire (Benefits –what good will come if I do this</li> <li>• Action – how to get it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales</li> <li>• Call to action</li> <li>• In desire sell “I want that”</li> </ul>
<b>Tell/Tell/Tell</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell em what's coming in intro</li> <li>• Tell them in detail</li> <li>• Summarise data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Business and technical factual reports</li> </ul>
<b>Story</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must have <b>no</b> summary</li> <li>• Must hold attention because no skeleton – done by each bit must force the question “What happened next”</li> <li>• Leave open loops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surprisingly – stories</li> <li>• More entertaining than factual.</li> <li>• Can be used to portray complex information to un-qualified audience - “Christmas lectures”</li> </ul>
<b>General Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start/middle/end</li> <li>• Intro/body/conclusion Must have a hook in the intro to answer the question – What's in it for me?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lets Audience know where they are</li> <li>• “I want to leave you with “ wakes them up</li> <li>• Attention curve</li> </ul>

