

MOVING PEOPLE TO ACTION

Technical Note “The Art of Persuasive Communication”

2015

Developing the Logos - Based Persuasive Speech

1. Defining Your Point X

- **Most persuasion fails because the communicator is not clear, specific and realistic about the action he or she wants from the audience.**
- **Start every communication by completing the sentence “When I have finished speaking, my audience will...” with an active verb.**
- **This immediately puts you into the shoes of the audience and will help you think about what they need to know, believe and feel in order to take action.**

I remember reading Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll as a child. One scene has Alice entering Wonderland via a hole in a tree trunk. On arrival in Wonderland there are several paths open to her. She sees a rabbit. She turns to the rabbit and says, “Which path should I take?” The rabbit looks at her and asks, “Where are you going?” She pauses and then says, “I don’t know.” The rabbit smiles and says, “Well then any path is good.”

In persuasive communication, if you don’t know where you are going, then no path is good. The first step in persuasive communication is to be clear on where you want to take the audience. Point X is the definition of where you want to take the audience. If you start with clarity on Point X, it will allow you to choose the best path to take.

Point X is the statement “When I have finished speaking, my audience will...” followed by an action.

Most communication fails here. Most communication fails because the speaker does not know what change he or she is really looking for, is unrealistic about the change, or is vague about how the audience can take action to begin this change.

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Take a blank sheet of A4 paper and, at the top of the sheet, write “When I have finished speaking, my audience will....” Complete the sentence with an action. Examples of clear Point X’s are:

- Raise their hands to vote for my proposal.
- Visit my website on their mobile devices.
- Stand up and shout “*Vamos a correr.*”
- Open their agendas and schedule a meeting for next week.
- Contribute €10 to Medecins sans Frontieres.
- Write a note recommending that their boss hire me for this job.
- Switch on their webcam for three minutes and practice their speech.

These are good actions. They are clear. Defining Point X will help put you in the audience’s position. What do they need to know, feel and believe about you in order to take this action? Anything else must be left out of your speech.

The following statements fail the Point X test:

- Understand more about my project.
- Think about medical research.
- Want to find out more information about my idea.

These three statements fail the Point X test because there is no tangible, concrete action. These statements lead to fuzzy, unclear speeches because they do not help clarify what the audience really needs to know, believe and feel to begin to take action.

Do you have Point X written down? Is it realistic? Is it specific? Is it tangible? If not, change it until you have a specific, concrete action that you believe is realistic for this specific audience.

Is your Point X clear? Is it realistic? If the answer is no, keep changing it until you believe it is clear and realistic for your audience.

Knowledge Review 1: Which of the Following Do Not Meet the Good Point X Test? Why? (Answers in Section 5)

1. When I have finished speaking, my audience will know more about dentistry.
2. When I have finished speaking, my audience will switch off their mobile phones.
3. When I have finished speaking, my audience will want to recycle more plastic.
4. When I have finished speaking, my audience will open their agendas to next Monday and write down “Don’t take the car.”
5. When I have finished speaking, my audience will sign the petition to install showers on the IESE campus.

If the answer is yes, we can move on to content development.

2. Develop Speech Content

1. **Your ultimate goal is to achieve audience action.**
2. **You need to provide logical, ethical and emotional appeals to achieve audience action (Logos, Ethos and Pathos).**
3. **The Logos-Based Persuasive Speech has an explicit eight-part structure, which you are required to follow.**

Argument is the process of making what we think clear to ourselves and to others. The form of argument used in spoken persuasive speech is not the full formal logic of academics and school, the dialectic. The form of argument applied to persuasion is the enthymeme. The purpose of persuasive argument is not to demonstrate the truth or validity of a position, but to effectively persuade the audience to take a given action.

Achieving Point X

Your ultimate goal is not to win the argument but rather to drive the audience toward a given action. Your speech's primary goal is always to persuade readers to take action because your position is the most viable, logical, moral and practical. This can be accomplished:

- By using logical, ethical and emotional appeals (Logos, Ethos and Pathos).
- By using various types of evidence including expert testimony, statistics, logical demonstration, personal experiences, real-life examples (from current affairs or history), fictional examples (from novels, plays, movies or television), hypothetical examples, legal documents and concepts and codes of conduct.
- By showing an understanding of your audience (some of whom are always skeptical).
- By showing that you understand both sides of the argument.
- By using all the resources of rhetoric.

Audience

For the purpose of this class, assume that the audience:

- Consists of thoughtful people of goodwill who might be persuaded by clear and cogent arguments.
- May not be as familiar with the material as you, so you will need to explain concepts and terms as well as what the problem/issue is.
- Includes some people who may be skeptical about your message before they hear your speech.
- Includes others who are undecided about the issue.

Also keep in mind that:

- Because some of your listeners may not know you personally, you must prove to them that you are a credible speaker with good intentions.
- You may need to explain the risks or obstacles of your message and then demonstrate that these arguments are flawed, that these risks can be mitigated, or that the obstacle is worth overcoming.
- If an obstacle to the audience changing is large, you may need to concede the point explicitly and then try, if possible, to minimize the importance of that point.
- You must treat your opponents and audience with respect, showing that you realize that they too are intelligent people of goodwill.

Content

- You must use the Logos-Based Speech structure with three explicit Benefit sections in the body of your speech.
- You must use a Grabber that captures the attention of the audience and establishes the right emotional environment for the audience to hear your message.
- You need to prove your assertions with evidence (e.g., expert testimony, statistics, facts, hypothetical and real-life examples and logical demonstration).
- Your speech must make sense to the average audience member.
- Your speech must be interesting.

Your Message

Most of us begin the speech development process with our minds already made up regarding our position. Almost inevitably, that initial position is based on our core beliefs and on unproven assertions and assumptions, and our position is rather general and sweeping. For example, I might feel that “all welfare must be abolished immediately.” This is a very sweeping generalization. What can we do to deepen and refine that message?

One of the major purposes of doing audience research is to test our message against the average audience’s point of view. For instance, our anti-welfare position might be based on the unproven belief that anyone receiving welfare is a lazy bum who doesn’t want to work.

When our research reveals evidence that some people on welfare are mentally incapable of holding a job or are suffering from a temporary illness, we might alter our message slightly to “We must abolish all welfare except that given to mentally incompetent people.”

Brainstorming Benefits and Obstacles

Now, write down 20 ways in which the audience would benefit by taking action, your Point X. Write fast and include every idea, no matter how small or strange it might seem. Keep writing until you have at least 20 examples. Do not stop at three or five or 10. At least 20 must be on the list. There are strategic, personal and business benefits. Increased revenue is a business benefit. Increased chance of promotion and greater

exposure to the bosses’ boss are personal benefits. Having the necessary resources and being able to execute a project are strategic benefits. We need to include all of these types of benefits if we expect to move people to action. Business managers are human beings with personal, family, social and business goals.

Now, write down 10 obstacles, or barriers to action. Why would somebody not take this action? Again, write fast and write down every idea no matter how small or strange (“I’d be embarrassed if I was the only one who came out in support of this...,” “I supported that last initiative and all it got me was extra work...,” etc.). It is the irrational reasons that block action. Nobody will ever say “I didn’t do it because I’m lazy”; they will say “It was too expensive” or “It is not a priority for my boss right now.” The real reason, however, is often “I don’t feel like it” or “It seems like hard work.”

Now, choose the three most important themes for this audience. It might be three benefits. It might be two benefits and one barrier to action.

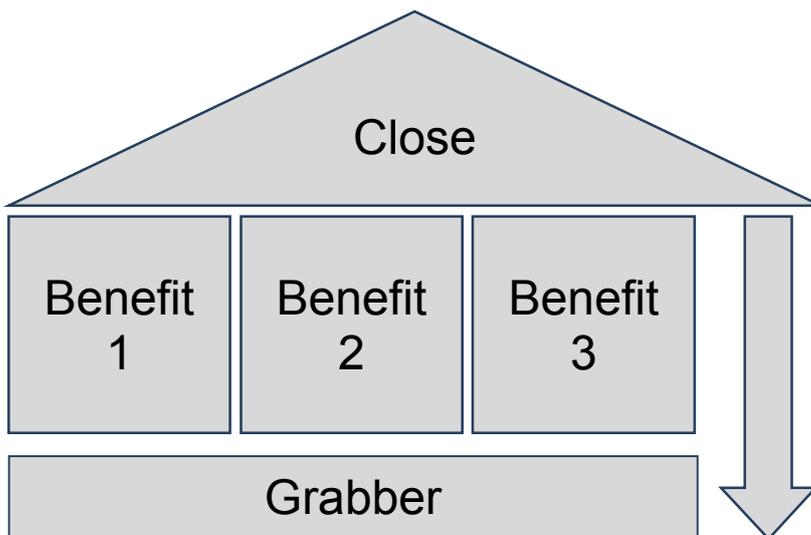
Benefits	Obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Richer, more money ❖ Visibility to the Board ❖ Innovation ❖ Diversity risks ❖ Increased bonus payment ❖ Cheaper ❖ Faster ❖ Freedom ❖ Aligns with company mission ❖ Get to meet the president 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Laziness ❖ Fear of failure ❖ Cost to start ❖ Painful extra work ❖ Two close friends are against this plan ❖ High-profile project

What examples, statistics or expert testimony will you use to support each of your three chosen themes? Select one for each theme in this three-minute speech. (In a longer speech, you would go into further depth in supporting each theme.)

Building the Logos-Based Speech Structure

The Logos-Based Speech follows a very clear, explicit structure. We will expect you to follow this structure closely. This comes from 2,300 years of rhetoric and we are not looking for you to innovate on this structure.

The three-minute Logos-Based Speech contains the following elements (approximate duration of each in parentheses):



Grabber (20 s)
 Message (10 s)
 Signposting of three Benefits (10 s)
 Benefit 1 (30 s)
 Benefit 2 (30 s)
 Benefit 3 (30 s)
 Close (20 s)
 Refer to Grabber (5 s)

Grabber

The first words out of your mouth should be your Grabber – an anecdote (personal story), a question, a startling statistic or a thought-provoking quote. Never start off with “My name is...,” “My topic is...” or “Ah... Er... Gosh.” (You will be asked to stop and give your speech later.) Avoid starting with a joke.

The Grabber should be 10% – 15% of your speech.

Message

The message and a signposting of your main points should follow the Grabber. This is a one-sentence statement of the message and the three main points you will present.

“I am here to ask for your vote,” “Drag-net fishing must be stopped,” and “Yes we can” are examples of messages. The message should help the audience answer the question “What is this about?” with the minimum necessary information.

A common mistake is to give too much information in your introduction.

Signposting

Signposting is the sentence “There are three reasons why we must do this: [Benefit 1], [Benefit 2] and [Benefit 3].”

For example, “There are three reasons why you should vote for me: knowledge, ability and passion” or “There are three reasons why drag-net fishing must end: destruction, cost and alternatives.”

Signposting lays out the skeleton of the argument structure for the audience.

Benefits 1 – 3

The body of the speech develops the main points of your discussion. No speech, no matter how long, should have more than three main points. Longer speeches simply develop those three main points in greater depth, using more examples and more evidence.

Each of the Benefits should be supported by one of the following:

- Statistic (citing the source)
- Expert testimony (citing the expert, source)
- Logical demonstration
- Personal experiences
- Real-life examples (from current affairs or history)
- Fictional examples (from novels, plays, movies or television)
- Hypothetical examples
- Legal documents and concepts
- Codes of conduct

Features or Benefits?

Features describe characteristics. Benefits show why those characteristics matter to the audience. The statement “The BlackBerry has a full alphabetical keyboard” describes a feature. The statement “The BlackBerry allows you to respond to e-mails while out of the office” describes a benefit. In speaking to persuade, it is important to speak about benefits, not about features.

The Benefits section constitutes 75% – 80% of your speech (for a three-minute speech, that’s about 2.25 – 2.3 minutes).

Close

This section is crucial since it is the last thing listeners will hear and hence the thing they will remember the longest. It should be 5% – 10% of your speech (15 seconds for a three-minute speech).

Never end by saying something like “Well, I guess that’s about it...”

Close by summarizing your main points in one sentence (e.g., “Use your webcam every day because it is simple to do, has a powerful impact and makes you a better leader”).

Call to action – there are two ways to close: the direct close and the indirect close.

The direct close asks for the action: “Vote for me,” “Visit our website,” “Call now to book an appointment,” “Drink water instead of Coke” or “Take your computer out now and turn on the webcam.”

The indirect close reminds the audience of the pain they will continue to suffer until they take the action: “Each day you wait before starting the webcam habit is a day lost to your development as a leader; each time you see an audience bored, remember that the webcam could have made a difference.”

Refer to Grabber

A powerful speech finishes by reconnecting with the beginning of the speech. A word or a phrase from the story at the beginning can let the audience know that we have come full circle and this is the end of the speech. If your Grabber was a story about a day out with your grandfather, you might finish with “I know my grandfather would be proud of his work today.” The challenge is to have a Grabber that allows for an easy closing reference.

Speakers who develop the ability to close the circle between the Grabber and the Refer to Grabber will never face the painful end of a speech in which there is a pause, then one person claps, then a pause, then two people clap, and then the whole audience realizes that the speech has finished. If you need to finish with “Thank you, that’s it,” then the connection between your Grabber and Refer to Grabber is not strong enough.

Knowledge Review 2: Which of the Following Are Features and Which Are Benefits? Why?

1. “Weight: This new plastic bottle weighs less than 200 grams.”
2. “Network: An IESE MBA will enrich your life through a deep connection to your fellow participants.”
3. “People: The IESE MBA has 289 first-year students.”
4. “Quiet: The IESE library is a quiet environment.”
5. “Energy: Daily exercise will give you more energy and reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.”
6. “Paper: This document is printed on A4 paper.”
7. “Portable: This document is available in a portable format that allows you to read it wherever is most convenient to you.”
8. “Camera: The iPhone 5 has a 20-megapixel camera and a five-gig memory.”
9. “Length: This course is 14 weeks long.”
10. “Portable: The iPod allows you to take your entire music collection everywhere you go.”

Knowledge Review 3: Which of the Following Are Effective Grabbers? Why?

1. “Hey everybody, I’ve just got a few words to share. This won’t take long....”
2. “Two years ago I met a man who changed my life....”
3. “Hello, my name is Conor and I’m happy to be here with you....”
4. “There are more people alive today than have ever died....”
5. “I’m not an expert but I’ve been asked to say a few words. I guess....”
6. “When I was 13 years old, my grandfather turned to me and said....”
7. “Ah... Em... Sorry... How much time? OK... Sure... I’ll start....”
8. “You were wrong. You made the wrong decision last year.”

3. Delivery

1. **Public speaking is a performance act.**
2. **You must learn to speak well under pressure and be in control of your state of anxiety.**
3. **You may not use notes.**
4. **Body language, gestures, facial expressions, variety in your voice and energy add to the power of your speech.**
5. **The first thing the audience will see is how you are dressed. Are you dressed appropriately for your message?**

Public speaking is a performance act. Performance acts require not only that you know the content well; it is also highly important that you deliver it well under pressure. Usain Bolt is not the fastest man in the world; he is the fastest man in the world when 80,000 people are watching in the stadium and one billion are watching live on television. Olympic champions need to deliver not just under practice conditions but under the spotlight on the big day.

There are four ways of dealing with performance anxiety. At a minimum level, using relaxation tools such as focusing on your breathing, practicing enough so that you can trust your memory and visualizing success will allow you to stand up and get through your speech. At the higher level, caring about the change you are making more than about yourself and accepting nerves and anxiety as something normal can allow you to fully perform.

The use of notes is not permitted when delivering your speech except in the case in which you are reading a direct quote or a statistic (e.g., holding up the *Financial Times* and then reading a quote).

Reducing Mental Load

A state of anxiety reduces your cognitive ability. You need to be prepared as your mind will not remember every detail under pressure. You need to reduce the mental effort required to deliver your speech. There are two ways to achieve this: first, a clear structure, and, second, lots of practice.

It is best not to memorize the whole speech. The Logos-Based Speech structure can be recreated from five elements. Write out the following on a sheet of paper:

- First 10 words,
- Message,
- Three Benefits,
- Close,
- Last 10 words.

Example of Preparation Notes	
First 10 words	In 2002, walking up the hill to IESE....
Message	Sign up for the IESE MBA Open Day.
Three Benefits	Knowledge, challenge, people.
Close: Direct	Visit IESE’s website and sign up.
Close: Indirect	Each day you wait is another day where you will doubt your knowledge and doubt yourself.
Last 10 words	Now, 10 years after that walk up the hill, I am happy with my decision.

The purpose of these notes is not to support delivery itself. It is to reduce the whole speech down to the minimum mental load. Ideally, if you can remember just your first words and the three Benefits, you can reproduce your speech.

Delivery: Preparing Yourself

Practice the speech at least four times all the way through before delivering it to the class: two or three times by yourself, at least once using a webcam (practicing gestures as well as the phrasings) and at least once in front of someone (a friend or teammates). Time your speech when you practice – never run over the allotted time!

- Act like a professional speaking to other professionals.
- Do not rely on notes during practice.
- Use gestures to emphasize points, but don’t gesture randomly.
- Make eye contact with members of the audience so they feel involved.
- Use facial expressions to convey your feelings.
- Average speaking rate is 110 – 130 words per minute. Don’t speed up. A three-minute speech would be about 300 – 400 written words.
- Enunciate and pronounce words clearly.
- Vary your rate of speech, the pitch of your voice (don’t speak in a monotone) and volume (don’t shout and then whisper, but some variation is good).
- Using a webcam is one of the best ways to improve your speaking ability.
- Appearance is important. Dress appropriately for your presentation. When you look right, you feel good about yourself. Appearance is part of establishing your credibility in front of an audience. You will be judged on your choice of clothing, whether you shaved and the logo on your T-shirt.

Delivery: The Day of the Speech

While being introduced, take a deep breath and slowly exhale. This will help your voice sound resonant and natural.

Pause, then begin with your opening.

While speaking, make eye contact with various members of the audience, first looking directly at one person for a few seconds, then looking at another, so people feel included in your talk. If you see you are running out of time, move smoothly to your conclusion and finish quickly. Observe time limits whenever you speak.

Finish with your conclusion.

The speech should last no longer than three minutes. The facilitator will provide a hand signal when you reach three minutes. He or she will signal again at four minutes. At five minutes, the facilitator will stand up and ask you to stop speaking. Ensure that you time your speech practice sessions. Again, running far over the three-minute time limit is a sign for the facilitator of problems in your preparation process.

Post Delivery: Speech Evaluation

After you finish, you’ll probably begin evaluating yourself even before you return to your seat. You may think you left out some key ideas. Take a moment to write down the things you did well and the things you want to improve to make your next speech even better.

The audience will provide comments on your speech. Listen without judging. We have a rule: “no feedback on feedback.” You will not be allowed to debate, discuss or defend anything about your speech. You listen. You take notes. If you don’t agree, don’t write it down, but it might be something important. Though every comment may not appear useful to you, consider them carefully. Remember, each evaluation is an opinion of how that person perceived you and your presentation. These opinions will usually (though not always) be helpful to your self-development.

The structure of the feedback will come in two parts. First, the audience will respond to the question “What was done well in this speech?” We will look at what was good in terms of the content of the speech, and we will look at what was good in terms of delivery style.

Following an analysis of the strengths of the speech, the audience will respond to the question “What specific improvements would increase the impact of this speech?” The aim of this feedback is to make step-by-step improvements, not to achieve perfection. Again, we will first look at improving content and then at improving delivery style.

You are encouraged to take notes based on the evaluation of your speech.

4. Logos-Based Speech Example

Point X: When I have finished speaking, my listeners will sign up for an MBA Open Day on the Barcelona Campus.

Grabber: In August 2002, I remember walking up the hill towards IESE Business School. I paused at the gate, had a look at the logo, and entered the school for the very first time. Just outside reception, I saw someone looking as nervous and excited as myself. I said hello. I said hello to Tsahi, a fellow student who was from Israel. We were both excited and nervous. This was my first memory of my first day of the IESE MBA.

Message: Sign up for the IESE MBA Open Day.

Signpost: There are three reasons why you should sign up for the IESE MBA Open Day: the knowledge, the challenge and the people.

First, the knowledge...

Second, the challenge...

Third, and most importantly, the people...

Close: For these three reasons (for the knowledge, for the challenge and for the people), I want you to visit the MBA section of IESE’s website right now and apply for a place at the next Open Day.

Refer to Grabber: Back in August 2002, I entered the gates of IESE excited and nervous. I stand before you now, 10 years later, and know that Tsahi and I made the best decision of our lives when we first walked through those Pedralbes gates.

5. Knowledge Reviews: Answer Key

Knowledge Review 1: Which of the Following Do Not Meet the Good Point X Test? Why?

1. NO. “Knowing more about dentistry” is not an action.
2. YES. “Switching off mobile phones” is a realistic, specific, concrete action.
3. NO. “Wanting to recycle more plastic” is not a specific action.
4. YES. “Opening agendas to next Monday and writing down ‘Don’t take the car’” is a realistic, specific, concrete action.
5. YES. “Signing the petition to install showers on the IESE campus” is a realistic, specific, concrete action.

Knowledge Review 2: Which of the Following Are Features and Which Are Benefits? Why?

1. Feature. “Weight: This new plastic bottle weighs less than 200 grams.”
2. Benefit. “Network: An IESE MBA will enrich your life through a deep connection to your fellow participants.”
3. Feature. “People: The IESE MBA has 289 first-year students.”
4. Feature (if the audience is seeking quiet, however, it could be a Benefit). “Quiet: The IESE library is a quiet environment.”
5. Benefit. “Energy: Daily exercise will give you more energy and reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.”
6. Feature. “Paper: This document is printed on A4 paper.”
7. Benefit. “Portable: This document is available in a portable format that allows you to read it wherever is most convenient to you.”
8. Feature. “Camera: The iPhone 5 has a 20-megapixel camera and a five-gig memory.”
9. Feature. “Length: This course is 14 weeks long.”
10. Benefit. “Portable: The iPod allows you to take your entire music collection everywhere you go.”

Knowledge Review 3: Which of the Following Are Effective Grabbers? Why?

1. NO. “Hey everybody, I’ve just got a few words to share. This won’t take long....”
2. YES. “Two years ago I met a man who changed my life....”
3. NO. “Hello, my name is Conor and I’m happy to be here with you....”
4. YES. “There are more people alive today than have ever died....”
5. NO. “I’m not an expert but I’ve been asked to say a few words. I guess....”
6. YES. “When I was 13 years old, my grandfather turned to me and said....”
7. NO. “Ah... Em... Sorry... How much time? OK... Sure... I’ll start....”
8. NO. “You were wrong. You made the wrong decision last year.”