

Writing Your Speech

Good public relations includes informing and educating the membership of the organization and informing and educating the general public about the organization.

We have to customize our message to our audience. When you're talking to a politician or a journalist, you want to emphasize the important public service that we provide. When you're talking directly to the public, the "ham radio is important" message must be matched with the "ham radio is fun" message. The primary motivation of most hams I've met is fun, the fun of DXing, the fun of contesting, the fun of trying to talk with an astronaut in orbit, the fun of chatting with people while hiking in the woods, the fun of meeting the challenge of bouncing signals off of meteors, the moon or an asteroid. Your core message may be about the same for everyone, but knowing your audience will allow you to slant the information so that the audience feels it was prepared just for them. Talking points for various special interest groups can be added to a basic speech to involve your audience.

According to Webster's definition -- "something that a person likes to do or study in his spare time; favorite pastime or avocation" (Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition) -- ham radio is a hobby. It's something we all like to do or study in our spare time. It's not our job (except in the case of a lucky few), it's a pastime, an avocation.

According to the FCC's definition (and the ITU's), ham radio is a service. After all, what government in its right mind would get into licensing and regulating a hobby? And there is no question that we provide a service, often by having fun! The message must be focused on the audience. You need to stress both the hobby and the service aspects because of who you're talking to -- the listening public. And you have to make it sound exciting.

It is a truism that most people attending a presentation will remember no more than five key points. As you prepare your presentation, keep in mind the key points you want your audience to remember. When you create your presentation, forget the details for a minute. First, write out your conclusion. It should emphasize the most important points you plan to make. Once you have visualized those points, build your presentation around them. It is your job to help the audience identify your key points. Once you introduce your conclusion and key points, proceed with the details of the presentation. When you are done, review and reemphasize the same key points.

Examples, anecdotes, visual images, stories and metaphors make your message memorable. Use as many one and two syllable words as possible. In writing, it is OK to write sentence after sentence that starts with subjects, then links to verbs, and then objects. However, you will sound very dull if you talk this way. Vary your sentence structure-sometimes ask rhetorical questions. Your actual speech should go 10-25% longer than your rehearsals (crowd reaction).

Use words that evoke emotions in people to make a greater impact when you speak. Your choice of words can trigger many emotions in the audience. Happiness, anger, sadness, nostalgia are just a few. Your purpose for being in front of the group helps you to pick which emotions you want to tap.