Speaking 101: Tips and Tricks for Conference Speakers

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Topics

- Speaker selection process
- Developing content
- Preparing slides
- Preparing to present
- You’re on
- Answering questions
- Practice, practice, practice
- Stuff goes right – stuff goes wrong
The Speaker Selection Process

You submit a proposal

I read and evaluate

“Possibles” pile

“No Way in the World” pile

Without warning I call you – You are shocked and amazed

My first question is: “What’s the Big Message?”

I’m looking for:
- Practical take-aways

I assign a track and a score

And here is the conference program

Consider:
- Topics for this conference
- Score vs. others
- Previous speaking scores

What I’m Interested In

• Topics you are knowledgeable about

• Topics you are passionate about
What I’m Not Interested In

- How you overcame pathologically bad management to succeed (Your success is impressive – but your bad management is the real problem and I’m just too old to care anymore)
- Really niche topics (<5% of delegates; “this presentation is aimed at quality managers of outsourcing companies in Vietnam using QTP”)
- Advocating anarchy (no rules, no process, no commitments, no accountability)
- Sales pitches (disguised or blatant)

What I’m Not Interested In

- History lessons (I’m a real fan of history, but it rarely helps you build better software)
- Plans for things you haven’t done yet (but you’re sure will be ready for the conference)
- What everyone else says about the topic
- Don’t leave me in suspense (if your presentation is titled “The Five Greatest Things Ever to Hit Software Development” then tell me what the five things are)
- Too simplistic (“x” is good; we should do it)
What I’m **Not** Interested In

- And finally, just plain bad ideas

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Developing Content

- You don’t have to be the greatest speaker if you have great content
- Key questions:
  - What is the **Big Message** you want to present?
  - Does all your content support the Big Message?
  - Can you illustrate your message with examples, metaphors, and stories?

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Preparing Slides

• Use **readable fonts** at **readable sizes**

• Check the appearance of your slides – are they aesthetically pleasing? Strive for a consistent look. Are they readable from a distance? How will they look projected?

• Include only key points on the slides – add the details in your presentation

• Include images that support your presentation

Preparing Slides

• Some of my favorite images

![Image 1](image1.png)  ![Image 2](image2.png)  ![Image 3](image3.png)

![Image 4](image4.png)  ![Image 5](image5.png)  ![Image 6](image6.png)
Example Slides

• Let’s look at some real examples from a previous conference

• What’s good and what’s not so good?

• You don’t have to be a trained graphic artist to identify or avoid these mistakes

What is a release?

• A release is defined by
  • The Date it is needed
  • High level Themes from the Product Roadmap
  • A Planned Feature Set - called the Release Backlog
  • The release team(s)
  • Can be an internal or external release
  • Has a customer
The Seven: Lean manufacturing establishes seven disciplines

- Eliminate Waste
- Amplify
- Learning/Increase feedback
- Delay Commitment
- Deliver Fast
- Empower the Team
- Build Integrity In
- See the Whole

Partially done work means value that can’t be delivered

80% of the components 100% tested versus 100% of the components 80% tested
Advantage – non-intrusive, access to data types and structure of the system
Disadvantage – limited code coverage, result evaluation based on quality of faulty response
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Preparing To Present

- Dress comfortably – clothes and shoes
- Find the room early
- Familiarize yourself with the surroundings
- Try out your computer, the projector, the microphone, where you’ll stand, …
- Coordinate with your Track Chair
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You’re On

- Don’t memorize your presentation
- Do not read your presentation word-for-word from the slides
- Make eye contact for a few seconds with each person in the room during your presentation
You’re On

• Speak to your audience like you were speaking to a friend in your living room

• Don’t stand in one spot – move around, but move for a purpose

• If you’re nervous – slow your pace and speak just a little louder

You’re On

• If English is not your primary language, slow your pace to be understood

• Be yourself. You might be serious, clever, a jokester, a storyteller – each of these is fine

• Make your message real – use examples, metaphors, stories, illustrations, …
You’re On

- Watch your %$*! mouth
- Your presentation must be G-rated

- Some delegates are just not comfortable hearing speakers say:
  - G-d
  - Fu-k
  - Sh-t

You’re On

- Also, please don’t make statements of a political or religious nature. They can be offensive to some, and they rarely add value to your presentation
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Answering Questions

- First, repeat the question so everyone hears it
- Dealing with questions:
  - If it’s a good question and it supports your presentation, answer it briefly
  - If you don’t know the answer, just say so
  - If it’s a tangential/bizarre question, respond that you’d be pleased to discuss it after your presentation
Answering Questions

- Remember, this is your presentation
- It is your time to shine
- You are in control. Don’t give control to others

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Practice, Practice, Practice

- The more you practice, the better you’ll be
- Record yourself, then listen and learn, then listen and learn, then …
- Nail the opening and closing – it’s what the audience will remember most
- Observe other speakers – incorporate their good traits, make sure you don’t emulate their poor ones
- The more you practice, the better you’ll be

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Stuff Goes Right – Stuff Goes Wrong

- What are the top three things that could go wrong – what will you do then?
  -
  -
  -

- Usually, it all goes right and you are great. People will thank you. People will congratulate you – what will you do then?

One Last Bit Of Advice

- Remember, everyone in your audience wants you to succeed

- They came specifically to hear you, not to get a good seat for the next presentation

- Have fun – it’s an experience few will have
Thanks

- Thanks for joining with me today

- Questions ???

- If I can be of assistance, or if you’d just like to chat, please contact me at

  lee@sqe.com

Acknowledgement

- Some of this material came from Johanna Rothman and Naomi Karten

- My thanks to them for sharing