The Eloquent Woman’s Checklist for the Whole Speaker

Too many of my trainees focus on preparing the speech and not the speaker...or, if they focus on preparing themselves, they zero in on one just one aspect of what they need to do. But to succeed as a speaker, you need to prepare the whole speaker for your presentation, not just one or two parts of yourself. That’s true whether you are addressing a small meeting or a large assembly. Here’s a checklist I like to use to make sure my own preparations are complete before I speak. How many of these preparations are on your checklist?

**Intent**

- Do I know what the audience wants from me? Is that what I’m going to give them? Do my goals match theirs?
- If not, why am I speaking to them? How will I reach them?
- What do I want to get out of this speaking experience?
- What do I need to learn from the audience? How will I find out?
- Do I intend to engage the audience? Do I just want them to listen? Do I intend them to act on something?

**Content**

- What do I need to include or exclude to meet my intentions and those of the audience?
- How can I put my facts across persuasively? What are my data, ideas, proofs, examples?
- What emotion or personal experience can I add to the mix?
- Is there content the audience can contribute? Am I comfortable with them sharing their insights?

**Mind**

- Am I focused and ready? Do I feel prepared?
- If not, what am I anxious about? What's the worst thing that could happen? How will I deal with it?
- What are 3 successful things I’ve done before that I can use again this time?
- What are 3 things I'd like to improve this time, based on previous speaking experiences?
- How and where will I fit those into my presentation?
- Am I prepared with breathing exercises or other ways to stay calm?
- What will help me relax and focus?

**Body**

- Have I taken care of the basics? Am I rested, fed, hydrated, stretched out, relaxed?
- Do I need to spend 10 minutes before the speech attending to breathing and stretching?
- Am I wearing clothes and shoes that are comfortable enough to help me stand and move as needed?
- If I don't feel well, what do I need to change to get through my speech successfully?
- Have I thought about how I will gesture, move, sit or stand during the course of the presentation?
- Are those movements planned or random?
- Do my movements help underscore my points?
- Is my posture straight but relaxed? Are my shoulders hunched? Am I centered at my core?
- Am I inadvertently clenching anything--teeth, hands, shoulders, neck? Why?
Audience interactions

- Can I be comfortable handling Q&A without feeling challenged whenever a question is asked? Have I reviewed the 17 reasons to welcome audience questions?
- Have I thought through events that may challenge all my assumptions about this speech? Do I know what I'll say and do if no one agrees with me, or if someone gets angry?
- Am I ready to roll with whatever situation arrives, with calm and good humor?
- Or am I going to get impatient and angry?

Wardrobe

- Are my clothes clean, pressed and mended? Do they fit me?
- Will my wardrobe allow me (if needed) to do things like crawl under a table to plug in a cord or reach high to point at a chart? Have I rehearsed my movements while wearing my intended outfit?
- Am I using color to my advantage? Will it help me stand out in the setting?
- Is there anything about my outfit that will distract me? Distract my audience?
- If I plan to gesture, have I removed rings and bracelets?
- If I'm standing behind a lectern, have I focused attention near my face?
- What from my outfit will be seen in that setting?

Technology and the unexpected

- Do I know how my own technology works?
- Do I have any adapters, cords or batteries I may need?
- Am I making the mistake of assuming there will be technical help?
- Can I give my presentation even if all the technology fails? Can I speak without my slides?
- Do I have plans B, C and D ready?
- Have I seen the room and available technology ahead of time, or do I need to show up early to do that?
- Is the room too hot, cold or noisy? Have I asked the facility staff for help fixing that before my talk?

Extra questions for introverts

- Can I "fake it until I make it" when it comes to projecting confidence?
- Should I welcome others talking so I don't always have to?
- Have I considered the advantages that introverts have because of the way they "think first, talk later?"
- Can I find out what I need to learn from the audience in a way that makes me comfortable? Do I need to greet them at the door so I don't meet them all at once?
- Will I feel more comfortable during Q&A if I can walk up to the questioner, so it feels like I'm speaking one-on-one? Will that be possible, given the room setup? Can I make that happen?
- Do I know how to use time-buying phrases and an active listening stance during Q&A so I have a little time to think about my answer?
- Should I plan to spend more time talking to audience members one-on-one after my talk, rather than take most questions from the stage, if that would feel more comfortable?
- Have I planned some down time after the presentation, so that I can regroup and recover without others around?