



the
ultimate,
kick-butt



Presentation
Prep

blueprint



A comprehensive, step-by-step Presentation Prep checklist so you can get started, save time and wow your audience





YOU ARE DOING IT!

I'm already so excited for and proud of you, because most people don't ever get this far. Most people just stumble their way through this process, feeling isolated, unsure, and grasping at straws as to how to do this incredibly challenging (and awesome) art form better. (And they waste a lot of time with all of that grasping!)

Because you know what? There's no one way to do this. That's what's so great - and so confounding - about giving a talk!

But you know what tends to stay consistent? The process. After over 20 years of speaking and coaching speakers of all kinds and levels, the process of creating a talk is remarkably consistent - even if the people moving through that process aren't.

So, I've created a roadmap of sorts for you, to help you get started and keep going, with me cheering you on along the way - checking each box as you go - eventually landing yourself post-talk, kicking your feet up and feeling darn-tootin' proud of yourself for your hard work and dedication to creating a talk that moves the world.

So, how do you use this blueprint? On the next page you'll find a simple high-level checklist. (We love checklists! It feels good to check those boxes!) On the pages that follow, you'll see a more in-depth explanation of each point in the process.

I can't wait to see what you'll create - and how that creation will move this world of ours.

Are you ready? (Ready or not...)

Let's do this!

Sally Z

PS., I know you've probably done this 'creating a talk' thing before - but you've never done this with me. So let me say this: I absolutely love speakers and speaking, and I hope you feel that. Your bravery makes me want to stand up and applaud. I love, love, love when a speaker surprises me and breaks the rules. I think the stage is an incredibly powerful place to delight and challenge, and if we're willing to take a risk, it can not only transform the audience, it can transform us as speakers. ...What else?... I have three kids, married my college sweetheart, am obsessed with bubbly water, and probably write too long of copy. Ha. I can't wait to "meet" you online!

Check it!

Start here.

Take the S.A.S.I. inventory.

What/how do you want your audience to know, believe, behave, feel?

Assess your speaking mindset.

Collect and capture.

Brainstorm.

Create a five-point outline.

Write a first-draft "script."

Iterate your outline.

Draft slides (if needed).

Second draft your content.

V3? V4?

Off-book or on-book?

Get on your feet.

Do a Walk-N-Talk.

Time check.

Do a stumble-through.

Revise; Stumble; Revise; Stumble.

Test with a loving audience.

Time check.

Gather and deliberate on feedback.

Commit.

Dress rehearsal.

Delivery check.

Read before bed each night.

Sleep a lot and drink lots of H₂O.

Celebrate progress.

Do a final tech-check.

Exercise.

Then: let go.

Celebrate afterwards, regardless of how it went.

Later: circle back on feedback – and start again!

You're done!

Pre-Development: Taking stock

Finished?

Take the S.A.S.I. inventory.

Before you get carried away with writing and creating and brainstorming... get clear on some important details that will impact what you do, and why you do it. **Download the SASI Speaker Toolkit** to answer some key questions about the Space, the Audience, you as the Speaker and the Idea you want to share. The answers to these questions will determine how you move forward!

What/how do you want your audience to know, believe, behave, feel?

Most people think about their audience to some extent, but it's worth digging deeply here to make sure that your content resonates, and serves them well. Ask yourself what/how you want your audience to know, believe and behave - and then spend an extra moment on this one: "How do I want them to feel when they leave?" As Maya Angelou so wisely stated,

“People will forget what you said, but they'll never forget how you made them feel.”

So: how do you want them to feel? The answer to this will help you filter out your content and keep it focused.

Assess your speaking mindset.

And where are you at with this process? I used to believe that speaking was 50% mental, giving all the hard-earned skills and my work as a coach their due credit. But time and again I saw people with great skills and beautiful content struggle to own the stage and get in the right mindset. Now I believe the balance is more like 80%; the "success" of your presentation is indeed dependent on what is going through your mind. Now it's a huge part of what I do as a coach, and essential to conquer if you want to have an impact. Every single one of us has a voice and story and idea to share that is worth an audience's time. Yes, we must work on the craft and skill of speaking; but even more importantly, we have to tackle the mindset. Do you believe that you belong up in front? Even if you question it (and we all do!) - getting yourself in the right frame of mind is essential to making an impact!

Content Development: Building

Finished?

Collect and capture.

To save you the 'time-crunch' and stress of finding awesome content on demand, integrate your talk development into every day! What is moving you? What inspires you? What do you find interesting? Collect this content, and capture it in a place where you can easily access it when you need it. (I use **Evernote** for this.) That way, when it comes time to sit down and work on your talk - you've got inspiration at the ready.

Brainstorm.

Before you sit down to think about flow and get serious about creating your content, do some free-flow brainstorming. Don't edit yourself - there's plenty of time for that later! (And here's a big hint: don't do this on your computer. Use a pen and paper - or, better yet - a big white board or easel pad!) Think big. One of the biggest mistakes people make is staying too safe. Now's the time to dream up some crazy ideas that may never happen... :) But what if???

Create a five-point outline.

Once you have a sense of all that you 'have' at your disposal for your talk, take a stab at a 1000-foot outline, with five simple stopping points. You might change your mind later and make it more like seven... or three... or who knows!

But this is a great way to START, and give you a sense of where you're going:

- 1) How might you open this?
- 2) What's the first point you want to make?
- 3) What's the second point you want to make?
- 4) What's the third point you want to make?
- 5) How might you close it?

(That's five!) Don't get stuck on wordsmithing or perfecting; the idea is to lay out the map as you begin to write, so you have a sense of where you're going.

Write a first-draft “script.”

Now’s the time to LEAP into writing, using your outline to get you started - but not letting it keep new ideas out! Just write. Give yourself 45 minutes, and go for it. If you’re someone who loses the feel of talking when they write (after all, we are not writing for this to be read - we are writing for it to be spoken and heard), you might want to just press play on your voice memo app and get it transcribed for you. At this point, you’d rather have too much than not enough - so as much as you can let the ideas flow from your mind to the page, and get it out there. If you have to take a few days to get a “full” script (even if you HATE some parts of it), that’s ok. Just get something down on the page.

Iterate your outline.

Go back to your five-point outline with the frame of CLEAR and SIMPLE, taking into account what you learned from your freewrite. What new ideas emerged? How might this impact your outline and key points? Head back to the 5-point outline and update it based on your best ideas (at this point). It’s going to keep changing - but this will give you a sense of what you have and where you’re going, keeping CLARITY at the forefront. Are you making the point you originally wanted to make? Are you creating the feel that you wanted to create? It’s ok if things have evolved, but make sure it’s intentional. Not everything from your freewrite will make it to this 2nd outline. That’s good! Most speakers try and say too much in one talk - so take stock of what you’ve learned, find the best of what you’re trying to say, keep your goals in mind and get re-clear (yes, that’s a thing) on the key points.

Draft slides (if needed).



If you’re planning on doing slides (and please don’t feel you have to!) now is a good time to begin a parallel creation of them. Sometimes slides help you get clear on what you want to say, and how... but be warned: don’t get distracted by them! Slides can be the black hole of content creation! Think high-level, clear, visual, simple - and as little text as possible. Remember: slides are the back-up singers to you - the main act.

Finished? Content Development: Building Continued

Second draft your content.

Ok, now you're ready for a 2nd full write. Take what you've got from V1, and - with new clarity from your 2nd outline - take a stab at V2. This is the point where you're focusing on CLARITY. Now's also a good time to get a sense of timing... is it in the ballpark in terms of length?

V3? V4?

Keep revising until you get to 80% done. Notice I did not say "stop once the content is perfect." Perfect and finished content does not exist! AND - more importantly - your talk will continue to evolve and develop as you get on your feet.



Which brings us to...

Integrating the Content

Integration is speaking from your whole body rather than merely reciting the words that are running through your brain. Integration requires us to know our content really well - whether it's memorized, or not - so we can speak fully from our whole body. Integration is the goal! So, to baby step our way to full-fledge delivery practices, we first focus on integrating our content into our bodies

Finished?

Off-book or on-book?

Determine which path you want to take. On-book means that you will use notes, and not go for "memorized." Most of us are on-book to some extent or another. Off-book means that you'll be "memorized" completely. (I don't recommend going Off-book unless this is a talk that you'll be doing again and again, or it's an expectation of the audience or event, like a TEDx or TED event.) Either way - we will be working towards integration -and both require a chunk of time.

Get on your feet.

Once you have your content at 80% (and you won't love it all, there will be parts that you still hate, that you're not satisfied with, etc. etc.)... stop fussing, and get on your feet. The next time you practice, I want you to practice ON YOUR FEET.

Do a Walk-N-Talk.

This is my favorite way to "start" getting on your feet, because it can feel intimidating and awkward. (There's nothing like speaking to suddenly make you wonder what to do with your hands.) But it's very simple: with script in hand, walk around and talk through your presentation. When you're talking, you're walking. There's no audience, you're not performing; you're simply syncing up your words with your body. As you're walking and talking, be sure you capture the AHA's that will come to you! These are gold. Let them change what you thought you were going to do. Trust your gut, and let it evolve.

Time check.

Time check! Talk it out loud and make sure that you're in the ballpark (or shorter) than the expected time frame. It grows in front of an audience, so plan for shorter. (No audience has ever said, "I wish that was longer.")

Focus on Delivery

Finished?

Do a stumble-through.

As you are shifting from having written content to now speaking it - things will change. It can feel especially brutal, and like you're way behind, or things aren't in good shape yet. But the only way to better is through, so go ahead and "stumble-through" your delivery practices. Which means that you're going to stumble. That's just part of it. No biggie. You are practicing falling and getting back up again. You're discovering what works and what doesn't. It's really, really, really hard work that most people avoid - which is why it will make you a better speaker.

Revise; Stumble; Revise; Stumble.

Each stumble-through yields huge lessons; take them in, learn and adapt for the next time. Stay determined, as this is often a rough patch, and people would rather just read through their talks in front of their computer rather than doing it on their feet. But we are speakers! Get up and speak.

Test with a loving audience.



Especially in a high-stakes presentations - or whenever you're sharing new content - it's a good idea to test it out with a loving audience first. What's a loving audience? Someone who will be both honest and helpful. And yes... sometimes that means you give your talk to your dog or cat! Start there before giving to a more critical audience.

Time check.

While you're at it, have someone time you! See how audience interaction changes the timing.

Gather and deliberate on feedback.

Once you've given the talk to an audience, gather some feedback with a few simple questions: 1) What worked? 2) What didn't? And then... sit on it for a bit. Discard what isn't helpful. And try/implement what is!

Commit.

So, you're still not quite "done" and yet, the 'performance' approaches. At some point you have to stop making changes and commit. Know it's not done, you are just choosing. It's better to commit 100% to something you feel 90% about than to do something half-ass-y cause you weren't quite done. :)

Dress rehearsal.

An often under-utilized moment is the dress-rehearsal. What are you going to wear? How will what you wear affect how you move? What about those shoes? Are they noisy? What kind of mic will you be using, and how will it work with your outfit? It's worth taking the time to decide what you're going to wear and try it all on for size while you do your thing. Ps., Wondering what to wear? Wear what makes you feel amazing! The 'rules' on this stuff have changed dramatically in recent years, so wear what makes you feel good and allows you to move freely.

Delivery check.



Some things to be on the lookout for: Are your feet pacing? Is your body engaged? Are you moving on purpose (or just because)? Can everyone hear you? Is your voice connected to what you're saying? Do your gestures come from commitment or choreography?...

Pre-show

Finished?

Read before bed each night.

A fun little trick to help integrate your content and help it sink into your brain: read your talk before you fall asleep every night. Osmosis!* (*Not actually sure that's osmosis.)

Sleep a lot and drink lots of H2O.

When I was in grad school for acting, they told me “If your pee isn't clear, get off the stage.” Well, let me tell you: clear pee = going to the bathroom every 45 minutes. It's not very practical, but I got the point. Water is magic, and necessary. It helps stave off illness and keeps your voice and body strong. The same thing for sleep! Speaking requires an incredible amount of focus. Help yourself out and get enough sleep so your brain can function at its best.

Celebrate progress.



Remember this is a creative process and iterative. It's never done, because each moment is different and requires something a little more from us if we are to meet it head-on. So, celebrate where you are now, and recognize where you've come from!

Do a final tech-check.

Hopefully you've had a clear conversation with the event people about the specs of the space. Are you using your own computer? Using theirs? Will your talk transfer without any hiccups? How about those fonts? What kind of dongles/chords/connectors do you need? Is your computer in good shape and ready to be run by someone else? Will you be using a remote/clicker? (Oh, there's so much to think about!) Make sure you've asked the questions you need to, and then prepare accordingly.

Finished?

Exercise.

I spend a lot of time exercising when I'm prepping for a big talk. It helps release anxiety, and gives my brain space to make meaning out of all that I'm processing! Adrenaline plays a big role in how we show up; get rid of excess adrenaline by working out on the day of the talk.

Then: let go.

Once you've done all of your prep work, make some space for nothing. Soak in the moment! Listen to another talk. Remember why you're here. Think back to the point and goals. And trust all the work you've put in. Cramming at the last minute won't work - and might even clog your brain instead of make it open to the moment.

It's showtime!

When it's showtime, your only job is to show up fully, focus on connecting with the audience - and seek out as much joy in the moment as you can.



Post-show

Finished?

Celebrate afterwards, regardless of how it went.

You just did a big thing - something many people avoid at all costs. But not you! CONGRATULATIONS! Pat yourself on the back, focus on what went well, and feel really proud of all the work you put in. (Do this before you start picking at all the things you wish would have gone differently...) :)

Later: circle back on feedback – and start again!

Once things have calmed down and you have a little space between you and the talk - take stock of how it went. Circle back to any feedback you've received. And then keep it evolving!

Thank you for sharing your voice and bringing yourself fully to the moment! I am cheering you on.

- Sally Z

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