Effective Storytelling
Lessons from a Senior Washington Speechwriter

Presented by Stephen Rabin
Brandeis University Class of 2000
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Ethos, Pathos & Logos
Before You Start Writing

1. Who is in the audience?
   - How large is the audience?
   - Will they be standing? Seated at tables? Roundtable?
   - Will there be press?
   - Will the audience be friendly/hostile/neutral? Stakeholders?
   - Will the audience have a background in the subject at hand?
   - Will the audience be adults, children, or both?
   - Should you be aware of any cultural issues?
   - What is the audience expecting from you/your boss?
Before you Start Writing

2. What is the right tone?
3. What are you hoping to accomplish?
4. What is your message?
5. What do you want the audience to remember?
Before you Start Writing

6. Who else is speaking?
7. What are the time limits?
8. What is the format of the event?
9. Who should you/your boss acknowledge?
10. Who is introducing you/your boss?
11. What is your/your boss’s voice?
VOICE
“These pretzels are making me thirsty”
Writing Tips

• Consider writing an outline.

• Consider whether to tell the audience where you are going, or not.

• Consider whether or not to lead with acknowledgements.

• Consider whether to lead with key points or build up to them.

• Creative punctuation gives you a say in how the speech will be delivered.

• Short, chopping sentences give the speaker an opportunity to breath.

• Nothing is worse than boring.
Telling a Story
THREE R’S OF ENGAGING COMMUNICATION:

RESEARCH
RHYTHM
REPETITION
RESEARCH
RHYTHM
REPETITION
DO MORE OF:

✓ Metaphor
✓ Images
✓ Visualization
✓ Alliteration
✓ Storytelling
✓ Humor
✓ The unexpected
DO LESS OFF:

- Facts & Figures
- Acronyms
- Wonk-speak
O'Malley: Maryland Overcame Groucho Marx Syndrome
By John Wagner. May 14, 2008

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley cited a scene from a 1935 Marx Brothers film today in making the case that his administration had acted boldly to take responsibility for the state's fiscal challenges.

Speaking to a gathering of the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce, O'Malley (D) compared Maryland's past practices to a scene from "A Night at the Opera" in which a character played by Groucho Marx is given an inflated dinner bill by a waiter.

"This is an outrage!" the Marx character says, handing the bill to a woman at the table. "If I were you, I wouldn't pay it!"

For too long, O'Malley said, Maryland leaders had been "like Groucho Marx at the dinner table," passing along the state's fiscal challenges without really addressing them.

O'Malley credited his administration with tackling a $1.7 billion structural deficit ...
Visualization
Humor

“George Bush was born on third base and decided that he'd hit a triple.”

JIM HIGHTOWER,
1988 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION
Making Numbers Interesting

WHICH SOUNDS BETTER?

“We have a 68% positive customer service rating”

“More than two out of every three customers tell us they are pleased with our service”
“Our greatest strength has long been not merely our military might but our moral authority. Our surest protection against assault from abroad has been not all our guards, gates and guns or even our two oceans, but our essential goodness as a people...”

Ted Sorenson, 5/21/04
“An’ he just smoked my eyelids, an’ punched my cigarette.”

BOB DYLAN

*Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again*
Next Steps

✓ Fill out our satisfaction survey and let us know how we did

✓ Register for our next webinar:
  LinkedIn 2.0: Expand Your Network
  Tuesday, March 10, 2015, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. EDT

  https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2231605446815162626

✓ Join our Brandeis University Career Connections group on LinkedIn

✓ Brandeis undergraduate students and alumni:
  Call (781) 736-3618 to schedule a free, 1-on-1 advising appointment with a Hiatt career counselor (in-person, phone, Skype)
Contact the Hiatt Career Center

Alexandra Anweiler Stephens
Associate Director, Alumni Career Programs & Engagement
Email: astephens@brandeis.edu
Phone: 781-736-3623

Website: alumni.brandeis.edu/careers
Twitter: @HiattatBrandeis
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