



Impromptu

Leading in the Moment

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

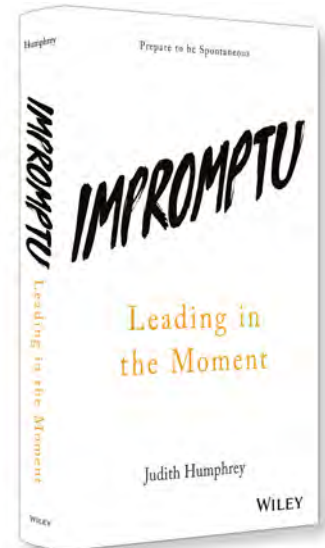
Today the most iconic leadership moments are spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment events that reveal the inner workings of the leader's mind. When these impromptu opportunities arise, leaders must be able to listen, think and respond within seconds. They can tailor a message — in a meeting, in the corridor or in a tweet — to influence and inspire any audience. Those who shine in that moment are remembered for their leadership.

The ability to speak on the spot is often seen as an innate gift, a talent of “natural-born” leaders. The truth is, it's a skill that can be learned — a skill that is quickly becoming a must-have for anyone in a leadership position. Guided by her entrepreneurial success as founder of The Humphrey Group and her firm's work with tens of thousands of leaders over the past 30 years, Judith Humphrey makes clear the importance of preparing to be spontaneous — as counterintuitive as that may sound!

Impromptu provides clear, actionable guidance to help you reach your full leadership potential. It will enable you to influence and inspire followers on the many “small stages” that define our daily lives.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Why impromptu speaking has become an essential skill for leaders today.
- To develop an impromptu mindset.
- To create an impromptu script for every occasion.
- To deliver your remarks with maximum effect on the impromptu stage.



by Judith Humphrey

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: IMPROMPTU

by Judith Humphrey

The author: Judith Humphrey is founder of The Humphrey Group, a premier leadership-communications firm. She founded The Humphrey Group in 1988 as the first Canadian firm to focus on teaching top executives to be effective speakers. As a communications expert, Humphrey teaches global clients how to communicate as confident, compelling leaders. She is also an acclaimed speaker and a columnist for *Fast Company*. Her other books include *Speaking as a Leader* and *Taking the Stage: How Women Can Speak Up, Stand Out and Succeed*.

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The New World of Impromptu

The Rise of Impromptu Speaking

Back in the 1980s, CEOs and top executives in every organization regularly delivered formal speeches and rarely spoke spontaneously — nor was anyone else encouraged to communicate. The law of the land was for managers and junior executives to keep their mouths shut.

And then in the 1990s something odd but unmistakable occurred. The demand for formal speeches declined, while the number of people asking The Humphrey Group for assistance with impromptu remarks soared. Today more and more leaders — pressed for time and anxious to be authentic — are scrapping the script.

Elon Musk, CEO of SpaceX, hired Dex Torricke-Barton, Mark Zuckerberg's speech writer, but was quick to point out in a tweet that "Dex will do comms, but my speeches are just a conversation w the audience. No time to rehearse & don't want to read from a prompter." This transformation of leadership communications from scripts to spontaneity, from the big stage to the small stage, reflects a new era of impromptu speaking.

The rise in impromptu speaking reflects three closely related developments that have changed our world. First, the flattening of organizations. There's still someone at the "top." But there are now fewer layers, and fewer barriers between top and bottom. Knowledge and decision-making are decentralized. Leadership is expected at all levels of the organization. Today's leaders must communicate in a more open, authentic and informal manner than was previously done at the top.

Second, technology has accelerated the shift to distributed leadership. Emailing, messaging, texting, blogging, tweeting and conference calls provide nonhierarchical channels of communication. People are communicating in shorter, more spontaneous and more authentic ways, making impromptu speaking more the norm than the exception.

Third, thanks to our interconnected world, time zones have dissolved and we live in a 24/7 universe. The flow of information, once a trickle, has become a veritable Niagara Falls of emails, texts, news reports, videos and social media posts. This leaves less time for lengthy, formal events, with the result that older forms of communication (speeches, presentations, meetings) have been replaced by crisp impromptu exchanges. In fact, impromptu speaking has become the *modus operandi* for leaders, reflecting the fact that everything leaders do is chopped up, fragmented into short bits of activity.

Power of Spontaneity

Impromptu speaking has compelling power for leaders. People don't necessarily "get" what you want them to if you say it only once. You need to repeat your messages over and over and over again. In impromptu settings you can do just that — in the corridor, the elevator, the lunchroom, the meeting room and the office. Each time you repeat your message it will sound fresh and spontaneous, and over time you will have the impact you want.

Impromptu conversations can stimulate collaborative idea sharing. "Ideas typically do not just come to you," Mark Zuckerberg said in a 2014 Q&A session at Facebook. "They happen because you've been talking about



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something or thinking about something and talking to a lot of people about it for a long period of time.”

Spontaneous conversations allow you to resolve problems and give feedback on a more timely basis. Sundar Pichai, Google’s CEO, often meets with Google employees in a room next to his office that has been nicknamed “Sundar’s Huddle.” On one such occasion, according to an article in *Fast Company*, the group had “barely begun its presentation when Pichai starts peppering [participants] with questions, opinions and advice. For half an hour the discussion careens from subject to subject.” This is the power of impromptu, on-the-fly exchanges that lead to better decision-making.

Spontaneous speaking allows you to be authentic and trustworthy — no small benefit when you are leading a team or organization. When leaders speak in an unscripted mode, their tones are more genuine and their listeners know they’re speaking from the heart, not from a text that someone else might have written for them.

The crowning touch of impromptu speaking is that it will make you charismatic. According to research published in *Psychological Science*, people who respond to questions or statements without hesitation come across as charismatic. “When we looked at charismatic leaders, musicians and other public figures, one thing that stood out is that they are quick on their feet,” said the researchers. And this ability to react without hesitation is attractive to others. ●

The Impromptu Mindset

Good impromptu speaking is a matter of words, scripts and presence. But before those words can be selected or scripts formed, there is a need to bring the right mindset. The right mindset includes having the intention to lead, being a good listener and being authentic, focused and respectful. Get your outlook right, and you’ll find the other pieces will fall into place.

Be Intent on Leading

In this new world of spontaneous communications, an opportunity to lead might come at any moment, in any situation, at any level, to anyone in the organization. But you must have the *intention* to lead. This involves the desire to move others by shaping their opinions, influencing their actions, or just connecting with them on a human level and making them feel better about their workplace or their lives. Seizing these opportunities means, above

all, realizing the potential of your own leadership and the ever-present opportunity to have an impact on others.

Smart leaders know when to seize leadership moments.

Pick the right time and place. Don’t speak too soon or wait too long to share your ideas. Choose your setting, too. Public spaces are not the best for sensitive discussions.

Collect your thoughts. This is perhaps the most difficult challenge for impromptu speakers. After all, you may have only seconds to collect your thoughts. Think first...then speak.

Have your audience’s full attention. Even if you have something powerful to say, or feel the person you are reaching out to knows you’re there, don’t speak until you have the undivided attention of the people you’re talking to.

Have something valuable to say. If you don’t have something of substance, keep quiet and listen to others.

Be politically sensitive. Even though organizations are flatter today, there are still political protocols for leading up, down and across your organization. And that means impromptu conversations must be undertaken with sensitivity.

Be a Listener

A commitment to truly hearing others is an important part of the impromptu mindset. But active listening involves more than listening with our ears. It’s a threefold approach that requires our entire being — our *physical*, *mental* and *emotional* powers.

Good physical listening begins with body language that shows you are interested in others. Open your hands and arms, and direct your gestures toward the person you are talking to. Turn your head and body toward that person. Warm up your voice, and be expressive. Look people in the eye, and even in a group meeting, always look at the speaker even if that person is not talking to you individually. Smile, nod, show rapport.

Listening mentally is the second tier of listening and involves fully engaging your mind in what those around you are saying, and probing and building upon their thinking. The starting point of mental listening is attentiveness. Mental listening also involves probing, drawing out others and eliciting their views. Mental listening at its best involves orchestrating a discussion and bringing coherence to disparate views.

The third tier of listening involves emotionally connecting with others and not letting your own feelings get in the way of effective listening. The starting point of emotional listening is reinforcement — nodding your head or saying “yes” and “I understand.” Show that you empathize

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by using phrases like, “I can see why you feel that way” or “That must have been a difficult decision for you.”

Be Authentic

Authentic leadership involves sharing the genuine qualities that define us. But it is more than that. It also requires embracing the values and deep beliefs that represent leadership at its best. Those qualities include the intent to lead and listen and to respect the views and dignity of others. The most successful leaders share what they know, believe, feel and experience in such a way that they inspire others.

There are many ways to bring your authentic self forward. The following six will put your audience (and you) in touch with your true self.

- **Share your presence.** It is about being “in the moment,” being open to the conversation and aligned with the person or people you’re talking to.
- **Share your ideas.** Authentic ideas are original, bold ideas that come from within you. Leaders need to delve deep to find them.
- **Share your beliefs and values.** Authentic leaders inspire others with their beliefs and values.
- **Share your feelings.** Authentic leadership involves showing positive, motivational passion and filtering out destructive feelings that might demotivate others.
- **Share your vulnerabilities.** Authentic leaders are forthcoming about their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Share your stories.** Nothing will endear you more to an employer, boss, team, colleague, customer or friend than an inspiring story about yourself.

Be Focused

The need for focus is important today because everyone is on information overload, and you’ll lose your audience if you don’t deliver clear, focused thinking. In *Brief*, communications expert Joseph McCormack writes, “In 2008, Americans consumed about 1.3 trillion hours of information outside of work, an average of almost 12 hours per person per day.” At work, the demands are even greater. Given this flood of information, it’s no wonder people’s attention span has gotten shorter and shorter.

The solution? Have a focused mindset that (1) encourages you not to talk, talk and talk because you like to hear the sound of your own voice, and (2) distills your thinking rather than offering up a content dump. Steve Jobs distilled his presentations down to one message: “Today

Apple is going to reinvent the phone, and here it is,” he told his MacWorld 2007 fans.

In impromptu speaking, being focused is a make-or-break quality. You’ll lose your audience if you speak too long or get sidetracked. But if you stay focused you can rivet your listeners’ attention on exactly what you want them to know and care about.

Be Respectful

True leaders show the utmost respect for their employer. If that sounds “old school,” just think of organizations as *communities*. Loyalty to your organization shows you value a community that includes you, your team, your colleagues, your customers and other stakeholders. As a leader, you should inspire others to believe in the organization and what it stands for.

Respect your management as well. When speaking off the cuff, avoid comments that show disrespect for your boss or senior management. Organizations may be flatter than they once were, but showing respect is still a coveted quality.

Respect your colleagues. Respectful people are the ones who listen attentively to others at meetings, who don’t interrupt when someone else is talking, who can be trusted with confidential information, and who always are generous and positive in their comments about others. They make others look and feel good.

Finally, respect yourself. Successful leaders also project a consistently positive and credible “brand” for themselves. They don’t undercut themselves when they feel vulnerable, tired or upset. Respect needs to be at the core of our impromptu conversations — and for that to happen we must make it part of our mindset. ●

The Leader’s Script

This section discusses how to craft scripts for impromptu speaking. First, let’s learn how to create a strong foundation for your script.

Lay the Groundwork

The first step in preparing your extemporaneous script is knowing your subject matter. This includes three kinds of knowledge:

Subject knowledge. People expect you to demonstrate a solid grounding on the topics you’re discussing. Get your facts right, or risk damaging your credibility.

General knowledge. The better read you are and the more you keep up with developments in science, politics

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and sports, the richer your remarks and the more persuasive you'll be.

Experiential knowledge. The best impromptu speakers also draw upon their life experiences. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech was largely extemporaneous, but it embodied ideas he had lived.

Preparing for impromptu speaking also means having key leadership messages in mind. Mark Zuckerberg does this well. He is always "on message." His central message and mission is this: "To give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected." He consistently delivers variations on this theme.

Read Your Audience

Take time to analyze your audience before you're face to face. Ask yourself, "What is their appetite for the ideas I will introduce?" "Will I need to bring them around to my way of thinking?" And "If so, what is my best strategy?" Assessing your audience's level of knowledge is also critical. Will you need to explain the basics to them, or do they have a sophisticated knowledge of the subject?

Once you're in front of your audience, be sensitive to the dynamics in the room and respond accordingly. When speaking, keep the following questions in mind and let them guide you in reading your audience. "Is my audience engaged?" "Which ideas are gaining traction?" "What is the organizational culture?" "What political realities are present?"

Follow up by asking yourself, "Did I 'get' the audience?" "Did I read the situation correctly?" Those post-mortems are valuable and a good way to improve your skills.

In sum, always think in stereo — one track keeping tabs on your own thinking while the other track monitors the audience's response. And to be a great impromptu speaker, read your audience — before, during and after you speak.

The Scripting Template

In every situation it's important to collect your thoughts rather than spew out whatever comes into your head. Winging it simply doesn't work for leaders.

The Leader's Script® template is a model for organizing your thinking in impromptu conversations. This easy-to-master template has a four-part structure rooted in the fundamentals of persuasion. Here's how it works:

First, engage your audience with a "grabber." This bridge to your audience can be a friendly greeting, a reference to a previous discussion or a segue from someone's point.

Second, state your message. This is your point. It is the heart of your impromptu script.

Third, build your structure. Create a compelling case for your message with clear, persuasive arguments.

Fourth, end with a call to action. Show how your message can be acted upon.

This four-part template will allow you to lead others through persuasive and sound thinking. Burn it in your mind, and use it every time you speak impromptu.

For example, you're about to meet with your boss for an update on a project. Take 10 minutes before the meeting to write down the key elements of your script. Your grabber might bridge to your boss by saying, "I know you're keenly interested in Project X."

Your message would follow: "I've got good news: We're making excellent progress." Now for your proof: Jot down several points that illustrate why you say things are moving along well. Close with action: What do you want your boss to do? Or what will you do next?

That's it — a simple template that guides you through any discussion. Creating your script is an important aspect of impromptu speaking. It will keep you from blathering, as so many people do. With a clear and persuasive structure, you will influence and inspire your listeners.

Commit to a Message

At the heart of the Leader's Script is a point — your point. It is the idea you want to get across. Without a message, conversations become information-based rather than idea-based. Listeners are not sure what point you're suggesting or why you're proposing a certain action.

The best speakers know the qualities of a good message. Here are the six characteristics to keep in mind.

First, a message is one idea. Too many ideas — or no idea — both produce the same thing: confusion in the minds of the audience.

Second, it's a single, clear sentence. Why? Because if your message is more than one sentence or is a long, convoluted sentence, the audience will not "get it."

Third, it is engaging. Design it so your listeners hear it, believe it and want to follow it.

Fourth, it carries your convictions. Make sure your message is an idea you believe in.

Fifth, it is positive. Your message should move the room, so be sure it embodies hope, aspirational goals, possibilities and accomplishments.

Sixth, it's recognizable. Often expressing it as a strong, clear, declaratory statement (with a tone of conviction) is enough to flag it as your main idea.

Make a Compelling Case

Stating your message is rarely sufficient. You need evidence that encourages listeners to buy into that point of view. So after presenting *what* you believe, share *why* you believe it.

Building your case involves choosing the right pattern of organization for your points. The secret is to learn the following four patterns and pick the best one for each impromptu script.

1. Reasons. This pattern backs up your main point with reasons. Suppose your message is, “I believe we need a more inclusive working environment.” Your bullet points might be: “First, we’re way behind in hiring women and minorities. Second, a diverse workforce leads to a better bottom line. Third, inclusivity is the right thing to do!”

2. Ways. This pattern shows the ways your main point can be acted upon. Or it can refer to “things” that have to be done. Suppose your message is, “I know we can fix this situation for our customer.” Your bullet points would show the ways: “First, we will interview our customer. Second, we’ll assign a team to resolve the situation. Third, we will follow through and make sure it’s fixed.”

3. Situation/Response. This pattern is used when your message refers to a situation or challenge to be acted upon. The first bullet describes the situation or challenge, while the second presents the response. Your message might be, “Although last year’s results came in below expectations, we’ve taken steps to turn the division around.” Your bullet points would sound like this: “Adverse economic conditions resulted in earnings that were 10 percent below projections last year. But our new product line and cost efficiencies should allow us to meet or exceed expectations this year.”

4. Chronological. This pattern takes your listeners through a temporal sequence that elaborates your message. Say your message is, “We have met our project commitments on schedule.” Your bullet points might sound like this: “When we launched this project, we said we would complete the installation in three years. In the first year we achieved the goal we set. In the second year we were ahead of schedule. Today all of our commitments have been met.”

To decide which structure to use, pause after your message, and choose your pattern. And if you have time to think in advance, all the better. Eventually the decision will become second nature. Having a message and bullet points will guide you through your impromptu remarks. Fill in the words as you speak. ●

Impromptu Scripts for Every Occasion

Meetings

Studies show that busy professionals attend more than 60 meetings every month and spend approximately 40 percent of their time in meetings. CEOs spend a full 85 percent of their time in meetings of various sorts, including scheduled and unscheduled meetings, brief encounters, conference calls and networking events.

You as a leader have a wonderful opportunity to influence and inspire in these meetings. For example, your boss asks for an update on a project or a string of projects. Realize that project updates are always a little more than just that. What you’re really doing is selling your boss, and anyone else in the room, on your work and why you think it matters — and why it should matter to them, too. To do that well, you need to avoid the mind-numbing, fact-based approach: “This happened, that happened, here’s where we are, blah, blah, blah.” It’s a poor idea to provide that jumbled-up selection of good news and bad news.

Start by writing down a positive message for each project, no matter what stage it’s in. Then write down or type out several reasons or ways your project can be shown to be in good shape. On your way to work, run through that messaging in your head.

When it’s your time to present, begin with your grabber. If you’re presenting to your boss, you might say, “You’ll be pleased about Project X.” Then set forth the positive message: “It’s on track to deliver higher revenue for our salespeople.” Always make sure your message inspires. If your group is underperforming, don’t hide the fact, but have a message that commits to turning the situation around. Poor results? Show why they’ll get better. Once you’ve delivered the above message, move to your proof points. Finally, your call to action (“Stay tuned!”).

Such a script will allow your boss to sleep well. Position every project in this way, and you’ll demonstrate your leadership and build confidence in your team.

“Just the Big Picture”

A meeting convenor or executive has told you time is tight, saying, “Just give us the big picture.” These words can be scary. Here’s a brief guide to shrinking your presentation on the spot.

The worst thing you can do is skim through your entire presentation or report, frantically trying to figure out what to say and what to delete. This approach is often

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characterized by talking too fast and occasionally discarding a slide with the comment, “That’s not important” or “We’ll pass over that one.” A far better approach is to bring your impromptu skills into play and create a shorter presentation on the spot. There are three ways to do this.

1. Scrap the slides and deliver your thinking. If you used the Leader’s Script in preparing your presentation, it will have all the key elements of a good impromptu script — grabber, message, proof points and call to action. If your time is reduced, tell your audience that you will give them the key messages of your presentation.

2. Select key slides. Focus on the few slides that present the key elements of your talk. In preparing your presentation, create an outline that has all the components of the Leader’s Script. Do this even before you create your visuals. Then design the visuals around this template. If you’re asked to speak in less time, use only those slides. Be sure to save this mini-presentation of four to six slides as a separate file.

3. Just use your message. There may be occasions when you don’t even have time to deliver a version of your presentation’s structure. Your boss may rush by and say, “I’ve got to run. Give me the gist of your presentation.” Or you may find yourself in a situation where someone needs the simplest version of your talk. Often this comes in a hallway conversation, an elevator chat or a client meeting. So always carry in your mind the one message you want to get across.

The Impromptu Speech

A vice president was asked to introduce a minister of labor at a business luncheon. The executive had prepared an adulatory introduction, but the minister showed up early and needed to speak well before her designated time. When the VP arrived, his introductory remarks were no longer needed.

After the minister finished her keynote address, the master of ceremonies called upon the VP to “say a few words” about the speaker. The executive knew he had to craft an impromptu speech, do so quickly and make it right for the occasion. The theme of his remarks came to him as he walked up to the podium to address the 700 people in the room.

He began, “Madame Minister, I am not surprised you were ahead of schedule today. After all, as your speech indicates, you have been moving rapidly to address labor issues in this province.” The VP then enumerated a few of the labor issues that the minister had been tackling and resolving. After doing so he concluded, “Thank you for

coming today and for staying ahead of schedule on your commitments to this province.”

The best impromptu speeches reverberate with a single, captivating idea. The executive’s central idea (praising the minister for “moving rapidly to address labor issues in the province”) flowed out of the grabber (“I am not surprised you were ahead of schedule”) and led to the call to action in the final line of the speech. Once you have that message, you’re well on your way to a great speech. All you need to do is figure out your proof points and your call to action. ●

The Impromptu Stage

Rehearse Your Remarks

Successful spontaneity is a practiced art. There are times when you’ll want to rehearse your remarks out loud because it can make all the difference in client pitches, job interviews, Q&A exchanges, impromptu speeches and difficult conversations.

Pitching clients can be unnerving, so it’s best to practice. Whether you’re an entrepreneur, a salesperson or a team leader, selling your ideas takes practice, and rehearsing will help you stay on message.

Rehearse for job interviews, too. Practice until you know your script thoroughly and can successfully field any questions thrown your way. This takes work, but it’s worth it.

Sussannah Kelly, executive vice president, DHR International, regularly rehearses candidates for CEO positions. She fires questions at them and gives them feedback on their answers. According to Kelly, “What they learn from these rehearsals is that it’s not about them. It’s about how they can help the company.”

Smart business leaders also prepare for Q&A. A financial executive was a pro at such dialogue because he rehearsed for his conference calls with analysts. Before each call he’d write down all the questions they could ask him, and create succinct, message-based answers. Then he would be grilled on those questions and others, including a few “left-field” questions like, “I hear there’s a management shakeup in the works at your company, is that true?” Or “Do you have any plans for a merger?” As a result of these rehearsals, he was terrific on the conference calls.

Choose Your Words

Mark Twain once said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.” In impromptu

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speaking, we may struggle to find the right word but land instead on the almost right word or even the wrong word — followed by apologizing, self-correcting or rephrasing.

To strengthen your impromptu language, keep the following four Cs in mind:

1. Be clear. Unclear language comes from unclear thinking. Too often words roll off the tongue, yet they don't present a clear idea. Prune your prose. Say "We'll focus on," instead of "What we are going to do is focus on." Junk the jargon. Delete phrases like "Transform our educational knowledge set," and replace with the more familiar "learn."

2. Be conversational. Impromptu language should be conversational — marked by the simplicity we use in everyday conversation. Use short words. Don't use "however" if you can use "but." Don't say "prioritize" when you can say "choose." Also, your audience can understand shorter sentences better than longer sentences. Finally, be conversational, but be professional. Avoid "yeah," "yup," "nope," "gotta," "you guys," "stuff," "hey" and "whatever!"

3. Be confident. Speak with conviction. Use phrases like "I believe," "I'm convinced," "I've thought a lot about..." Filter out the filler. Avoid words like "um... ah... yeah... well... like... you know... to be honest" or any combination of these. Shun weak words ("just," "a little bit," "only," "maybe"), and watch wiggle words ("perhaps," "probably," "possibly," "basically").

4. Be collaborative. Limit the language of "ego." Words that can smack of egotism if overused, such as "I," "me," or "my," should be used sparingly. Nix the negatives. Collaborative language builds relationships and is therefore positive. Avoid "I can't" or "I won't," as in "I can't get the budget for this project" or "I won't be able to make the meeting." Also, focus on common goals, and encourage diverse viewpoints.

Find Your Voice

Your voice is a powerful instrument for impromptu leadership. If you're too rushed, too loud (or soft) or seem out of breath, you will undercut your ability to engage others. Let's discuss how to achieve a strong, confident voice by learning to breathe, grounding your voice and achieving the ideal volume, tone and pace.

Begin by breathing. You're in a meeting and suddenly a question is thrown at you. Before answering, pause and take a deep breath. That breath will send a calming message to your brain. You will sound — and be! — more focused in your reply. It takes a steady, reliable supply of breath to speak powerfully.

Ground your voice. Grounding your voice will make it deeper, stronger and more credible. To build this skill, think of the connection between "gravitas" and "gravity." Imagine your voice tugged down by gravity. When we are tense or surprised, or rushing as we speak — as often happens in off-the-cuff moments — our voices rise. So gravitas is a perfect antidote to that tendency.

Strive for the right volume. Find a voice that's neither too loud nor too soft but strong and confident. If you speak too softly, people will tune you out. You'll sound tentative and unsure. By the same measure, if you're too loud or aggressive, you'll offend people. Also, adopt a warm, committed tone that inspires confidence. Let your voice be expressive and show you're a person who cares about what you say and about those you're talking to.

Pace yourself. Your pace should be slower than you think. Pause between sentences. This will allow you to formulate your next idea, and it will also help your listeners absorb what you've just said. Typically the pause between your sentences should be about two seconds. Deliver your ideas at a relaxed tempo, and pause between the elements of the Leader's Script. Those breaks are a sign to listeners that you are moving from grabber, to message, to structure and, finally, to the call to action.

Few skills are more important today for leaders and aspiring leaders than the ability to speak well in impromptu situations. The day when executives could deliver the big speech and then retreat to their offices is long gone. Constant, spontaneous interactions with colleagues, senior executives, clients and stakeholders have become the norm.

The new world of leadership is full of conversation, collaboration and charisma. Make the most of these opportunities. ●

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