

## Effective Communication with External Partners

**Lesson Objective:** As leaders rise to higher levels of responsibility, the need for public speaking skills increases. This topic will discuss that fundamental point, with an emphasis on making extemporaneous speeches and delivering briefings. Moreover, the topic will introduce members to the “how to” of making a presentation and addressing an external group about Civil Air Patrol. The topic will emphasize the role public speaking plays in the senior leader and staff environments.

### **Desired Learning Outcomes (DLO):**

1. Participants will explore multiple techniques for speaking effectively.
2. Participants will demonstrate best practices for good delivery and how to organize an oral presentation.
3. Read and discuss “Effective Communication with External Partners” reading list.

**Scheduled Lesson Time:** 30 minutes

### **Introduction**

The hallmark of any great organization is professionalism. It does not matter if you are paid millions to lead an organization or if you are an unpaid professional (volunteer). How you communicate to the outside world is a keystone in laying a foundation of excellence. You only have one opportunity to make a first impression. This one opportunity may be through a speech, letter or email. Make no mistake, perception is reality. It is incumbent upon you as a senior leader to take the right steps from the beginning.

### **1. Types of Communication**

We communicate in many ways. Let's focus on three: Verbal, Non-Verbal, and Written.

**Verbal:** Did you know that glossophobia (fear of giving speeches) is one of the most common phobias? As many as 75% people have glossophobia. Statistically, far more of us claim that we would prefer death to giving a speech; even comedian Jerry Seinfeld used to joke that at a funeral, most people would rather be lying in the casket than delivering the eulogy.

The ability to speak in front of a group is a much-admired skill. This course will help you along the path of effective speaking. However, we do need to make one thing clear. Everyone gets nervous before a speech. The best way to overcome it is to be prepared and to practice. Yes, it does get easier over time.

There are three common types of speaking you will be called upon to deliver. These include a briefing, teaching lecture and a formal speech.

## Level 4 Effective Communication with External Partners

### Student Guide

**Briefing:** Most briefings are provided to senior leaders to either inform them about an ongoing event, activity or mission or they are seeking to get a decision from a senior leader for a path forward. They should be concise and to the point. It helps to be aware of how much the person you are briefing knows about the subject. Kline suggest you follow the ABC's – Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity. It is very common to use power point to augment your briefing. The biggest mistake you can make using this tool is to read off the slide. Your audience knows how to read. The second biggest mistake is to put too much information on each slide. The slides should also follow the ABC's. Hit the high points, answer questions and be ready to take on follow-on taskings. If the goal is to get a decision, ask the question at the end. If possible, provide pre-briefing material beforehand. There is no guarantee that it will be read, but most senior leaders will not decide at the end of the briefing without this preview. Charts and graphics can be a big plus in a briefing. However, avoid the mistakes of too much details in the graphic and too much animation. Animation tools can enhance a brief, but too many things flying around the screen is a distraction.

**Teaching Lecture:** This type of speech is very common in CAP and the most common method of teaching is a lecture. As you prepare to present this speech you should understand the environment that you will be presenting in. Is it formal? Is it one way – “you talk, they listen”? Is it informal? Is it “hands-on”? This type of talk is usually presented by an expert in the subject so your comfort level on the material should be high. You can use tools to assist in your presentation, like power point, but the same cautions should be used to guide you.

**Formal Speech:** This type of speech, like the briefing, can be informative or persuasive. In addition, it can also be entertaining. A speech at a Dining Out or graduation is an example of an entertaining speech. The use of humor or anecdotes is often a key ingredient. However, be mindful of your audience. If you use humor, the best type of humor is self-deprecating. No one likes someone to make fun of their unit, school or background. Taking shots at yourself is always safe if you keep it clean and respectful.

**Preparation:** In most case the subject of your speech will be given to you by the people asking you to speak with them. In the event you are asked to come up with the subject, keep these points in mind:

- Know the audience. If you have not spoken to them before, ask someone who has.
- Pick a topic that is of interest to the audience and one that you have a level of expertise in, as well.
- How much time do I have? You may have to skim the surface of the topic if you do not have enough time. It is important to note that you need to keep track of how long you have been talking. Tricks to follow include having a clock at the back of the room or placing your watch or cell phone on the podium. If you find you are going long, edit out parts of the speech. If you find you still have time you can always go back.
- Subject – Purpose – Objective: Identify these three items up front. They will help guide you as you prepare your speech
- Layout the key points that you want to present gathered from your personal knowledge. If you need additional material use multiple forms of research to gather it. Evaluate the

## Level 4 Effective Communication with External Partners

### Student Guide

material you have and be certain it is accurate. In today's world 99% of our research is conducted online. One of the first sites that pops up for many topics is Wikipedia. While it is a good source, it is written by the public and could provide inaccurate information. Don't be that person who, when questioned on a topic replies "it must be true, I looked it up on the internet"

### **Organizing Your Speech**

You owe it to your audience to give them a well thought out and organized speech. One of the biggest failures an orator can make is to stumble around a speech, not following the rule of Introduction, Body of Speech and Conclusion. Have the points you want to cover laid out in advance and in the proper order is a must! Present your points in a logical way. If you are talking about how an internal combustion engine works, you would not start at the exhaust stroke following the combustion of fuel. You would begin explaining the components and the strokes (steps) in the process. If you have not been given an introduction, you should also begin by saying who you are.

Most speeches can be organized into five main points (or less). You may have subpoints within each point. Caution! If you try and tackle more, you will lose your audience.

### **Extemporaneous (Bullet Points) vs Manuscript (Written)**

Whether you write out the text of your speech, put key points on a note card, or use a visual tool like PowerPoint; put your thoughts in writing. You want to avoid missing key parts of your speech by using your notes as a checklist to ensure you covered your material. If possible, avoid reading your speech word for word off the page. If you are going to "read" the speech, add editorial notes in your speech to help you connect with your audience. Tell yourself to look up, ask a question of the group, tell a story or joke. These will prompt you to look up from your notes and re-connect with the assembly.

If you choose to use bullet points to cover your material, be careful to avoid filler words. Words like: "uhm" and "you know" or stuttering happen to the best speakers. It happens to many speakers when giving public speeches. If you have a habit of using these types of words simply reminding yourself at the beginning of your talk will often help. Instead of fillers, pause between thoughts, but not too long.

### **Common Issues**

- Speaking too softly
- Stiff body movements
- Speaking too fast
- Poor eye contact
- Low energy

### **Best Practices**

## Level 4 Effective Communication with External Partners

### Student Guide

- Practice! It may sound obvious, but if you haven't practiced your material you are setting yourself up for failure. Time yourself. Get feedback from others. Record yourself and watch/listen to it. Practice does make perfect.
- Keep an eye on your audience. If they are falling asleep, playing with their cell phones or staring off into space you've lost them. Put more energy into your speech. Move around the stage. Use appropriate movement and use body language to communicate.
- Don't talk over or under your audience. This can be a challenge based on who you are addressing, but select words that they will understand. This is not the time to impress them with SAT words or technobabble.
- Get feedback from the audience to help you improve for next time.

### Non-Verbal Communication

We discussed that you only have one chance to make a first impression. As you enter an event, you will be communicating with your audience. Is your uniform proper? Do you look sharp? Do you look terrified? Effective communicators understand that they are always "on" and they need to "work the room" before and after the speech. Introduce yourself or have your host introduce you to others. Be friendly and avoid sounding too formal. Do not introduce yourself as Major Robert Smith, introduce yourself as Bob Smith. The audience can see your uniform and they will know your rank.

We mentioned earlier the importance of practicing timing and sound. Practice will put you at ease and make you feel more comfortable as you give a talk for the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> time.

Maintain eye contact with your audience. This will help provide a connection. Strutting around the stage can detract from your speech. Use the space by moving around to other sections of the audience. Do something purposeful with your hands if you have nervous habits (chewing your nails, scratching your head, or wringing your hands). One trick used by many speakers is to grip the podium with both hands. It keeps them in place and allows you the opportunity to use them for expression. However, go back to gently gripping the platform.

### Written Communication

No lesson on effective communication would be complete without touching on the importance of written communication. If you are asked to give a speech to a group you have to respond, this may be in the form of an email, letter or phone call. 90% of the time there will be some written communication.

**Email:** In today's world we communicate more with email. Let's start at the beginning with your email address. If you are acting as an official representative of CAP your email address should reflect that. Many squadrons, most wings and regions offer CAP specific email addresses. Get one! [I Love Airplanes@juno.com](mailto:I Love Airplanes@juno.com) may have sounded cool when you were 12. However, [RSmith@mywing.cap.gov](mailto:RSmith@mywing.cap.gov) is more professional. Respond to emails in a timely manner. If you must wait to give an answer, acknowledge your receipt of the email and let them know when you will be getting back to them. Proofread your emails or have someone review it. Spell check isn't

## Level 4 Effective Communication with External Partners

### Student Guide

grammar check and neither will identify all errors. For more tips on written correspondence review CAPR 1-2 Publications Management.

**Letters:** This may be a letter of introduction or a thank you letter. No matter the purpose, remember to follow CAPR 1-2. It lays out proper headings and provides samples. The opportunity to speak to an outside group about CAP isn't over until you write a thank you. It could be an email or a letter, but always remember to say thank you. If you are asking for something from the organization the "thank you for allowing me to address your group" affords the chance for you to diplomatically also ask "is the check in the mail?" Of course, once you get the check you get to write another letter!

### **Lesson Summary and Closure**

As an effective leader you will be called upon to communicate with external partners. They may be community based or military based. You are representing yourself, your unit, and the Civil Air Patrol. Your professionalism is vital to our mission. If you are going to "talk the talk" you need to "walk the walk." Some of our members err on both sides of the spectrum. They show up in uniform then start out by apologizing that they are not "really" in the Air Force. Others show up demanding 21-gun salutes. Be the servant leader and professional who treats everyone with respect and exudes proficiency and competence.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Prepare a short speech (3-5) minutes on a topic assigned by your instructor. You will need to develop the format using one of the ideas in this document or one of the assigned readings. Give the speech to a group and receive their feedback. Write a brief "thank you" to the group that asked you to speak.