

September 27, 1943

Mr. J. C. Stevens, Director  
Speakers Bureau  
Oregon State Defense Council  
Spalding Building  
Portland, Oregon

Dear Mr. Stevens:

I am enclosing a copy of an article from Printer's Ink, recently sent to us by Mr. Frank Gaines, Assistant Director, Organization & War Services, Regional Office of Civilian Defense.

This article contains so many pertinent points I suggest that you have it mimeographed and sent out to your chairmen of your county Speakers Bureaus.

Sincerely,

Mrs. E. W. St. Pierre, Director  
Civilian War Services

Encl.  
HSP:dp  
cc Mr. Jerrold Owen

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## WHAT EVERY SELLER OF IDEAS SHOULD KNOW

By Tom A. Burke  
Reproduced from "Printer's Ink" Monthly

*Speakers*

1. GET YOUR BACK TO THE WALL: Don't let anyone get behind you when you are speaking to a group. Ask the Chairman to take a seat out front. If he sits behind you, the audience will watch him to see how he's taking it. If he doesn't listen with rapt attention, why should they? If he lights his pipe, that's a show and they watch without regard for what you are saying. Yes, get your back to the wall. Don't let anyone behind you steal attention from you.
2. DON'T PROMISE TO DO SOMETHING IN A MUNUTE: Don't say "I'll cover that in a few minutes." The boys and girls hope to adjourn in a few minutes. Announcing that you plan to keep on talking doesn't help at all. Nobody is wondering why you don't talk about the subject now. If you plan to talk about something after a while, keep it a deep, dark secret. Take it up in its turn without any advance ballyhoo.
3. KEEP YOUR PROPS UNDER COVER: If you are going to show a chart, keep it under cover until you are ready to spring it. If you don't, the boys and girls may read it and get a partially baked idea of its meaning. They might even build up objections to its methods. If they see it for the first time when you show and interpret it, they get your arguments first. When you show a specimen of anything, stage an unveiling at the time you mean to talk about it. Gain the greatest value of the element of surprise by keeping every prop under cover until you are ready to show it.
4. HAVE EVERYTHING READY: Have all your props ready and know where they are when you want them. Don't stop the meeting to borrow a knife to cut the rope on a package of literature. Set up your projector, know where the light switch is, get the film threaded. Don't break up the meeting by asking people to move so that you can set up an easel for your chart. If it is impossible to arrange all details beforehand, call a recess while you change over the room.
5. DON'T COMPETE WITH YOURSELF: Don't hand out that sample and ask the boys and girls to pass it around and examine it while you keep on talking. If you do, you are just setting up competition. The person who gets it speaks to his neighbor, his neighbor replies, and all those around them try to hear what they are saying. Pass out your literature at the close of the meeting so they won't be reading and looking at pictures when you want their attention on something else. The noise as they turn the pages of your booklet will not help you keep attention. If you want to pass a sample around, make it part of the meeting, give it to a man in the center of the room, have him stand up and help you demonstrate it. Or have them read your booklet

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with you, one paragraph by one person, another by another. Don't send an assistant out in the audience to set up a projector while you go on with the meeting. Remember, always, that anybody doing anything is more interesting than a speaker.

6. DON'T DEPRECIATE OR APOLOGIZE: When you set out to do a demonstration, don't say, "I don't know whether or not this will explain my point." Don't announce, "These charts were made up for another purpose, and I am not sure they will show you what I want." Don't start "If you will bear with me . . . . ." If you have any doubts about the interest worth of your material, how can you expect the audience to believe anything? If you feel it doesn't make the point, discard it, or use it without comment. It is probably poor enough without your knocking it.
7. PLACE YOUR EXHIBITS AT THE BACK OF THE ROOM: If you want the boys and girls to examine models or parts, after the meeting, put them at the back of the room, near the exit. Don't put them up front for most of the boys and girls want to run as soon as you are finished. And don't leave them back there unattended. Get back there quickly and call attention to them and answer questions about them.
8. HAND OUT YOUR LITERATURE: If you have some literature to hand out, don't leave a stack of it by the door and expect the boys and girls to pick it up. Have someone hand out the material and check to see that each person gets one. It is your meeting and it is your job to button it up.
9. PRACTISE EVERY DEMONSTRATION: Never take a prop into a meeting until you have looked it over and know how it works. It may work with a simple flick of the wrist if you know how to flick. Never admit "This is supposed to do so-and-so, but I never worked it before". If you have to demonstrate any device, practice until you have the demonstration letter perfect. Try it before a group only when you can make it look easy.

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