

**DELIVERING RESULTS:  
HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR SPEECH**

**SUMMARY**

Speakers spend virtually all of their time searching for the perfect words to deliver their message. Yet, they spend very little time on creating a winning atmosphere and a follow up plan that will deliver results.

My philosophy is that the speech is just one aspect of a bigger messaging campaign, that involves strategy and planning – before, during and after your talk. I believe it is important (a) to place the speaker in context for the audience, (b) to have options for Q/A sessions, including articulating “I don’t know” or “No comment” responses, and (c) to set the speaker up for success by laying groundwork early and providing follow up.

In this case, the Client was relatively new in her career, recently earning her professional license. She had served in her local chapter of this professional organization and on an advisory panel for the national organization, thus creating a small profile among her peers. She came to me to help her increase her profile and to develop her reputation as a leader of the next generation without patronizing or insulting the bulk of the members and the leadership who were traditionally older, male and from larger markets.

Her goal was to earn a spot on the national board, targeting one of the newly created at-large board positions. Candidates were required to create a video to be posted on the national organization web site in advance of the election, make remarks at the national convention where the votes would be cast, and address several smaller caucuses at the same convention where she would be asked questions by a moderator and then by the audience members. She was allowed to make phone calls, but was limited by the organization in her use of social media.

My first step was to talk with my Client regarding what she wanted to accomplish in the role and to better understand her personal story. She had written some brief remarks that were very generic, while her verbal descriptions of her story and her goals were much more colorful. Ultimately, I helped her focus her message, researched facts to back up her thoughts, and provided a competitive analysis of the other candidates. I worked with her on both writing and presentation of her remarks for both the video and the live speech, as well as strategies for facing Q/A sessions in both caucus and on-stage/panel environments.

Below is a compilation of the communications we had regarding the planning and execution of this project. I have reconstructed the plan as it pertains to the strategy and messaging, and have included the final remarks.

**RESULT**

My Client won with the most votes of all candidates, earning her the first, full 3-year term as an at-large director for her national industry association. The other two candidates received 2- and 1-year terms. In her thank-you to me, she wrote:

“It was a huge statement that a young architect was elected to the board, and an even bigger statement that it was for the 3-year term. I’d like to say it was one thing that made everyone vote for me, but it was a combination of the speech, calls, and the caucus. I couldn’t have done any of them without your support and suggestions. Most of all though was that people felt I did the best in the speech.”

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## NATIONAL TRADE ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGN

### **BACKGROUND:**

With 12 weeks until the election, our goal was to create the messaging and promotional plan, within the restrictions set by [ORGANIZATION], to raise the profile of [CLIENT] and establish the platform on which she could comfortably rest her candidacy. Voters needed to like her before they would trust her, and they needed to trust her before they would vote for her. Therefore, it was important that we work together to create [CLIENT]'s authentic voice. For consistency, I created a "Style Guide" with some basic guidelines to reference with all of her communications, whether scripted for speeches or unscripted in caucuses and on phone calls.

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### **PHASE I: ESTABLISHING A BASELINE**

#### **MESSAGING GUIDELINES**

As a follow up to our conversation, I have developed the following guidelines to direct all future communications. As we discussed, consistency is key in relaying your message. The majority of my clients become bored with the repetition and want to change how they say things on a regular basis. However, you need to keep in mind that the audiences are different, and most have not heard your message, or may have heard it once before and cannot remember which of the candidates said what. Therefore, we need to get them to recognize your platform when they hear it, and to tie it to you.

That is why I always ask: Why YOU? Why NOW? Why HERE? If you cannot answer those questions, then your remarks likely will be generic.

Here are our messaging guidelines:

#### **TERMS to work into informal conversations and formal remarks:**

- **Bridge** – Term to describe your role and who you are
- **Legacy** – Term to describe older, more experience Baby Boomer "rainmakers"
- **Energy** – Term to describe [COMPETITOR NAME] and other young people who are active, but maybe not leaders, and have some good ideas, but no action yet
- **Relevant** – Describes WHY you are motivated

#### **ATTITUDE to convey in all communications**

- **Be positive** – No complaints, only explanations for the WHY of your actions
- **Be active** – Go beyond the description of a problem, talk about the actions or the WHAT you will do when elected
- **Be specific** – Why [CLIENT]? Why [ORG]? Why NOW? – Possible answers: Not just "I represent the younger generation and we need to keep up with changing technology" instead "I see the younger generation full of ideas and **energy** without the experience to execute. I see the senior architects, our industry 'rainmakers,' struggling to find a way to solidify their **legacy**. I want to be the person to **bridge** that connection with the lessons I learned from the Perot Museum, and [ORG] is uniquely positioned to be the place to do this."

#### **VIDEOTAPED STATEMENT/CONNECTING TO CONSTITUENTS**

With limited knowledge about the other candidates – only what they stated in their organizational bios, their own personal websites and LinkedIn profiles – we worked on establishing her core messages and her personal story.

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The video will be your introduction to voters. Unfortunately, since we will not know what the others are saying, we cannot do much positioning against them at this time. Instead, we need to address the issues/concerns you discussed with me earlier – your youth and the need to change an entrenched organization that is shrinking, but does not seem to embrace change – weaving the answers into your personal story.

As we discussed, the best way to address both issues is to use the data I provided regarding the size of the Baby Boomers (80 million), Gen Xers (58 million) and Millennials (78 million). You can use the information to present yourself as the bridge between the two larger groups – legacy and energy – and to show the urgency – the “Why NOW?” For example (note keywords highlighted):

"Purposeful, directed mentoring programs that pair our experienced architects with young architects who want to be leaders in our industry is NOT just a NICE program, but the data shows it will be an IMPERATIVE (or ESSENTIAL or VITAL) program. If [ORG] has any hope of staying **relevant** as the Millennial generation takes over from the Baby Boomers, it will be only with the help from the Gen Xers, like me, who step up and become the **bridge** between these two behemoths, assisting in the transition that is inevitable. If we maintain the status quo at [ORG], with mentorship an option and internships spanning almost a decade, [ORG] will be nothing by a quaint networking group in 10-15 years as the Millennials take over and see no contribution to their careers from this organization."

Whatever you decide, make sure you are comfortable with it and believe it. If you like this info, but feel a little uneasy, note that and we can work on it in our coaching sessions, and maybe include that thought/idea with a modification in your final speech.

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## PHASE II: POSITIONING THE CANDIDATE

### COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

The videos were very helpful. Here are my thoughts on the competition and how to use it to your advantage during your informal talks and your formal remarks:

- 1) **[CANDIDATE A]** – She was very generic and didn't say what she wanted to do. She listed her activities but not her accomplishments - i.e. I wrote a newsletter vs. my newsletter's informative content doubled the subscription rate, expanded readership and engaged members resulting in a 40% increase in voter turnout and 30% increase in active committee membership. While also young and female, she is not licensed like you are. Going forward, I would talk about her great **energy**, and how she will be great once she gains some real-world experience in a couple of years.
- 2) **[CANDIDATE B]** – She was very good describing her experience, and she showed how she differed by her run for Congress. Unfortunately for her, she never said what she wanted to do, nor did she follow up on her points, such as, "the time for [ORG] is now." Why? She never said what was so urgent or what she was going to do about it. I suggest you talk about how you respect her contributions and that women like her paved the way for women like you, and that you hope to **bridge** her great experience to the new generation, thus putting her in the Baby Boomer category and positioning you as the future.
- 3) **[CANDIDATE C]** – He had a lot more meat to his talk. His message of outreach and inclusion was good. He seemed a little out of touch by starting with the fact that he talks to elementary school kids, but coming from New Jersey, he probably has a lot of built-in support and his message probably speaks to them. He had a theme, but it was [ORG]'s "look up" theme, not his own. Yet, that did show a connection to the org, more so than the others. I think he may be given a spot on the board because he has a big state organization behind him. However, I do not think anything else makes him stand out. I would use the same tactic of putting him in the Baby Boomer category as mentioned above.

4) **[CANDIDATE D]** – Good personal story, good plan for future, but not very charismatic. Again, I think coming from the big group in New York City he has a built-in constituency. I think of the two men from the Northeast, that he has the best chance of winning. He clearly has campaigned before, or also has professional help. Referencing his great past experience and how you hope to work with him to pass on his **legacy**, can link you to him in the minds of his constituents, while not offending. Sometimes, it is best to push for being on the team of your biggest competitor, so you can win over his constituents.

As for your video, I liked your vision and your performance was very good. You looked in the camera and varied your voice tempo and volume.

No one was really great on video, though. Improvements I'd like to see for your live speech:

- 1) Briefly state your experience early. You mentioned your work on the Perot Museum, which is great, but I noticed everyone else took a few seconds for a summary of his or her background.
- 2) Give an example of how you can **bridge** Baby Boomers to Millennials. Maybe something like holding up your phone and saying you want to record senior architects relating “lessons learned” as well as historic stories and examples of problem solving. So you show how to use new technology to capture stories for posterity. You may think of a better example, but find something that is visual and memorable.

Based on what I have seen now, I think you, **[CANDIDATE C & D]** will get the board positions. That is based on content. While charisma can overtake content in a heartbeat, I do not see anyone in the at-large spots with strong charisma. With that said, I will help you with your performance to solidify your likability and trustworthiness to support your strong content.

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### **PHASE III: CANDIDATE IN PLAY**

#### **GRASSROOTS TACTICS**

Your speech is very good. It has a balance between personal and professional, while also showing that you have a vision and a will to execute. The key to a really successful speech is to maintain the message and the tone throughout the evening as people are caucusing and voting. All of your work can be negated if you are different in-person than you are on stage. This is why we worked so hard to make sure you felt comfortable with the messaging and were thus authentic.

As a base for when you feel flustered or surprised by a comment or question, I suggest you look for any opportunity to use your words "legacy," "experience," "energy," "bridge," and "relevance." Remember to always return to your original messaging guidelines and keywords when faced with any question that stumps you. You can also turn to the various ways we discussed to say, “I don’t know.” It is a perfectly legitimate response. Finally, you can refer back to the data points you used in your talk regarding the generational data and how that makes your duty as the bridge inevitable, not just possible. You have done a good job with those points. Here's some ways to use these tactics:

- In response to the questions you were asked regarding the future or what is your “one goal,” I would use this as an opportunity to give an example of what you mean by staying relevant and disseminating information in a timelier manner:

"Every single one of us is carrying a high def camera and a video camera in our pockets! Why aren't we recording our best practices and posting them online? If one of us uses new technology like 3D printing in a new way that saves money or time, why aren't we recording its use and posting it on the **[ORG]** website for others to see? We can create a relevant lesson in under 12 minutes, not 12 months."

Or

"We need to start sharing information in REAL TIME. [ORG] should be the forum/showcase for our industry's thought leaders. Each of us carries a high def camera and video-recorder in our pockets (pull out your phone and hold it up)...why are we waiting for conventions and conferences to share new info? We should be posting our breakthroughs, our errors, our trials and our triumphs as soon as possible, so others can learn from both our mistakes and our successes. THAT is how you stay relevant."

- Per your "Why are you the best candidate?" question, think back to how you have positioned yourself against the competition and your basic messaging guidelines. Here is an example:

"It's time for my generation – the Gen Xers – to step up, so if not me – who? We are sandwiched between two of the largest generations in America – the Baby Boomers and the Millennials – and we are half as big. Therefore, there are fewer of us to take the helm, so we need to get to work.

"As you can see with the candidates for all offices, not just the at-large spots, we have primarily Baby Boomers as candidates. It's time for my generation to take on leadership roles and **bridge** together the **energy** of the Millennials and the **legacy** of the Baby Boomers.

"As for me specifically, I have spent the last 7 years taking progressively larger leadership roles both in my profession and in this organization. I believe I am uniquely qualified to build that **bridge**. I've earned my [ORG] certification, and now I want to earn your vote."

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#### CLIENT NATIONAL CONFERENCE REMARKS

Good morning, my name is [CLIENT], [ORG] and I am excited to be your candidate for At-Large Director. The position of the At-Large Director is in its infancy, the essentials are just starting to be defined, and I want to be the person to define it.

In my career, I have been fortunate enough to have a diverse set of experiences. I believe these experiences provide me with a wider perspective than most – For example, I was one of the only licensed architects to work with Morphosis on one of the most iconic projects to hit my city's skyline – the Perot Museum. As a leader in the [ORG], serving as Vice President of my state component, I oversaw the small chapter task force.

This was eye opening coming from the seventh largest chapter in the [ORG]. Additionally, I spoke several times to the national board regarding issues affecting the profession. I have had numerous conversations with colleagues from all sizes of firms, at all levels of their careers and from all parts of the country. I understand the issues, and I understand the need to create a balance when creating a path to the future.

So let me tell you what I would look for when voting for an At-Large Director.

First, I would look for someone who listens, as it is extremely important that the **Legacies** of some of the softest and most experienced voices of our industry "rainmakers" be elevated. Second, I would look for someone who is concerned about the **Relevancy** of efforts within the [ORG] to ensure we are nimble. And third, I would look for someone who can be the **Bridge** between our legacy and the **Energy** of our newest colleagues.

In listening to chapters, I heard they are concerned their **Legacy** will be jeopardized due to areas of Core Member Services. We need to position National to help chapters maintain their identities. We need to use the power of our national organization to offer services that can help reduce redundancy and costs at the local level.

Repositioning transformed the [ORG] but we need to continue to capitalize on competitive advantages in order to remain **Relevant**. For example, did you know that 3D printers could build a house out of concrete in one day? In our world of five-year plans, we cannot keep up with opportunities like these that surface around us.

The recent focus on providing more opportunities for Emerging Professionals generated the phrase ‘this isn’t your father’s [ORG]’. Well, it IS my father’s [ORG]. My dad, a 2015 Fellow, is sitting amongst you today. It is my concern that the same issues he faced are the same ones I am exploring today. It is important for me to **Bridge** what problems unite our generations instead of focusing on the issues that divide us.

My name is [CLIENT], [ORG] and I want to be your **bridge**, sustain your **legacy** while making the [ORG] a **relevant** organization. If you agree, please vote for me as your [ORG] At-Large Director.

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I advised her to remain authentic in all communications. No matter what anyone told her was “the right thing to do or say,” in the end, “you must be true to yourself.” I told her – as I do all of my clients – “you do not want to win being someone else, because you then will have to serve in office as someone else. Stay true to what you believe and what you want to do in office, and the voters will embrace you. If on the outside chance, they do not embrace you and you lose, then keep in mind that you would likely not have been able to lead them where you wanted to go, because they were not ready. There is always another election and the scenario changes with each election cycle. Therefore, if you remain interested, your time will eventually come.”

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