

Story and Point of View Development

Our group is about getting voices heard, and more importantly, getting speakers to include more of their story and point of view. I am enamored by Pixar – outside of their technical prowess, it's their storytelling. It's their point of view and the way they choose to tell a story by what they focus on. But same also goes for other people / entertainers I like and follow: their point of view – their 'take on the world' – their 'slant'.

Do you have one? Or more?

Many emerging speakers, especially those coming through toastmasters, are nicely packaged in a box of well choreographed sameness. Same delivery techniques, same points of feedback, same skills. Toastmasters is a tremendous organization to help you overcome your fear of speaking and provides a sound process for moving through your fears and developing presentations and leadership. But while the manuals attempt to help you focus on content development – it's their content and topics. You cannot be controversial, taboo, or have a different point of view. You are to speak on general audience easing, comfortable to hear topics, or feel good topics, to very diverse audiences (who are all there themselves to learn to speak better, not to specifically 'hear you').

We here at the Bureau exist to help everyone break out of their shell and think deeper. Why? Because our emerging speakers are looking to break out and get paid, to stand apart from the competition and make some kind of income from it, to be heard and recognized. Our emerging speakers are looking to grow a business through their speaking, or to take their expertise to a new level and new audiences.

What are new ways to make you stand out, get you heard and paid? One of the ways is get you speaking on that main topic you have, helping you to think deeper, or to a new audience. Getting you to connect with, and be one with the content you have and the message / change / shift you are called to impart. That can only happen if you give that presentation multiple times, get feedback, and re-do the presentation. It may require you to rethink or reinvent your topic.

Countless times I've seen that moment when a speaker connects with their message, their style, what they really want to say. It's awesome!

So what is a point of view? A slant? A 'take on the world'?

Most of all, it is not doing what everyone else does. It's being different and real and deliberate ... and *Speaking Outside the Box*.

I love Pixar, and their movies, and they use a lot of tools that are relevant to speakers.

One of Pixar's rules?



If you replace 'story' above with 'your message', or 'your topic' – the question still applies. *Why do people need to hear your story, from you? and now?* Even if you are a business owner – if you are looking to stand out – this still applies to you.

Another important question: As with all effective communication, the first question you should ask before any question, conversation, email, and speech.... What do you expect to happen as a result of your talking?

➡ Your story, your speech, becomes infinitely more powerful when you when you can answer those questions. You step apart from all the competition because you begin to place the emphasis on the audience, and not you.

Following Pixar's model, ask yourself:

- Do you appeal to some core truth about the human condition?
- Do you empathize with your audience, assuring them that you know how they are feeling this way, and then
- Offer to show them why they are feeling this way.in a manner that is not preachy or condescending?
- Do you strive to teach emotional understanding?

** It's time to embrace your medium.

** Break away from the bad speech habit of having a beginning, a middle, and an end, and strive to write and present story like Hollywood does: by setting up, presenting the conflict or confrontation, and then taking people through the resolution.

Stories (as in movies and books) have 5 main components: the characters, the **setting**, the **plot**, the conflict, and the resolution. These pieces allow smooth transitions, in a logical way that the reader can follow and where the action can develop naturally. Your stories don't have to be that intricate or complicated, but that's the flow people are used to having.

Stories are not just for motivational or inspirational speeches. They are for professional speeches, business speeches, pitches, training, teaching... all types. This is because stories provide the opportunity for people to connect to you, for you to inspire and motivate.

Most past narratives and stories set the stage. Use characters to provide context, reveal emotions, people involved who are real.

Demonstrate the conflict or confrontation by showing how the character (or you) actually transforms because of the challenge. Provide context in that moment – what they person is going through, what they are feeling, what causes the change and the shift in thinking. Demonstrate how things got resolved. You are taking the audience on a journey, and you are navigating, so provide the emotion and elements for them to bridge, make connections, and comprehend the story.

Most times you will not be able to simply spout out a story. You will need to discover, expose, think, discover and think about your story in general and through the lens of its components above. You will need to ask yourself questions, give yourself time to let things marinate, and open a dialogue with yourself.

Point of View:

Think of books first – they are 'told' from a 1st person (the character in the story) or 3rd person (narrative) point of view. But that 1st person can be any character and each had their own vantage or view point. Think about those stories where there are several vignettes – stories as seen through the eye of that character. Each represents a point of view

You can come at something from the point of view of a bully or the bullied, the victim or the predator, the teacher, the journalist, the celebrity, the scientist, the observer, etc. Each has a unique way of presenting, tackling the same information and each appeals to different kinds of audiences and people.

Think talk show host. How many exist and operate at the same time? A lot right? Why? Because they appeal to certain kinds of audiences, and have their own unique slant.

WHAT'S YOUR SLANT?

If you're an emerging speaker, you need all the edge you can muster. This will come from finding that unique point of view / slant / edge that will resonate with a particular audience you want to reach, your personality, and your material.

This will ultimately become a part of your brand, and **many times, you will be hired SPECIFICALLY and solely for your angle, your edge, and your point of view.**

Your story portfolio which you should begin creating now, can be a few sentences to a significant portion to interwoven. Look at how you can come at those stories from different angles, AND, look for common threads that perhaps you can capitalize on.

Identifying an angle, edge, slant, and / or point of view ahead of time will help you master your story development for your different audiences and topics.

Note of caution: if you're currently a same old, same old, you may run into some resistance when you try to change up your personality and presentation. People like consistency. When you change, there will now be some uncertainty, and many won't know quite how to handle you or respond. Some won't like and will tell you. If you're switching audience types, and building a brand you are confident of, you can typically handle that or put things in place. Just know it will come.

Back to story development: Most good stories are 2-3 minutes in length. Your presentations, your story is ultimately all about your audience, not you. SO create your stories from your point of view, and build consistency.

Part of the mission of the Emerging Speakers Bureau is to make voices heard. That all voices matter. **Each individual has a story, AND a point of view.** Each story is worth telling. Every person's story deserves to be heard, and to make an impact. In order to do that, we need to unleash the powerful stories within you. And for some of you, that means giving yourself the permission to go deep, and go beyond the obvious story, the obvious conflict and to take the time to really look at and understand your stories. Your story matters, and it needs to be heard. We help you cultivate the stories, the point of view, and your brand.

Work on building your stories, and practice delivering them when you can – different versions, different audiences, different angles. Practice until you are the maestro leading the symphony, and capable of taking your audience on a journey.

Here are Pixar's 22 rules of storytelling: (some of these will help you identify an angle, edge or point of view)

#1: You admire a character for trying more than for their successes.

#2: You gotta keep in mind what's interesting to you as an audience, not what's fun to do as a writer. They can be v. different.

#3: Trying for theme is important, but you won't see what the story is actually about til you're at the end of it. Now rewrite.

#4: Once upon a time there was _____. Every day, _____. One day _____. Because of that, _____. Because of that, _____. Until finally _____.

#5: Simplify. Focus. Combine characters. Hop over detours. You'll feel like you're losing valuable stuff but it sets you free.

#6: What is your character good at, comfortable with? Throw the polar opposite at them. Challenge them. How do they deal?

#7: Come up with your ending before you figure out your middle. Seriously. Endings are hard, get yours working up front.

#8: Finish your story, let go even if it's not perfect. In an ideal world you have both, but move on. Do better next time.

#9: When you're stuck, make a list of what WOULDN'T happen next. Lots of times the material to get you unstuck will show up.

#10: Pull apart the stories you like. What you like in them is a part of you; you've got to recognize it before you can use it.

#11: Putting it on paper lets you start fixing it. If it stays in your head, a perfect idea, you'll never share it with anyone.

#12: Discount the 1st thing that comes to mind. And the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th – get the obvious out of the way. Surprise yourself.

#13: Give your characters opinions. Passive/malleable might seem likable to you as you write, but it's poison to the audience.

#14: Why must you tell THIS story? What's the belief burning within you that your story feeds off of? That's the heart of it.

#15: If you were your character, in this situation, how would you feel? Honesty lends credibility to unbelievable situations.

#16: What are the stakes? Give us reason to root for the character. What happens if they don't succeed? Stack the odds against. (NB: for emerging speakers – give your audience the reason and chance to root for you, what odds have been against you, your failures and where / why / how your succeeded – what shifted?)

#17: No work is ever wasted. If it's not working, let go and move on - it'll come back around to be useful later.

#18: You have to know yourself: the difference between doing your best & fussing. Story is testing, not refining.

#19: Coincidences to get characters into trouble are great; coincidences to get them out of it are cheating.

#20: Exercise: take the building blocks of a movie you dislike. How would you rearrange them into what you DO like?

#21: You gotta identify with your situation/characters, can't just write 'cool'. What would make YOU act that way?

#22: What's the essence of your story? Most economical telling of it? If you know that, you can build out from there.

Homework / Things to think about up front, for building your presentation:

1. ID your specific target audience(s).
2. Identify your potential points of view, angles, and write a presentation or video script from the various angles and practice delivering them to see what resonates most with you and your audience.