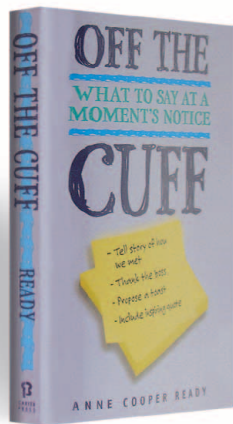


# SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®

FILE: SUCCESS — CAREER  
TECHNIQUES

By Anne Cooper Ready

## What to Say at a Moment's Notice

# OFF THE CUFF

### THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The phrase “off the cuff” is believed to have originated with waiters who were among the first people to use their shirt cuffs as notepads to take orders or to calculate the tab. Hollywood directors were the next perpetrators of the practice, carrying notes to actors about the scene on their shirt sleeves. Impromptu speaking has likewise become known as off the cuff. The speaker is pictured as hurriedly jotting down notes on his starched shirt cuff during the meal and delivering them afterward from an arm’s length note card.

About 99 percent of what people say is impromptu, which is defined as without preparation or advance thought. Virtually everything that people say — after-dinner speeches, discussions, product announcements, answers to questions during job interviews, new business pitches, media interviews, and arguments — is off the cuff.

Now, to help readers build up their confidence when asked to just “say a few words,” writer and communications coach Anne Cooper Ready offers them a useful combination of encouragement and preparation to face impromptu speaking in *Off the Cuff*. In an easy-to-reference guidebook that helps readers put words together that motivate, direct, entertain, and get a point across, Ready teaches both the basic and advanced skills that are needed to solve communication challenges ranging from apologies and meetings to introductions and rallying the troops.

Delivering ways to speak easily, effectively and fearlessly, *Off the Cuff* provides readers with tips, tactics and strategies for successfully navigating through situations when communication skills are crucial, and helps them prepare for those moments when time to prepare is at a minimum.

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### What You'll Learn In This Summary

- ✓ How to face Americans' number one fear.
- ✓ How to display self-confidence when addressing an audience.
- ✓ How to keep it simple when communicating.
- ✓ The best ways to market yourself with proper business etiquette.
- ✓ The best things to say and the best times to say them.
- ✓ How to master job interviews, conferences, panels and workshops.

# OFF THE CUFF

by Anne Cooper Ready

## — THE COMPLETE SUMMARY

### The Cs of Communication

Communication is the third C after chemistry and compatibility in any relationship. Establishing a command of all the Cs of communication will change your relationships and the life that you build around them.

- **Concise.** Audiences appreciate respect for their time and will pay more attention when the end is in sight. It's better to let an audience out early than to drag it out.

- **Conversational.** The most effective way to plug a product, service or book is to mention it, by name, in conversation. Practice dropping your mention into conversation easily and naturally, without overdoing it.

- **Careful.** Good or bad, sound bites seem to live forever. Sum up the essence of your purpose in a sound bite you can deliver in a simple seven-second phrase.

- **Candid.** Tactful candor and simple honesty are very refreshing in today's world of bluffing and hype. Speak to audiences as you would a friend with a big mouth: with careful candor, circumspect trust, and respect.

- **Cogent.** Begin by deciding what opinion you want changed or action you want taken by your presentation, and go for it by being forceful and to the point.

- **Convincing.** Show respect for your audience with a logical presentation. The most compelling speech is one that makes sense.

#### Radiate Confidence

- **Confident.** Fake it till you make it. Be prepared and rise to the occasion. Smile and radiate confidence.

- **Clear.** Logical flow can help you make your case. Test your logic on friends to make sure it stands up.

- **Compassionate.** Show your passion, compassion, warmth and humor. Radiate confidence and energy.

- **Cool, Calm and Collected.** Keep cool. Stay calm and collected. Bottom-line each point, one at a time.

- **Correct.** Check your facts. Acknowledge what you know and don't try to answer hypothetical questions.

- **Compelling.** Your communication should make people care. Touch your audience with your voice.

- **Consistent.** Consistency of message is crucial. Make your habits, behaviors and conversation consistent with your values.

- **Credible.** You need to be credible to be trustworthy. Establish credibility by name-dropping as background.

- **Crisis Conscious.** In a crisis situation answer questions with an acknowledgement of compassion, the bottom line in a sound bite, appropriate history, repetition of the sound bite, and the next steps you will take.

- **Controversial.** If controversy serves your purpose, use it. However, you should not be the only one who is served.

- **Charismatic.** Make everyone feel good about being themselves. From a handshake to handing over your business card, look at the color of their eyes. Once you've registered the color of the eyes that are being introduced to you, you've kept enough direct eye contact to be considered charismatic. ■

### Mastering the Moment

Imagine the pressure on an evangelist or president facing the flock during a breaking sex scandal. Integrity and authenticity go a long way in establishing your credibility, because the lens doesn't lie, whether it is in the eyes of your audience or on the front of a camera.

Lee Iacocca said that being honest is the best foundation — to be clear and candid about what must be accomplished and what sacrifices may be involved. And in the case of a serious problem, you cannot do much to put out a brush fire if you first insist there isn't one.

If you are in a relatively formal role in your professional life, trying to be folksy on a platform can be risky. You can also be a fish out of water if you are nat-

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### Mastering the Moment

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urally casual and try to be formal because this is an “important” occasion. If no one ever laughs at your jokes, don’t try to reverse the trend while standing before an audience. Be yourself — and be the best you can be at being you.

#### Master the Medium

Know what presentation media you’ll be using and how to handle it well. Go to the speech site days before and be very early on the day of the event to get the lay of the land and take care of logistics. You will be the one who looks bad when the monitor doesn’t work, a microphone doesn’t project, or a podium light flickers. Don’t leave anything to chance or to somebody else. It is better to use an old-fashioned slide projector or even an overhead with ease than to fumble with a computer-based presentation you don’t know how to operate.

If your medium is the media, offer to be a media resource as an expert in your field. Cultivate media contacts. Make yourself available for background or a sound bite when there’s a breaking story.

To successfully master the moment, you must master your material. Adapt it to the level of the audience and have it organized in a way that will lead your audience to respond. When the material is second nature to you, this allows you the freedom to work the room and the audience. Keep your facts and processes in order.

Master the message by keeping whatever you are presenting simple and organized around a single idea, preferably a provocative, profound or at least cogent thought, to make it worth the audience’s time. Presentations with several competing ideas only compete for the attention of an audience that is no longer clear about what is important. ■

### Business Etiquette

Recent history is littered with bodies that were brought down for arrogance or lack of humility. Sadly, arrogance almost always seems to be a front that masks an otherwise poor self-image. It inspires followers to root and, sometimes even vote, for a downfall, or at least a comeuppance.

#### Shaking Hands

Conduct yourself properly. Those in business favor a simple handshake — not pulverizing, but firm. Save the two-hand handshake and air kiss for personal encounters or old friends. An executive may reach over and shake hands from behind his or her desk, but it is more gracious and welcoming when he or she comes around to greet the visitor. Appropriate greetings include “I am

pleased to meet you” and “How do you do?” reinforced by a sincere smile and direct eye contact.

Here are some tips for association mixers, cocktail parties and networking events:

- **Arrive early, before the cliques are formed and begin your own conversation with new people as they arrive, informally playing the role of the host.**

- **Include others in your conversation to give them a sense of comfort and gratitude.**

- **Find or create an unofficial role for yourself (name-card maker, guest-list monitor, pollster) that gives you an icebreaker.**

- **Open a conversation with a genuine compliment that is appropriate for a business, rather than a personal, situation.**

#### Areas for Compliments

In other than business casual situations, men’s ties and women’s jewelry are still their personal statements and thus, are usually safe areas for compliments. Avoid commenting on other items of clothing, hair, or eye color, particularly if you are the opposite sex. It seems too personal and may be read as inappropriate flirtation.

Tailor your practice to the culture and country where you are. Practicing a “less is more” approach is wise and prudent to creating a good business environment.

The best etiquette is following a version of the Golden Rule, do unto others as they would have you do unto them. ■

### Trade Show Etiquette

If you are a “booth sitter” at an industry trade show, you are the greeter and gracious host. Welcome all visitors to your booth and product demonstrations with a smile and an offer to be of assistance. Your friendly personality will put a face and a name on your product line and company in customers’ or potential customers’ minds.

Facilitate media coverage for your company by knowing who the designated hitters are and offering to introduce them and provide their contact information through business cards.

Talking to the media without being ready for it is playing with fire. Don’t spoil years of hard work getting ahead in your company and career by letting your name be attached to an inappropriate sound bite heard round the world, industry and company. In this Age of the Sound Bite, what you say is every bit as important as how you say it — probably more so because the words will be quoted out of context, usually in print and by others without the inflection or meaning that you perhaps intended.

## What to Say and How to Say It

The *Harvard Business Review* reports: “The number one criteria for advancement and promotion for professionals is an ability to communicate effectively.”

The most important moments of any presentation are the first and last ones. Everything else may be forgotten if it starts or ends badly.

Usually the best attention-getting beginnings come out of real-life experiences that are funny or insightful. Speakers who can be humorous and roll with the punches because they are relaxed enough to be spontaneous are the ones who triumph over adversity and win the appreciation and approval of their audiences. Short, true-life stories with humor, paradox or pathos are usually safer than jokes, even for professional comedians.

Revisit the beginning at the end. If you began with a story, tell the audience how it came out at the end. The end of a speech requires three things:

1. **A payoff or something dramatic (but not necessarily forceful).**
2. **A sense of humility.**
3. **A reiteration of expectations or call to action.**

Effectively presenting yourself, whether to your peers, your boss, the customer, the general public or even the media, plays a major role in career advancement. Good grammar is a key to being educated, which is the key to getting ahead. Poor grammar, vulgarity, crudeness and insensitivity have the opposite effect on your image. If your standard usage causes other people to consider you uneducated, you may want to consider changing it.

Use nonstandard English only when you intend to rather than do it mistakenly because you don't know any better.

### How to Face Ending Questions

One of the most terrifying moments of any speech is when you ask if there are any questions, and there are none. You've probably left a third to a half of your time for questions and no one speaks up. You may have just answered all of the questions in a really complete speech or the audience members may be shy or intimidated by their peers. But it gives the impression that no one is, or was, really interested.

Solution: Bring three or four really good questions (ones you have answers for) with you along with extra information that hasn't been covered in the prepared remarks. Next, pose them to the audience with, “You might be asking yourself ...” or “You may be wondering ...,” then answer them. This may serve to get them started asking their own questions or may simply finish your presentation smoothly.

Constant reinforcement of good grammar will help you, and so will writing it down, correctly, over and over. Gradually, you will teach your ear to hear and your mouth to speak correctly. Here are some grammatical do's and don'ts to keep in mind:

- **Number and Quantity.** Things that can be counted should be referred to as fewer (in number), such as birthday candles and cars. Less refers only to quantity, such as orange juice, pollution and shoe polish.

- **Tense.** A commonly made mistake is using the past tense instead of the past participle with “have” and “had.” This is understandable because often the past tense of a verb is the same one you use with the past participle. For example, I walk, I walked, I have walked.

- **Subjects and Objects.** To say, “Susan and me went for Chinese” is *incorrect* because you and Susan are the subject of the action or verb. But, “The deliveryman brought Chinese to Susan and me” is correct when you are the object of the action or verb.

- **Agreement.** If the subject is plural, the verb should be, too. The rest of the sentence should also agree.

- **Modifiers.** Adverbs are often words ending in “ly” and always describe verbs or the action. They answer the questions Where? When? and How? For example, “She played fairly” explains *how* she played. *Not*, “She played fair.” Adjectives describe nouns or subjects by answering which, what kind of, and how many. For example, “It was fair play” (what kind of play).

- **Articulation.** If anyone has ever asked you to mumble that again, or is constantly asking you to repeat yourself, you may have a problem with articulation. Slow down and emphasize every syllable and sound, particularly the letters at the ends of the words.

### Lights, Camera, Action!

Not only will you make more money if your grammar is up to snuff, but you may lose your job if you can't speak correctly. Recently, a brilliant turnaround president was hired, and then fired, by a high-profile company because he spoke in “dems” and “dose” instead of “them” and “those.” He was a street warrior and let loose with expletives, too, that were very inappropriate for the executive suite. Swear words in the executive world are seen as uncouth and uneducated.

Because people hear in three different languages, but only one per person, it's best to include video, audio and kinesthetic words and approaches in your communication. For the audios, use audio words such as “hear this” and “let me tell you.” For the videos, use visual words such as “see it this way” or “my view is.” Kinesthetics learn most from experience. The important relationships of your life should be typecast so you can reach them with the words they can best hear. ■

## Don't Talk to Strangers

The audience is the other half of your conversation. It's best to involve audience members through acknowledgement, laughter and poignancy; by name or participation. Learning how to use an audience is the single biggest key to success in a workshop or presentation. Here are some do's and don'ts:

- **Be your audience's champion.** Help them win.
- **Ensure that the audience recognizes the value you are offering by applying your expertise directly to current circumstances.**
- **Do whatever you have to do to engage an audience, on an individual basis.**
- **Enable a successful response.**
- **Don't single out an audience member for critique or ridicule.** The group will close ranks against you.
- **Don't embarrass anyone, if at all possible.**
- **Don't take on or criticize the audience as a whole.** The audience may close ranks on you and you'll be a dead man walking.
- **Don't try to enlist a member of the audience in doing your dirty work.** Don't say, "Nudge your neighbor and wake her up for me."

Find out what the audience wants or needs to know. You will be most successful if you know your audience. The secret to being interesting to audiences is being interested in them. ■

## Question and Answer

The question-and-answer portion of a presentation is often the part both reporters and audiences look forward to the most. In press conferences, members of the press often wait until remarks are over before they turn on the cameras and begin taking notes. According to former San Francisco news anchor Fred LaCosse, journalists fall into a number of types depending on their styles.

The **Machine Gunner** is the type of interviewer who likes to fire off several questions all at once to bewilder and frustrate you. Take control of the interview, and choose one question to answer. Then shut up.

The **Intruder** never allows you to finish a thought. You are midway through your message when another question is thrown your way. Take control and finish a thought and then wait for the next question.

When the **Paraphraser** repeats your message, it comes out antagonistic and wrong. Make sure you always correct the reporter right then and there.

The **Softsoaper** is super friendly. Stay alert and remember that nothing is ever off the record.

The **Bully** is hostile, and has a few extra nasty habits. Take control, stay calm, and say politely that you are

happy to answer the questions if given the opportunity.

The **Sneak** always has tricks up his or her sleeve. Stay on your toes and refer back to your message.

The **Rookie** is an unprepared reporter who requires you to give a lot of background information. Don't let it get in the way of the messages you want to convey.

The **Old Horse** is a reporter who is tired of doing the same old stories. Be careful not to mimic him or her and bore everyone. Establish your own level of energy.

Don't let your guard down when dealing with the **Pro**. Appreciate the reality that he or she will give you the opportunity to use your good material.

Think of journalists as your boss or your mother-in-law: Never forget where their loyalties lie.

### The 'Teflon President'

President Ronald Reagan is a good role model for speakers who are often put on the spot. He pioneered the practice of listening intently to a difficult question, and then began his answer in the direction of the interrogator, but would finish his answer looking at a more sympathetic member of the press. In essence, he took the floor from the interrogator and avoided getting locked into one-on-one verbal combat.

**Bridging** begins with an acknowledgment of the question, then bridges to one of the messages you came to give. These are called SOCOS (Single Overriding Communication Objective Sound bites). They are the three to five bottom-line message points that you want the audience to take home with them. Just choose the one most appropriate to the question and bridge to it.

**Flagging** is a technique that alerts your audience that something important is coming. It is a phrase that sets them up to listen, such as, "My most embarrassing moment was ..." or, "I'll never forget the time that ..."

Another way to maintain control of the situation is by **addressing** the question *rather than* answering it. Any question can be responded to with a quotable statement that addresses the question clearly and concisely. ■

## What Should I Wear?

When you are a guest of the media, and, perhaps most especially, if you are a brilliant college dropout with a mega-million-dollar software company in Silicon Valley, Calif., wear a coat and tie. Shirts should be bought to go with the suit and the belt and socks should match the shoes.

The difference between bosses and their heirs apparents should only be in the expense of the fabrics, which reflects higher salaries. Never is it more apparent that you don't get a second chance to make a first impression than with your choice of wardrobe.

## Working a Room

Whether they are called mixers, parties, or meet and greets. The bottom line is, it's you in a room full of people you don't yet know, perhaps with name tags, and the expectation that you will emerge with votes, business cards or phone numbers.

Stephen Clouse, an on-camera communications coach based in Washington, D.C., recommends observing and then emulating the image of coaches at the end of a sporting contest. The losing coach almost always slouches, head bent over, and eyes looking downward. However, the winning coach stands straight with shoulders back and chin up. He visually communicates the role of a winner and it carries over into gestures and even the smile on his face. "Always be the winning coach on camera and in person," Clouse tells his congressional clients. "That's the type of individual people like to vote for."

### Likability

In connecting with an audience, the issue is almost never your knowledge but your likability. In her book, *How to Work a Room* (HarperResource, 2000), Susan RoAne lists what she calls the Top 10 minglers when meeting new people. Here are her Top 10:

1. **Make others feel comfortable.**
2. **Appear self-confident and at ease.**
3. **Laugh at yourself.**
4. **Show interest by maintaining eye contact, asking questions and listening.**
5. **Lean into greetings with a firm handshake and a smile.**
6. **Convey a sense of energy and enthusiasm.**
7. **Be well rounded, well intentioned, well informed and well mannered.**
8. **Prepare interesting conversational vignettes.**
9. **Make introductions of others with enthusiasm and compliments.**
10. **Convey respect and genuinely like people.**

Always remember that you get one point for sharing your own topics of conversation and twice as many for your genuine interest in someone else's. ■

## Awards and Acceptance Speeches

When Yogi Berra was receiving the key to New York City on a miserably hot and humid day, Mayor Lindsay's wife, Mary, commented on how cool he looked. He replied, "You don't look so hot yourself." Later, he reflected, "I guess I was a little nervous about the speech I had to make."

There are two sides to an acceptance speech: Giving the award and making the acceptance.

A good technique for giving an award is to save the recipient's name as the last thing you say. Even though everyone may know whom you are talking about, it creates some suspense and a payoff.

Whichever role you play, do your research for some little known but charming and relevant facts about the recipient and/or the award. If something interests you, it is likely to interest the audience, too.

The biggest mistake to make in accepting an award is making your acceptance speech too long or too political. Your audience may not share your politics. Stick to the subject and event at hand.

When you are competing for an award, take your lead from sports where players and teams genuinely compliment their opponents. Don't give a speech but rather a thank you. You can be pleased, but not proud. Make yourself the example of a lesson learned, but never the hero or heroine. That is too much like bragging, which turns everyone off. ■

## Arguments and Apologies

In arguments, as in sports and life, whether you win or lose depends a lot on how you play the game. One of the best ways to make your points is to avoid blaming the other and take responsibility for your own feelings.

Instead of, "YOU did such and so," try saying, "What happened made ME feel disappointed, hurt, sad, lost or  
*(continued on page 7)*

### After-Dinner Speeches

Follow these tips when making an after-dinner speech:

- ✓ Make your speech a metaphor or personal anecdote. Give it a middle, a surprise and a laugh.
- ✓ Start with a personal, real-life story that taught a lesson or personified some truth. Make yourself the butt of the joke, *never* the hero or heroine.
- ✓ If you choose to write your speech out as a security blanket, write for the ear, not the eye.
- ✓ Spell out acronyms after using them.
- ✓ Never start a speech with, "Tonight, I'm going to talk to you about ..." Instead, build rapport from the introduction or circumstance, followed by an attention-getting story with a provocative but appropriate moral, statement or question as the main point.
- ✓ Do not jingle the change in your pocket.
- ✓ Avoid hanging on to the podium.
- ✓ Say what you believe and believe what you say.
- ✓ Twenty minutes is probably long enough.
- ✓ Be succinct.

### Arguments and Apologies

(continued from page 6)

betrayed because ..." "I" statements keep the responsibility for your feelings with you. Your worthy opponent, instead of feeling blamed and becoming defensive, can usually at least sympathize with your feelings. He or she then has the option of mirroring back what he or she has heard; expressing understanding, sadness or regret, and offering to do something to help you feel better if he or she cares to. If not, you still have a clear understanding of how you feel and perhaps how he or she feels about you.

If you are in an argument where blame is being leveled at you, justifiably or not, try this in reverse by stating the feelings that would seem appropriate to the situation: "That must have made you feel disappointed, hurt, sad, lost or betrayed." If you identify the correct feeling, it's like throwing a life raft to a drowning soul. Even if you guess wrong, you've taken the argument to a feeling level and your contrarian will almost always come back with the correct feeling.

Sometimes, the best question to ask is, "What can I do to help you?" By involving your opponent in the solution, you guarantee that you've gone to the heart of the matter and will find out what to do next if you care and can. This technique of active listening deepens the surface conversation, too. By identifying the feelings that come up in any situation, people seem to feel not only heard but understood as well.

Fighting fair means limiting the argument to the issue at hand and not condemning the other person's character or being. Arguments, and avoiding them, take planning.

#### Apology

The best antidote for regret was shared by well-known journalist Jim G. Bellows. He follows the guiding principle of "begin at once and do the best you can."

Once you've acknowledged your wrongdoing, correct the wrong and make amends. Be genuinely sincere about winning back trust.

Make apologies brief and sincere. Recap what you did

and how it hurt the other person or situation.

Acknowledge how you feel about it.

Accept apologies graciously by briefly mentioning the impact of the other's actions and how you felt, and then offer to move on. If you can't, then at least acknowledge your appreciation for the courage it takes to apologize.

In the media, one of the most important aspects of apology is timing. It's not only what did you know and when did you know it, but what did you say and when did you say it.

Lead from a position that responsibility has not yet been determined, unless it has, then move directly to ways in which your company is reacting in a respectable manner. Don't meet the media and deny it was you if it was.

The minute you know you are wrong, begin at once to do what's right. If your company was in part responsible, show as well as tell that specific actions have now been taken to ensure that the situation will not — cannot — be repeated. ■

### Job Interviews

Whether you are a guest on a talk show or in a job interview, sit up straight with your head up, shoulders back for relaxed but full breathing, comfortably perched on the front half of your chair.

One seasoned job applicant thought well and quickly in an interview by answering the question, "Did you ever make a mistake?" with "Sure, I'm certainly human. But I never made a mistake that I didn't fix before it became a disaster." This was a perfect example of candor, creativity and confidence. Instead of going into dangerous and damning detail about the errors of his ways, he answered the interviewer's "unasked" question of whether they could count on him to help the company survive and succeed, particularly in a crisis.

#### Do Your Homework

Don't wait until you are in the lobby to read the annual report. All of your homework should have been done online from home. If there is an interesting reprint or article about the company in the lobby, it might be a good conversation starter once the interview begins.

Learn as much as you can to ask intelligent questions of genuine interest to you. Prepare yourself with more education, skills, industry-specific information, and knowledge of trends.

If your resume contains a topic that might be considered a "pink elephant," address it to open the subject for discussion, if necessary. More often than not, a simple comment bridged to a related benefit will be more than enough to dispel the issue.

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### Five Rules for Conversation

#### Do's

- ✓ Do be well-read.
- ✓ Do be willing to expose your ignorance.
- ✓ Do avoid wasting time in conversations where there is no contribution you can or want to make.

#### Don'ts

- ✓ Don't pretend agreement or interest.
- ✓ Don't be a spectator to the conversation. Get involved.

### Job Interviews

(continued from page 7)

If an industry executive offers to spend time with you, even if there is no position currently available, take the opportunity. Every industry is a small town and you never know who knows whom.

Avoid cattiness at all costs, but be ready to hear insider gossip. Let it roll off your back without being judgmental or condescending. And never, never, never repeat it. You never know where alliances lie. ■

For Additional Information on tips for job interviews, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

### Panels, Seminars and Workshops

If you are chosen to be a panelist in a panel discussion, take the time to research the bios and backgrounds of the other panelists and be generous in spirit, even if they are your biggest competitors. A panel is a great opportunity for potential customers to compare and contrast the competition, and you want to appear gracious and good-natured.

Take a dynamic point of view, but not one that contradicts your business philosophy. Address the topic both from experience and research. Be subtle in your advertising or self-promotion. Use your experience, client list or case histories as logical examples of points that need to be made. Avoid being too commercial.

Look intently at each speaker and listen very carefully to what each one says, noting places where you can refer back for agreement. Very often the audience will be watching you to see how interested you are in what the others have to say. Nothing will hurt the others' credibility or yours more than a yawn from you or a roll of your eyes or even staring into space.

#### Seminars

Every audience has smilers and stoics. Both can be misleading. Smilers will smile and nod at anything: That's their social mode. Involve the stoics and those who are looking at their shoes. Interrupt your flow and engage the stoics with questions. ■

### Media Interviews

The media has been a thorn in the side of many presidents and presidential hopefuls since the early days of television. In the first televised presidential debates, Richard Nixon's nerves, pallor and 5 o'clock shadow contrasted sharply with the tan, relaxed Jack Kennedy.

Politically incorrect, culturally insensitive, last-minute remarks made in anger or jest can get anyone fired, or

worse. Distinguished careers are forgotten in an instant, replaced by a sound bite that lives on forever.

Don't try to find sound bites or lines. Sound bites will come naturally when, like Winston Churchill, you speak a simple truth, "The maxim of the British people is 'Business as usual.'" Or offer a powerful word picture, "An iron curtain has descended across the continent."

#### The Biggest Media Mistake

Not mentioning the name of the sponsor, company, product or book by name early and often is the biggest branding mistake made in the media. A close second is not including the advertising slogan or subtitle, once you know what you're selling.

Crisis happens even to the best companies. There is a proven formula for responding to it: Give an acknowledgement of compassion, a bottom-line sound bite message, appropriate history, repeat of the sound bite, and then the next step. Rightly or wrongly, companies and their products have gotten reputations exclusively for how they have handled crisis. Johnson & Johnson acted quickly to address the Tylenol poisonings and used its media moment to introduce Tylenol's tamper-proof packaging on the front page of every newspaper. ■

### Rallying the Troops

UCLA's winningest basketball coach, John Wooden, motivated his championship teams with, "Be quick but don't hurry." And football great Vince Lombardi said in a 1962 interview that "winning isn't everything but wanting to win is." This was homogenized into the reported battle cry for rallying the troops, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing."

When speaking to audiences of your peers and reports, what you have to say should be second nature when you get up to bat. It's what you know and what you do all the time.

#### Transfer Passion

Picasso said, "To draw is to close your eyes and dance." What music are you dancing to? Your job, as a communicator, is merely to transfer the passion and music of your life into the expression of your work or project or subject. It is, after all, your life's work, your contribution to society. Your job, since you've chosen to accept it, probably holds within it your leadership potential and possibility.

By finding passion for the work you do and expressing it, your briefings and speeches will become much more exciting and inspirational. Bottom line, don't seek to inform, seek to motivate and inspire. ■

For Additional Information on batting practice for rallying the troops, go to: <http://my.summary.com>