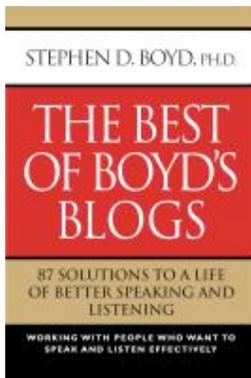


STEPHEN D. BOYD, PH.D.

THE BEST OF BOYD'S BLOGS

87 SOLUTIONS TO A LIFE
OF BETTER SPEAKING AND
LISTENING

**WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT TO
SPEAK AND LISTEN EFFECTIVELY**



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*87 Solutions to a Life of Better
Speaking and Listening*

Stephen D. Boyd, Ph.D.

*Working with People Who Want to Speak and
Listen Effectively*

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First Edition

Speak by Number

Posted on **August 17, 2011** by **Steve Boyd**

When I was a boy, a popular pastime was to paint by number. You would buy a kit that included an outline of a picture or scene and each part would have a number. A key told what color to paint a certain number. The "artist" would then paint the colors according to the corresponding number and behold! Once you painted in all the numbers, you had completed a "real painting."

I think speakers can also use numbers which, when connected to the content, produce an excellent presentation.

The number ONE means to have one clear theme throughout the presentation. Sometimes called the thesis, it is the essence of your speech in one sentence. If the main idea is not clear to the speaker, then neither will the theme be clear to listeners.

Number TWO refers to the use of contrasts. With contrast you are showing differences to dramatize a point. In a presentation, especially a persuasive one, the salesperson is seeking to show how his or her product is less costly than the competition. The minister might be showing the difference between heaven and hell. The politician could be concerned that his constituency sees how his holding office will be a great improvement over the job the incumbent is doing.

THREE is the number of pieces of evidence you need to prove a point or help an audience understand how something works. The number three has held great power and intrigue for humans through the centuries. We think about time as

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past, present, and future. We divide our meals into breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In popular literature we have all kinds of threesomes, from the three witches in *Macbeth* to the three little pigs. A speaker should have three specific instances, or three statistics, or three examples in proving points. This makes sense to the human mind.

The number FOUR is the sound of the first part of a word important in your preparation: *forethought*. You want to give *forethought* before you start writing ideas down on paper. Writing main points or evidence you want to include may limit your thinking. The more *forethought*, the more your mind will be stretched in looking for ideas.

The number FIVE refers to the last five minutes of your talk. These may be the most important part of your speech because here is where you want the strongest evidence and clearest explanations. Don't forget: The audience remembers best what you say last. Those last five minutes should clarify understanding and move people to action.

A presentation after SIX o'clock p.m. should have humor in it. People have worked all day and they want to enjoy themselves with good food, friendship, and humor. You don't have to be a comedian, but you can include an embarrassing personal experience, show a cartoon (with permission), tell a short joke, or give a one-liner. You want people to smile and be in a festive frame of mind.

The word SEVEN comes from a Hebrew root word that means *complete*. The presentation should be complete with evidence and structure. Everything should make sense. To be complete, the introduction should have an attention device and a preview. The body of the speech should have two or three main points with corresponding evidence for each of the

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points. The conclusion should include a summary and a move to action step. All three parts of the presentation should be tied together with smooth transitions.

Often people in certain occupations deliver the same speech many times. The CEO might report to different divisions of the company throughout the United States, Asia, or Europe. EIGHT is the maximum number of times you want to give the same material without rearranging or seriously revising the content of your presentation. If you don't, the material on the day you give the speech for the ninth time will be boring to you and certainly to the audience. Use different stories or rearrange your points. After eight times a speaker may have better ideas. You might add a new attention device or deliver with a different style.

The number NINE conjures anticipation. Ten follows 9, 100 follows 99, 1000 follows 999 and so on. We may anticipate a change, reaching a goal, or accomplishing a great feat. Going from the year 1999 to 2000 was traumatic for people, with a tinge of uncertainty and anticipation of how things might be different. Anticipation is an important method of holding the attention of the audience. We want to know how the story will end, or the solution to a problem, or new research that holds much promise for a new drug or cure.

I stop at the number TEN because this is a logical progression of thought for us. We have a "top ten" list. The anesthesiologist will say when starting the medication, "Now count to 10." In other words, ten is a logical place to stop. In a successful presentation, know when to stop. We have all heard speakers we enjoy listening to, but our pleasure is diluted if the speaker speaks five minutes too long or begins to repeat material. That is why having a clear conclusion is so important. When you follow earlier advice and have a specific

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summary and a thought-provoking ending sentence, you are more likely to stop at the right time.

Public speaking can be very effective and fairly simple when you speak by number.

Never Stop Dancing

Posted on **August 4, 2011** by **Steve Boyd**

An article in *The New Yorker* featured the career of Dick Van Dyke, who at almost 85 years old was singing and dancing in *A Musical Memoir*. One of the themes throughout the article was his high energy level. In fact, on Thanksgiving Day of last year he appeared at a mission on Skid Row, entertaining the residents while they ate. His comment, "I sing and dance. That's what I do."

I think that philosophy is critical, whether becoming a better speaker or getting the most out of our lives. *Never Stop Dancing* is even the title of an excellent book by Gordon Livingston. I completed my career as a professor a couple of months ago and in advance I asked a colleague if she would dance out of the classroom with me at the end of my last class. She agreed.

As scheduled, she showed up and we danced down the hallway. What I did not know was that word had gotten out and about 150 students lined the hallway to watch the event. Our secretary filmed with her flip camera and you can watch us on YouTube at [Steve Boyd Farewell Dance](#).

I've been taking dancing lessons for 17 years and I don't intend to stop dancing. I've been teaching and speaking for several decades and I plan to continue speaking as often as I can and experiencing as many new things as I can.

This philosophy should guide our daily lives. For example, as a speaker I want to continue to improve. I believe my best speech is my next one. Each presentation I deliver gives me

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more experience. I urge all speakers always to seek to improve. Never stop dancing.

You can always make improvement if you keep working at developing your skills. This is true whether you are learning a new technology or simply working on your golf game.

Remember the life philosophy of Dick Van Dyke: "Never stop dancing."

Give the Gift of Grace

Posted on July 6, 2011 by Steve Boyd

When you present, you know that many things can go wrong. When that happens, give grace to the person responsible. Don't be a *prima donna*; go with the flow. Be gracious when circumstances create difficulties in delivering your speech.

This was shown in dramatic fashion this past week-end in the gracious manner with which Rafael Nadal accepted defeat in the men's tennis finals at Wimbledon. The media went to him immediately after the match and asked him agonizing questions such as, "Do you have any celebration tips for Novak?" (Novak Djokovic defeated Nadal in the finals.) Clearly, Nadal wanted privacy and time to deal with the loss. Yet he patiently answered each question with grace. Writing about this in the *Wall Street Journal*, Jason Gay said about Nadal, "He smiled. He breezed through a crushing loss with exceptional charm and grace, deflecting pain in a language that isn't his first." He thanked the All English Club for making him feel at home. His response to the loss: "I tried my best, as always. Today, one player played better than me. I will try another time, next year."

What can you do as a speaker to do show grace in a difficult situation? You can anticipate the unexpected so that you are not easily surprised when the public address system gives awful feedback sounds or the dessert comes just as you start your presentation.

Get to the speaking location early so that you can correct difficulties that are correctible. Take a tour of the meeting room. Check to see if the equipment is available that you

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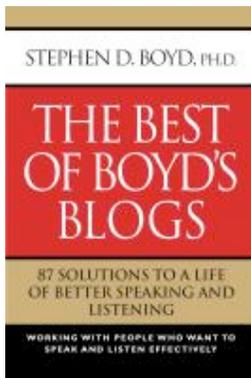
need to deliver your presentation. Talk to the person responsible for your being present to speak. Ask about any unusual circumstances that you did not anticipate.

Don't panic if something unexpected happens. In the middle of your speech, the lights might go out. Simply pause for a few moments. Sometimes the lights come back on quickly. Just a few seconds of waiting will give you time to think of what you might say if they don't come back on.

If the problem is not corrected quickly, have a line you can plug in with any emergency. This might work: "I'm sure this will be corrected shortly. Let's just give the staff a little time to deal with ..." or "We can easily continue on without..."

We usually think of grace as a spiritual term, but it is also an important aspect of gaining the respect of audience members. Your graciousness confirms that you really are a credible source who cares about the principles he or she is discussing.

When you speak, you bring with you information that the audience needs to hear; remember to bring a little grace as well.



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