
~~~~~ THE PORRO PASSAROUND - TIPS FOR COMMUNICATORS ~~~~~

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READING, CASTING A WIDER NET, AND MORE

As we count down to Halloween, you are probably heavily involved in those fall writing and speaking projects that started landing on your desk the day after Labor Day. Here are few tips to help you ease into those tasks as the leaves change colors

- [1] Speeches: What to Read this Fall
- [2] Speeches: Casting a Wider Net for Quotes
- [3] Speeches: Gender Matters

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1. **Speeches: What to Read this Fall**

So by now you're sick of those mysteries, inside-Hollywood expose's, and stories about romances in warm climates. Now you're looking for something that will help you write speeches this fall, right?

Pick up a copy of the 'updated and expanded' version of "Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History," selected and introduced by William Safire. The speeches themselves are a terrific resource: all the classics are there, as well as some lesser known, but powerful nuggets (Mark Twain on stage fright, for example). Plus the speeches are well organized, by topic - sermons, political speeches, eulogies, etc.

But for a speechwriter, the short essays with which Safire begins the book are an added bonus. You'll find his "ten steps to a great speech," here and other supremely useful bits of advice.

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2. **Speeches: Casting a Wider Net for Quotes**

In his introductory essay, Safire says, "In the past, orators occasionally studded their rhetoric with references to the ancient Greeks, but now quotation seems to be a must." As usual Safire is absolutely right. However, some speechwriters think that quotes should be used only to add "heft" to a speech. Therefore, they tend to seek our weighty quotes from statesmen, philosophers, religious figures, and Shakespeare.

There's nothing wrong with that, of course. In many speeches such quotes work perfectly. But you can also use a quote to add lightness to a speech - a touch of humor or informality.

One way to do that, of course, is to funny humorous quotes. Another effective way is to broaden your search for quotable people. Quoting an unexpected "authority" can increase the impact of the quote and bring a smile to your audience. The classic example, (overused by now) is to quote Willie Sutton's answer to the question, why do you rob banks? "Because that's where the money is."

I recently wrote a speech on economic change for a Montana audience. Research revealed that the daredevil Evel Knievel was from Montana. And I unearthed a great quote that illustrated the need to plan for the future. Evel once said, "I did everything by the seat of my pants. That's why I got hurt so much."

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### **3. *Speeches: Gender Matters***

Thanks to a focus group organized by communications strategist Denise Graveline (check out her blog at <http://eloquentwoman.blogspot.com/>) I learned an important lesson about writing speeches for men and women. Every speechwriter knows that the first thing you do in a speech is establish rapport with your listeners ("Shaking hands with the audience," Safire calls it.)

But the focus group of professional women, most of whom give a lot of speeches or presentations, pointed out that the "handshake" is trickier for women than men. Unfair though it is, audiences tend to cut women speakers less slack than men. If a woman "tries to hard" to connect with the audience-- doing things like apologizing for conditions in the room, spending too much time thanking others, even using self-deprecating humor--the audience may think the speaker is ineffectual or unimportant.

On the other hand, an audience may find that a "bold" handshake opening that works for a man- an edgy joke, a quick summons to action or call to alarm-- is off-putting when used by a woman.

The lesson: when writing for an executive who is also a woman, take extra time on that opening, do extra research on the audience, do an even longer preparatory interview with the speaker, to make sure the first few minutes of the speech strike the right balance.