

~~~~~ THE PORRO PASSAROUND - TIPS FOR COMMUNICATORS ~~~~~  
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#### MAKE YOUR AUDIENCE'S JOB EASIER

The best way to make an impact with your key audiences--legislators, the press, the public--is to make it easy for them to get what you're saying, and to remember it. Here are some ways to create user-friendly speeches, action e-mail, and press releases.

- [1] Speeches
- [2] E-mail
- [3] Press releases

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#### 1. SPEECHES--WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM LINCOLN

You can be darn sure that the people who heard Lincoln's Gettysburg Address were moved, and remembered it for the rest of their lives. Chances are your next speech for a client won't be mentioned in the same sentence as Lincoln's, but you can learn some terrific lessons from what the Great Emancipator said.

Most importantly: Lincoln made it extremely easy for his audience to remember his message.

First, the speech was short. The famous story is that Lincoln was done before the official photographer could take his picture. Your clients probably don't want anything quite that succinct. But remember, nobody ever left a speech complaining it was just too darn short.

Second, the speech stuck to his message points. Boy did it ever! No filler, no diversions. The audience had no doubt what Lincoln meant to convey.

Finally, the address used "word pictures," spoken images, to convey its message. Carefully crafted images are easy for an audience to remember. Statistics, an avalanche of details, or meandering anecdotes make audience's minds wander or even lull them to sleep.

We can't all be Lincoln, but we use what he said to improve the speeches we write.

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## 2. E-MAIL: CUT TO THE CHASE

If you're using e-mail to move people to action, let 'em know what you want them to do within the first few sentences. People race through e-mails. If they have to work through your e-mail--even a little bit--they'll ignore you.

So what should those first few sentences do?

Sentence #1: tell your reader what the problem is.

"As you read this, the Senate is considering a ban on stem cell research, a vital medical breakthrough that could give new hope to millions of Americans facing incurable disease."

Sentence #2: present the solution.

"We need to let the Senate know that our children and children need this critically important medical research."

Sentence #3: underline the urgency.

"Senator John Smith has announced he will bring a stem cell research ban to the Senate floor this month."

Sentence #4: what YOU can do to help.

"That's why we've launched a new campaign to tell our Senators to keep hope alive. Click here to join us and send a free e-mail to your Senators. [www.YOURCAMPAIGN.com](http://www.YOURCAMPAIGN.com)."

Do those four sentences tell a reader all the ins and outs of an issue? No. But you can always add more information after the opening sentences, or direct the reader to a Web site to learn more.

Better to have people hungry for more information than turned off because they have to work hard to get to the good stuff!

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Porro Associates LLC helps corporations and nonprofits improve the written and spoken materials they use to reach key audiences.  
<http://www.porrolc.com/results.html>

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## 3. PRESS RELEASES - KEEP YOUR HEAD UP

Every reporter and editor gets a snow storm of press releases every week. If they have to work hard to find out what your release is about, they'll toss it. Your event or publication could sink like a stone.

So how do you make a reporter's job easy? Start at the top. Make sure your headline, and the subhead or two underneath it, draw the reporter in. The ideal headline not only tells the reader what the release is about, it does so in a way that makes the reporter want to check out the text.

So get the subject of the release into the headline. Use simple, active language. Come up with a snappy or ironic phrase or two. A good way to go is to start with a "telegraphic" headline, followed by a subhead that is a full sentence. For a release about an Endocrine Society panel on leptin and other classes of anti-obesity meds, we wrote:

NEW WEAPONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FAT  
Research on 'Fat Blockers,' Leptin Offer Promising Obesity Treatments

Whatever you do, take extra time to craft the headline. Remember, it is the first thing a reporter looks at and could be the last.