Speech Writing Tips: The 14 Speech Writing Secrets of President Bill Clinton

Speaking in public can be a powerful way to build a business. It can help raise the profile of your business, generate new leads and create greater profits. But speaking in public can be nerve wracking and seriously stressful for first timers. Writing a speech can be a major challenge, especially for technical writers.We can all learn from watching professional speakers.I have achieved a long held ambition to hear Bill Clinton - in Perth on Saturday February 23, 2002. It was a fantastic event!My motivation? Anyone who earns $300,000 for a 50 minute keynote presentation must be good. As a professional speaker, I wanted to see Clinton in action. I didn't want to only hear what he said, but how he said it.Here's my analysis of what I learnt from hearing Bill Clinton in person and noting how he was presented. You should be able to adapt at least some of these points to fit your own circumstances.1. The marketing strategyIn previous years a big advertising blitz brought audiences to see speakers such as former Soviet leader Gorbachov and others. Their marketing approach was very commercially focused with a massive advertising budget. The Clinton event had a more humanitarian angle with funds being raised for a good cause, namely sick kids through The Princess Margaret Hospital for Children Foundation. This was a better match with Clinton's core values of building community and having an empathy with the concerns of ordinary people. The marketing campaign relied heavily on positive media coverage to create awareness of the event.2. A memorable entryClinton's entry to the ballroom was brilliantly stage-managed. Everyone was asked to stand and then he walked into the room to his US Presidential election theme song 'Happy Days are here again'. The emotion in the room was electric and made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up!3. Personal presentationHis dress and presentation was absolutely immaculate. (Maybe the $500 haircuts help.) Many women at my table commented that Clinton was far better looking in the flesh than on TV.4. The Power of PresenceThere was a buzz about being in the same room as President Clinton. His body language, smile and confident hand shake exuded charisma. His considerable charm reminded me of that high school science experiment when you tip iron filings onto a white sheet of paper covering a strong magnet. People were attracted to Clinton like metal filings to a powerful magnetic field.5. Warm-upAlan Jones was MC and the warm-up included a short film taking a light hearted look at Clinton's last days in office. Scenes included Clinton washing the Presidential car, clipping the hedges and playing switchboard operator in the Oval Room. A great scene from a press conference showed Clinton waking a single sleeping journalist.6. IntroductionA well constructed introduction helped build empathy and highlighted that Clinton's life had not all been plain sailing. The fact that his father died when he was young, his mother was a nursing assistant and he was born in Hope, a town of 10,000 people, helped put his success and achievements in context.7. Building on the sense of destinyA strong personal brand is built on stories. The story of Clinton meeting President Kennedy when on a youth leadership camp was used to great effect. Not only was it mentioned in the introduction but that famous photo of Clinton shaking JFK's hand was also used in the marketing materials. Other brand building shots included an intimate moment with Hilary, a shot of him playing the saxophone, a jogging photo, one with Chelsea and one featuring Clinton lined up with 3 past Presidents. They all helped to define Clinton the man.8. Customising the messageClinton's speech in Perth was customised to include stories relevant to a Perth market, including his memories of Perth switching on its lights at night for a US space mission re-entry and comments on a former US President's career as a mining engineer in Kalgoorlie.9. Using humourClinton had some great lines about how he could have helped previous Presidents in dealing with the media in tricky situations.10. Memorable one liners using oppositesThis can be very effective. When talking about possible solutions to the war against terrorism, Clinton said "most of the big things in life are simple".11. RepetitionClinton used this proven speechwriting technique to great effect.12. Using metaphorsClinton used the metaphor of the gap between the invention of the club and the shield to describe the present situation in the war against terrorism. He said "this gap needs to closed". Metaphors can give intangible concepts more impact with an audience.13. Develop empathy with the audienceClinton told the story of how he was in Australia at Port Douglas on September 11th and how his daughter Chelsea was in downtown New York. He connected with every parent in the room when he talked about his feelings when he couldn't contact his daughter for three hours on that day.14. A call to actionThe aim of the event was to raise money for a Children's hospital. Clinton's final words were "I want you to help". Simple, direct and powerful.I hope you have enjoyed this analysis. I certainly learnt a lot by seeing one of the world's great communicators in action. Whatever your personal views on Clinton are ... his personal warmth, ability to connect with an audience and presentation skills are outstanding.

About the Author

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