



# NSA Speakers Academy

# Topic Development

## How Your Message Makes a Topic

Now that you have more clarity on why you wish to speak for a living or get paid to address an audience, what will you share with them? What they remember you for is often described as your message. What they learn from you or learn to do with the information you share is considered your topic. The message you wish to share is usually one of importance to you. How you describe it in your marketing, what makes you different in the way you present your topic, is critical. Often your message is derived from your life experiences and the topic is used to more easily explain to an audience what you do or the topic about which you speak. The combination of your message and the topic it fits into, and how you deliver it, is what you are selling as a professional speaker.

1. **Message: What is the story, belief or experience that drives your desire to speak for a living?**
2. **Topic: What do you want your audience to do/believe when they walk away?**

### Corporate Examples of Message/Topic:

- **Disney:** to make people happy/theme parks
- **Dove:** to make women feel beautiful every day/beauty products
- **Google:** to make the world's information universally accessible and useful/search engines
- **Amazon.com:** to be Earth's most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online/book stores
- **Ford:** to become the world's leading consumer company for automotive products and services/cars

### What are some of the messages of NSA speakers you know?

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### MY MAIN MESSAGE:

#### Consider a Speaker Mission Statement

“The mission statement [of a speaker] reveals who we want to be and what contributions we want to make to society. It also clarifies the values and principles that must guide our actions if we are to achieve these aspirations. Our mission statement should motivate and energize us and should drive all activities of our business.” — Azim Jamal, “The Power of Walking Your Talk”

## Choosing Your Topic

Your topic is used to define the subject area or presentation category that meeting planners will search. For example, if they want to help their audience to choose a healthy lifestyle, they will click on the topic *health*. They will choose from dozens of speakers on that topic. Imagine a pool of goldfish (*health*) in one pond and a pool of salmon (sales) in another. Whether you decide first which pool you fit and next how you *stick out* from the others, or vice versa, you will need to decide both. Developing your topic by looking at your expertise, credibility, passion and style will help. What makes you different from the pool of presenters on health, sales or whatever topic is a best fit for you and your message? What topic are you **MOST** passionate about?

To limit the confusion and reduce your potential marketing budget, start with **three possible topic areas** and then **narrow down to ONE**. *Caution: Avoid the temptation to say “I can do that,” which can result in a multitude of “OK” topics. Lean toward the one that excites you the most.*

**Your Turn!**

1. Go to the NSA website: **www.NSASpeaker.org**
2. Click the FIND A SPEAKER button.
3. Click the drop-down arrow on the line labeled: EXPERT ON.  
(Topics are listed on pages 4 and 5.)
4. Choose three topics.
5. Fill in the chart on the following page (using the tips below and the example that follows), matching your expertise and credibility to **your three possible topics**.

<p><b>Expertise:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have certification, training or a degree in the topic</li> <li>• You have a deep knowledge base in the topic</li> <li>• You have significant experience in the topic</li> <li>• Your lived values support the topic</li> <li>• Your personal strengths/talents fit the topic</li> <li>• You have overcome challenges in the topic</li> </ul>	<p><b>Credibility:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have certification, training or a degree in the topic</li> <li>• You have a deep knowledge base in the topic</li> <li>• You have significant experience in the topic</li> <li>• People have asked you for advice on the topic</li> <li>• You have helped others with the topic</li> <li>• The media has sought you out about the topic</li> <li>• You have authored articles, e-book(s), book(s), CD(s) and/or DVD(s) on the topic</li> <li>• You have a blog and/or website focused on the topic</li> </ul>	<p><b>Passion/Personality/Style:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your personality supports the topic</li> <li>• Your core message excites you</li> <li>• Adjectives people use to describe you are a good fit</li> <li>• Your words and actions are congruent with your message</li> <li>• Your best known strengths, talents and skills are utilized</li> </ul>
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## Choosing Your Topic

**Example:**

Topic:	Expertise:	Credibility:	Passion/Personality/Style:
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified Marketing Specialist</li> <li>• 20 years of experience in developing marketing strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have training in marketing</li> <li>• Author of <i>The Millionaire Marketer</i></li> <li>• Published dozens of articles</li> <li>• Have a marketing-focused website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outgoing</li> <li>• Passion for generating marketing ideas</li> </ul>

**My Turn!**

Topic:	Expertise:	Credibility:	Passion/Personality/Style:
1.			
2.			
3.			

Out of the three possible topics above, choose **the ONE topic** in which you have the **most expertise, greatest passion, and highest credibility.**

**MY #1 TOPIC IS:**

## @speakers Expertise Topics List

Accountability	Current Events	Innovation Inspirational	Profitability
Adventurers	Customer Service	International Affairs	Psychology
Advertising/Public Relations	Difficult People	International Business	Real Estate
Aging	Diversity	Internet	Relationships
Agriculture	Domestic Violence	Law	Religion/Spirituality
Alcoholism/Drug Abuse	Eating Disorders	Leadership	Retail/Restaurant
American Legends	eCommerce	Life Balance	Retirement/Aging
Anger Management	Economy	Lifestyle	Safety/Security
Arts/Culture/Music	Education	Magic	Sales
Attitude	Employees/Workforce	Management	Science/Engineering
Best-selling Authors	Empowerment	Marketing/Merchandise	Social Networking/Media
Black History	Entertainment	Master of Ceremonies	Sports Athletics
Branding	Entrepreneurism	Media	Spouse Programs
Business	Environmental Policy	Medical/Dental	Strategic Planning
Business Growth	Ethics/Integrity	Men's Health	Stress
Business of Healthcare	Etiquette	Mental Health	Success
Business Trends	Facilitator	Military	Sustainability: environment
Cancer	Family	Motivation	Sustainability: organizational
Careers	Financial & Tax Planning	Negotiation	Teamwork/Teambuilding
Celebrity	Food	Networking	Technology
Change	Future	Olympic Heroes	Time Management/Self- Management
Character Portrayals	Gender Issues	Organizational Development	TQM
Chronic Diseases	Generation Issues	Organizational Skills	Training
Civil Rights	Global Economics	Parenting	Travel/Tourism
Coaching	Goal Setting	Partnering/Strategic Alliance	Vision/Purpose
Comedian/ Comedienne	Government & Politics	Patriotic	Wealth Building
Communication	Green/Environment	Peak Performance	Wellness
Community Relations	Health & Nutrition	Performance Improvement	Women in Society
Competition	Healthcare	Personal Development	Women's Health
Computers	Hero	Persuasion/Influencing	Writing/Publishing
Conflict Resolution	Human Resources/Labor Relations	Political	Youth/Children
Consulting	Human Rights	Presentation Skills	
Consumer Trends	Humor	Pro-Choice	
Corporate Responsibility	Identity Theft	Pro-Life	
Creativity	Image/Self-Esteem	Productivity	
	Information Overload		

*(This list of topics was created in a joint effort between the International Association of Speakers Bureaus (IASB), the International Federation for Professional Speakers (IFFPS) and eSpeakers.)*

## **The Structure of Your Message in that Topic**

### **Title:**

### **Opening:**

- Tell them what you're going to tell them.
- Hook your audience initially and then continue to connect with them.
- Provide an overview or objectives of your topic and purpose.
- Spend less time on yourself, unless it is highly relevant to your message or the audience needs to know.

### **Your first words:**

### **Body:**

- Tell them.
- Provide must-know information in three to five points.
- Provide support content, "evidence" or a story for each point.

### **Support Content:**

First Point:

Second Point:

Third Point:

### **Conclusion:**

- Tell them what you told them.
- Summarize your ideas.
- Provide a call to action.

### **Your closing words:**

**Winging it works when you've done it for a while, but in the beginning it works best if you have a plan. (In fact, those who you THINK are winging it are likely repeating a plan they've used hundreds of times!)**

## **What Do You Say?**

Chances are the information for your next or first speech will not fit on these two pages. Use this outline as a guide, and consider fleshing out your entire presentation in much greater detail after you have recorded at least the highlights of your structured message.

**Title:**

**Opening:**

**Your first words:**

**Body Points:**

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## What Do You Say?

### Support Content:

First Point:

Second Point:

Third Point:

Fourth Point:

Fifth Point:

### Conclusion:

Your closing words:

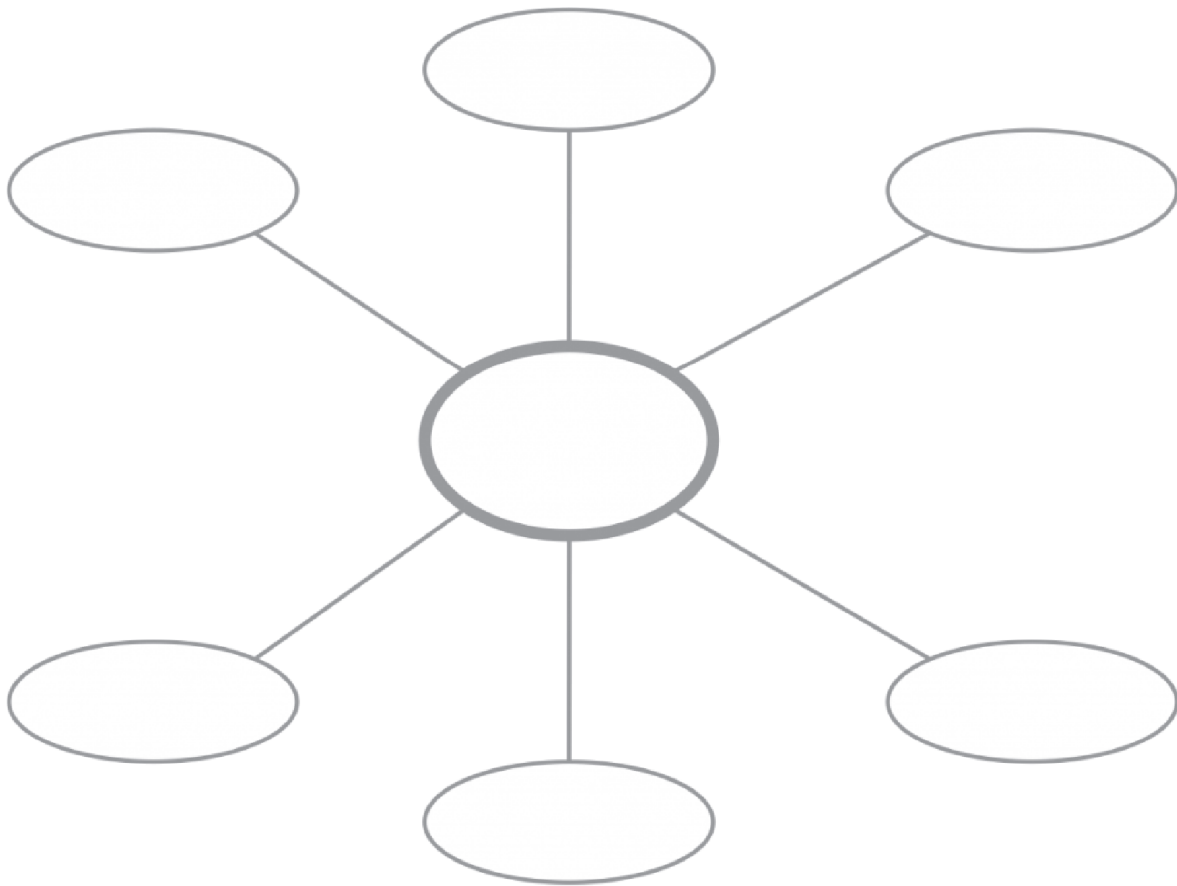
### 13 Effective Ways to End a Speech

1. Summarize the main speech topics or main points.
2. Repeat a few key words or phrases.
3. State how your points prove your general and specific goals.
4. Repeat the tie between the needs and interests of the listeners and your speech topic.
5. Refer back to an anecdote or quotation in the introduction text.
6. Offer a so-called moral to the story.
7. Call them to act and offer them how-to-do-it steps.
8. Visualize the outcome of your call to action with a prop or visual aid.
9. Transform your central idea or even the speech title into an easy-to-remember slogan.
10. Recite a couple of lines from songs, poems or speech quotes from a historical presentation.
11. End with a heart-felt human interest story.
12. Finish with a clinching personal anecdote.
13. End with a joke, funny remark or shocking statistic.



## What Do You Say?

Another model for creating your speech or presentation is known as mind mapping — an effective tool for organizing thoughts in a less linear fashion. An example is shown below. Place your primary topic in the center circle and branch off your opening, middle and closing in other circles, with branches for supporting points extending from those.



## Who is Your Audience?

What you say to your speaker friends about what you do may differ from what you say to your participants. It's all about the "audience" you're addressing. With friends, it's easy and slang. With clients, you'll likely be more formal. Not only is the message important for your audience to understand and connect with, but who your audience is will determine HOW you connect and share.

### Who makes up most of my speaking audience?

#### If your audience is made up of adult learners, they usually:

- Are knowledgeable and experienced.
- Want to be treated in a mature and respectful manner.
- Want relevant information that they can apply at work and home.
- Tend to want to be involved in the learning process.
- Tend to be more reluctant than children to take risks in front of their peers.

#### How do they learn?

**Auditory:** The learner HEARS the key points. Use verbal feedback and discussion.

**Visually:** The learner SEES key points. Use overheads, flipcharts, posters and handouts.

**Kinesthetically:** The learner EXPERIENCES the key points. Use small group discussion, role-plays, and work experience.

**Extra learning style:** The learner needs to THINK before listening, seeing, or doing.

#### How are they motivated?

**Attention:** Make your presentations fun, appealing, safe and comfortable.

**Relevance:** Link your content to the participants' values, needs and experiences.

**Confidence:** Believe in their ability to learn what they need to learn and normalize their fears. Build on what they already know.

**Satisfaction:** Point out that what they are learning will help them create RESULTS.

**ARCS Model:** *J. M. Keller (1983) developed the theory of motivation of adult learners.*

# What Do They Know and Need?

Audiences are becoming savvier about the information you share. Whereas at one time you may have been the expert, one smart phone or Internet connection in the audience could cause them to question what you know or question you during your “show.” Try to establish where your audience is in these four layers of learning, and then try to understand what they need from you in order to make use of your message.

### Four Layers of Learning: (Cognitive Dissonance)

**Level 1:** Unconscious Incompetence: Does not know what he/she does not know.

**Level 2:** Conscious Incompetence: Aware that there are things he/she does not know.

**Level 3:** Conscious Competence: Successful action is taken.

**Level 4:** Unconscious Competence: Can do the action without thinking about it.

My audience is in Level \_\_\_\_\_ on my topic.

### Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (1970)

- **Basic Needs** (physiological): No one can learn if their basic needs are not met. Assure adequate breaks, refreshments, fresh air and a comfortable room temperature.
- **Safety:** Physical and emotional safety can impede learning. Create a safe and accepting environment.
- **Social:** Interaction among adults is important for social, networking and learning needs. Provide adequate time for participant connection.
- **Self-Esteem:** We all crave recognition and respect. Acknowledge and encourage effort, participation and learning.
- **Self-Actualization:** Support your participants to become the best they can be.

My audience needs \_\_\_\_\_ from me.

## Research and Development for Your Topic

You've identified your message and found a topic in which it fits. Now, it is important to understand as much about your topic as possible, but also what makes the way in which you deliver this topic, using your message and differentiating from the others who speak on the same thing. Below are strongly recommended research and development action steps that will increase what you know before you go and speak to a group.

- ✓ Read an additional book that explores or elaborates on your area of expertise.
- ✓ List the ways in which you agree and differ with the author.
- ✓ Read three articles about your topic or area of expertise.
- ✓ "Listen" on social media for what is being said about your topic.
- ✓ Review three audio or video recordings on your topic.

Understanding the similarities and differences of what others are doing in your topic will help you define your marketing direction, addressed in a later module. It will also help you determine what to say about yourself. Answer the following questions for those who need what you have, and in a way they understand, and you'll be well on your way to getting paid to speak!

What do you do?

Example: "I work with \_\_\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_."

**How do you do it differently?** List three distinct ways in which you are different.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **SOMETHING TO CONSIDER**

Now that you've defined what you speak on and how it is different, no one will introduce you better than you. Hey! Why don't you write your own introduction to give to meeting planners or session host.

Help them know what to say about you and what you do.

# Checklist for Topic Development

### Topic Development:

- I have chosen my speaking area of expertise or topic area(s)
- I am experienced and/or knowledgeable in my topic area(s)
- I know the target market for which my expertise is best suited

### Structure:

- I am clear about the different elements demanded of an effective keynote, workshop and training
- I have dynamic and benefit-oriented titles
- My presentations have a compelling structure with an effective open, middle and close
- I know how to support each point
- I know how to effectively integrate examples, metaphors, analogies, quotations, audience participation, research, facts, props and humor
- I understand the importance of stories, especially in keynotes, and how to collect and craft them

### Handouts:

- My handout(s) have effective structure and excellent content
- Each page of my handout(s) has my contact information and page number
- My handouts include a call to action or action plan that is part of my message

*(Adapted from BRANDSTORMING, by Dick Bruso)*

## Topic Development Homework

Congratulations on the completion of your Speakers Academy session on TOPIC DEVELOPMENT. Your journey may have begun today or some time ago. Wherever you began, homework can help you keep up the momentum.

**My homework from this session is:**

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

