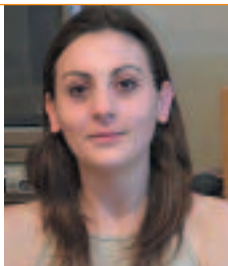


It's all Greek to me

Sarah Cottam

(Second in a series of three articles on Oratory)



What is oratory? What is rhetoric? Who are these orators and rhetoricians? Why do these words have negative connotations with a political stance? And is this just a Greek history lesson or does it have bearing on presentations today?

First of all, let's clear up the first three questions. Oratory is the art of giving a prepared speech that uses the principles of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the study and teaching of oratory. Orators are the people that make those speeches and rhetoricians study and teach the principles of rhetoric. Got that?

Okay, maybe we need just a little bit more of an explanation...

What makes a speech an oration? Let's call in the experts... Aristotle defined oration as "the art of

finding, in every given case, all the available means of persuasion" and Cicero described it as "the art of persuasion". Not quite the definitions used today! Today, the Oxford English dictionary defines oratory as 1. formal public speaking. 2. rhetorical or eloquent language.

The Greeks saw oratory as the noblest of arts. Early rhetoricians realised that the actual *presentation* of a case was essential in persuading an audience. They observed people giving speeches and discovered that some were effective and others were not. Rhetoricians then developed a set of principles from observations and continued to observe and adapt these principles to increase the persuasiveness of orations.

These rhetorical principles are detailed and complex but the main ones were identified by Aristotle and his chums as The Five Canons. These are:

1. Invention – the process of generating effective material for the particular situation or argument
2. Arrangement – organising the material so that it can be delivered smoothly and appropriately
Cicero broke this down into a further seven parts:
 - (1) The entrance or introduction of the subject and the securing of the subject at hand
 - (2) The narration, situations necessary to understand the topic
 - (3) The proposition, the speaker's central idea or thesis
 - (4) The division, or a brief list of the points the speaker will demonstrate
 - (5) The confirmation, or the body of proof for the points
 - (6) The confutation, or the rebuttal
 - (7) The conclusion
3. Style – the use of language that will grab the audience's attention and enable the orator to deliver not only his thoughts but his emotions
4. Memory – the listener's ability to remember what you have said. Achieved through the other four canons
5. Delivery – how you present your material to your audience - developed more by the Romans.
I will come back to this in my next article 'What have the Romans ever done for us?'

Now, why the negative connotation and political stance?

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The second in a series of three articles on oratory in which Sarah Cottam introduces the principles of rhetoric and Cicero's art of persuasion - oratory. Sarah also finds that Management Consultants can trace their ancestry back to the Sophists of classical philosophy!

PowerPoint gets a better voice

Ewan Pearson explores the latest development in PowerPoint and explains how adding sound can be a Breeze.

Can you staircase your notes

Alastair Grant illustrates a useful technique for talking with clarity and precision, and finishing within the time allowed.

It's all Greek to me

continued . . .

Some of the first to cause the negative political attitude towards rhetoric and oratory were the Sophists. The Sophists were the first Greek philosophers to charge for their teaching. Ah ha... management consultant's early ancestors! They worked largely with young politicians, concentrating

6 For AGMs, IPO presentations and business pitches, which need to be highly persuasive, oratory is more effective than conversation 9

on rhetoric but using these principles to teach the art of persuading people to believe whatever the young politician wanted people to believe even if that was "black is white". This brings the comparison closer to modern political 'spin doctors' than management consultants.

Many influences have led to the decline of rhetoric and the dilution of oratory. Beginning with the fall of Rome and the rise of Christianity, where rhetoric became tainted by its pagan Greek and Roman origins. Another era worthy of note was the 17th century and the rapid progress of science. This fashion for science hit rhetoric badly as the theories and principles of rhetoric didn't fit in with scientific thought.

The one area that rhetorical teaching remained protected was within politics!

When we think of oratory and rhetoric now, we typically think of a very strong political speech. Yet, Aristotle defined three types of oratory (adapted directly from the Sophists, so perhaps they weren't that bad?!) of which 'political' was only one.

The three types were:

- *political* – concentrating on the future and designed to move the audience to action or non-action;
- *forensic* – more factual and informative, usually based on past events to accuse or defend;
- *ceremonial* – based in the present to praise or blame.

All three of these types can be seen in modern presentations. Today, Political oratory is constantly used within political halls but also makes a guest appearance in other areas including business. Forensic oratory is regularly used in court and in the news, and Ceremonial oratory is the basis of most public and business presentations. They don't all strictly follow the principles of rhetoric but many of the key techniques are being used.

So how does this affect presentations today?

Many modern day presentations have been made more informal as it is widely thought that persuasion is better done in conversation. However, this is not always possible. For example in the early nineties we worked with the board of an insurance company on a presentation to persuade staff of the rationale of making 1,000 of their 3,000 staff redundant, in order to save the business. This had to be done by large audience presentations in order to ensure the staff were all told at the same time and

6 ... the art of persuasion ... 9

before the press. The key goals of no strike action and acceptance of the proposal were achieved.

Think also of AGMs, IPO Analyst presentations and formal business pitches. All of these presentations need to be highly persuasive and conversation would be much less efficient and effective.

Surely in these situations, oratory excels and should regain its good name?*

Oratory is the art of oral persuasion. The rhetorical principles hold the key to creating persuasive presentations and The Five Canons are a useful start to unlocking oratory's potential. We commend them to you.

* *This is a rhetorical question. From 'erotema' meaning question, posed for effect rather than seeking an answer. Derived from the Greek's rhetorical studies, it is one of the many tropes (figures of speech) that they outlined as useful tools for persuasion.*

PowerPoint gets a better voice

Ewan Pearson

For most of its life, PowerPoint has had no sound, and if you did add sound, it wasn't very easy or very good. That's changing with a new standard available for 'sound on visuals' called Breeze supplied through VWI Media, based in London. Breeze is essentially a software add-on to PowerPoint, with a built-in facility to easily upload and stream the presentation through the web. We thought we should let you know as soon as possible about this step forward in presentations.

For face-to-face presentations, things will be largely unchanged as it is normal and best practice to speak most of the time when presenting! But so far you have mostly had to look at PowerPoint with a bland voiceover from the presenter. As most of you who are clients will know, we fix this! We think that the presenter should be the star, getting a positive impression of themselves over to their audiences, and only supported by good visuals where relevant. A key aspect of this is the voice, the relative

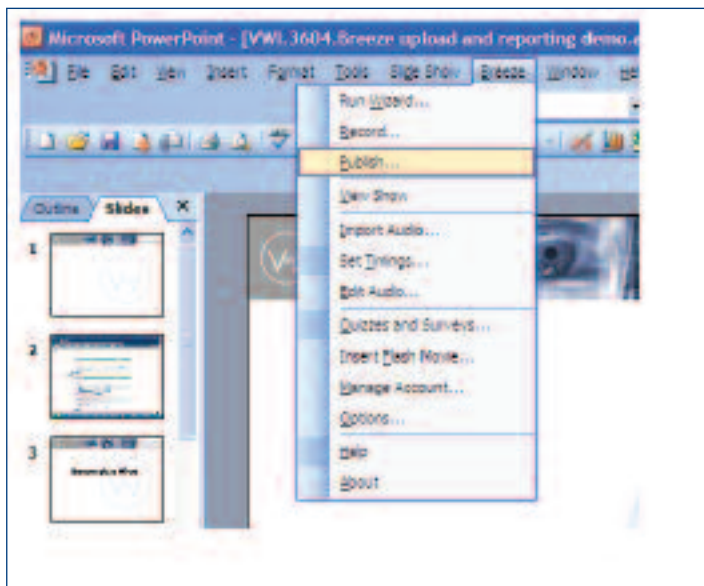
aren't really any other ways". In fact we increasingly email PowerPoint files to each other, or look at slide shows on the 'net. Breeze really is a breeze to use (sorry!). In the enhanced PowerPoint package, a drop down menu opens the Record Mode, and with a microphone into the PC you can just speak your lines. When you click next slide, you speak again and so on. Click save and you're done. You can then edit out all the umms, errs, and other things you wish you hadn't said and re-record something useful instead! I had a go myself, and found it really easy to use (so

‘ We think the presenter should be the star ’

all of you will have no trouble at all!). Go see for yourself, by clicking on www.gpbuk.com and following the link on our home page.

It's the applications of this 'sound on visuals' technology

from the web that impresses us most. If you use the web for this, there is an option to monitor how many have looked at the presentation, who has viewed it, and to see which slides they viewed and for how long. There is also an optional feedback question section and things like surveys and FAQs. Just think about it for a moment: Someone who misses the presentation can watch it on the web, and you could know that they did so. They could ask you questions on it. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in accountancy, banking, the law, medicine, academia and many other areas can be done this way, and you the employers would know for sure that the individual really viewed the whole thing, making compliance



importance of which I wrote about in our last newsletter. Thanks by the way to all who replied. The overwhelming view from you was that the words & voice are far more important than the statistics suggest.

Here I want to look at the times when PowerPoint is used not in face-to-face meetings, but in other ways. My first reaction was "Huh? There

in these tougher times much easier. You are only left with one thing to sort out, your voice. Yes, we know you all like the sound of it, but others may beg to differ. Given that it's the only way you can get you across well, it had better be good. See our articles on voice analysis and coaching for more on that....



Can You Staircase Your Notes?



Alastair Grant

The distinguished speaker addressed a select lunch group of senior businessmen. Chatham House rules were in force and the topical subject was about affairs in the Middle East.

He made six points, some simple and some complex. In his hand he had, in A5 format, about five pages of notes. He referred to them frequently yet engaged us well with eye contact as key points were made. He had ten minutes to speak. The conclusion came on time in the ninth minute. Nothing remarkable about this. Yet a challenge we continuously meet is to coach people to use notes effectively.

It's easy enough; write notes and then follow them. So what's the fuss? The thing is there is a skill in writing notes. It's difficult to get them properly organised in one go, so we recommend a two-stage approach. Start by writing down ideas and phrases in a loose format. Then rewrite them in a proper sequence. The information must be sufficient to be unambiguous. That depends on how well you know the subject and your discipline in sticking to the point. One piece of advice that we find is popular is the concept of 'staircase notes'. This means laying out each section of notes indenting each line more than the one above. Here is an example of detailed staircase notes based on the recent furore surrounding the UK bill to ban fox hunting.

Bill to Ban fox hunting
Yesterday – bill – H of C – passed – effective in 18 months
Result – riots in P Square – men with bloody faces – mayhem
In the House – men in white coats – security breach

Why so much anger – Back benchers – emotional cause

Two reasons

Class issue Workers V toffs?

Cruelty to animals – foxes

Either way – huge amount of time spent

Issues – pensions – backburner

90% couldn't care less about foxes

But implications – majority in H of C yet minority in country

Impact on other sports – shooting – fishing

That would be serious!

By staircasing the notes the eye can easily see the start of each new topic, but more importantly the presenter can see where each idea should end. So often presenters use their notes to spark off an idea but then largely ignore them, relying instead on their memory bank to maintain the flow of information. Realising that it is time to move on they slow down, hesitate, falter as they direct their energy to create the new idea. Get this right and the umms and arghs are eliminated and replaced by crisp termination.

Our speaker, an acknowledged expert in his subject area with a vast knowledge at his disposal, spoke passionately, crisply and memorably. No waffle; no excess detail.

Without his notes I am sure he would have been competent but I doubt if he would have covered the six points with such clarity and precision in the time allowed.

Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting is a respected adviser. We enhance the performance of businesses, helping clients to excel in the use of the spoken word, improving the performance of individuals and teams. Over the long term our work improves the way a firm does business.

We coach and advise individuals to perform at their best in the toughest situations including: Presentations, New Business Pitches, Business Development, Negotiating, Media Interviews and Telephone Calls.

Our clients' needs are the only focus of our work; we listen to them and closely tailor our response to deliver first class coaching and advice. Through our own innovative culture we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as Voice Analysis, Prospect Relationship Management (PRM) and the GPB Virtual Classroom.

Advanced Presentation Skills

(through Capita Learning & Development)

This senior level workshop is designed to help participants improve their style and method of presentation. This is a two-day course followed by an on-line 'Virtual Refresher'.

2004: Oct 28-29, Nov 22-23

Open Course

This course is a good opportunity for individuals who need coaching and would benefit from being in a group with people outside their organisation.

Please call us on 020 7831 1000 for further information or to book someone on a course.