



Kairos

seize the moment

Speechwriting for diplomacy

Training and coaching

Alan Barker

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Kairos is a specialist training consultancy. We train and coach communication skills, with a particular emphasis on the effective use of language.

Our work covers:

- writing skills
- meeting skills
- presentation skills
- persuasion and influencing

We are affiliated to the UK Speechwriters' Guild and the European Speechwriter Network.

Find us at:

www.kairostraining.co.uk



Kairos Training Limited

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Introduction

Speechwriting is a core diplomatic skill.

Speeches have a critical role to play in inducing cooperation. They establish policy positions, influence perceptions and help to build lasting relationships. The impact of a powerful speech can endure for years.

Speechwriting is often seen as a 'dark art'. Why do some speeches succeed and others fall flat? How to avoid dull platitudes? How to say something meaningful and memorable?

Above all: how to keep the audience's attention?

We come to speechwriting by many routes. Most of us learn on the job: working out by trial and (sometimes embarrassing) error what works and what doesn't. But writing speeches need not be a hit-and-miss occupation. We can formulate a method that will build on our experience, save us time and dramatically improve the quality of our speeches.

Our seminars and coaching programmes help you to:

- formulate striking key messages;
- structure a speech as an engaging performance;
- use rhetorical devices to give your language flair; and
- make your ideas more memorable.

We can even show you how to write speeches that will actually help the speaker speak more effectively.

We explore the pleasures and perils of speechwriting: how to manage speakers in the context of political and diplomatic realities. With our help, you can survive as a speechwriter with your professionalism and self-esteem intact.

1

What makes a great speech?

We should be ambitious for our speeches.

Whether written for ourselves, an ambassador or a senior minister, a successful diplomatic speech converts speech into action. It defines and clarifies a key issue, channelling the audience's thoughts and feelings into new territory, persuading them how to see, feel, and act.

A successful speech speaks directly to its audience.

It binds its audience into a community of thought and feeling. It uses inclusive and unifying language to establish common values and aspirations. It appeals to the audience's better instincts and their intelligence. It touches their sympathy and humanity. Great speeches help us to know ourselves a little better, and to know how we belong to our communities: local, political, economic, spiritual, and human.

At its best, a speech can ennoble and enrich us.

A successful speech responds to the moment.

Bad speeches address a prefabricated agenda. Successful speeches address the needs of the moment. They reflect the circumstances in which the audience is meeting, and seek to change them.

A successful speech is simple.

It has a simple message, expressed in simple language. The message is not just simple; it is *memorably* simple.

A successful speech is bold.

It's easy for diplomatic speeches to say more or less nothing: to wrap up an idea in equivocation and meaningless clichés. A successful diplomatic speech neither overstates nor provokes; it states its case with respect and conviction.

A successful speech is persuasive.

Every speech is an act of persuasion. Audiences don't want complex explanations; they want to be convinced that

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Delivering a memorable speech is saying the right thing, at just the right time, and in the right place.

[Max Atkinson]

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Our approach

Kairos programmes are intensely practical and interactive. We use four pedagogic methods.



- Delivery of learning material using trainer input and group conversation: both didactic and Socratic methods.



- Written support materials, usually in the form of a comprehensive workbook containing examples of speeches, detailed discussion of all learning points, exhaustive references and links to other materials.



- Analysis of speeches from different speakers and events, both as printed texts and on video.



- Practical work applying topics, tools and techniques learned, with direct feedback and coaching from the tutor.

Most importantly, you will plan, draft and edit your own speeches, which are then delivered and critiqued.

We draw on an ever-expanding archive of speeches to illustrate the key learning points on our programmes. We take care to choose examples that are relevant to the participants on each programme, wherever possible.

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Guiding principles

Our approach is founded on the body of knowledge, theory and practice known as rhetoric.

Rhetoric is the study of effective speaking. And the art of persuasion. And many other things.

Rhetoric – in the European tradition – has its roots in Ancient Greece. The heroes of Homer’s epics use the skills of rhetoric. Later, Aristotle and Isocrates began the long process of creating a system to teach rhetoric.

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The true orator is a good man, speaking well.

[Quintilian]

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In the Roman period, Cicero was perhaps the most famous of all orators and studied rhetoric in great depth. Quintilian, a Spanish Roman, wrote a massive manual called *The Institutes of Oratory*, which became hugely influential in the Renaissance.

Rhetoric as a taught system survived into the nineteenth century. Today, few students know much, if anything, of rhetoric, although it has begun to re-emerge as a subject in a number of universities – principally in the United States.

Rhetoric currently has a poor reputation. Many regard it as superficial or even deceitful: we talk of ‘mere’ rhetoric, or of ‘empty’ rhetoric. Why are we so suspicious of this body of knowledge? Because it shows us *how* to influence our audience effectively; it’s not concerned with *why* we wish to do so. Every speechmaker is responsible for their own objectives.

The truth is that rhetoric is unavoidable. We never use language just to inform; we always use it to manipulate the thoughts and feelings of others: to cajole and seduce, to impress and to inspire, to comfort and to persuade.

And that’s why rhetoric matters for diplomats. Kenneth Burke, a great 20th century rhetorician, defined rhetoric as:

the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.

In another word: diplomacy.

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Outline programme

We can design our programmes to meet the needs of your organisation or participating group. A typical training programme will usually look like this.

The challenges of speechwriting

Rhetoric: what it is and why it matters

- The five canons of rhetoric
- Responding to the *kairos*

Three key planning questions

- Analysing the audience
- Defining the objective of the speech
- Formulating a message

Three types of speech (and how they work)

- Purposes
- Goals
- Strategies

Three modes of appeal (and how to use them)

Six elements of a compelling speech

- (Join the programme to discover what they are!)

Constructing a speech

- The classical model
- Building pyramids
- Modern structural models

Writing for speaking (and why it's not like writing for reading)

- Sentence structure and sequencing
- Making the text more dynamic
- The language of diplomatic speeches

Tropes and schemes (what they are and why they work)

Participants engage in practical exercises and analysis at all stages.

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People are more apt to pay attention and more apt to remember something that you write, or a speech that you deliver, if it tells a story.

[Jon Favreau]

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Alan Barker



I'm MD of Kairos Training Limited. I've been a specialist trainer and coach since 1990. Before that, I was a professional actor, working in theatre, radio and television. I hold an MA in English from the University of Cambridge

I regularly run speechwriting training for the UK Speechwriters' Guild and the European Speechwriter Network. I run a module on speechwriting for the trainee diplomat scheme at the Korea National Diplomatic Academy. I have trained speechwriting at the European Commission. I train and coach speechwriting and associated skills at a wide range of organisations, including the London Assembly, the Natural History Museum, and Unison.

Find out more about me by visiting my website:

www.kairostraining.co.uk

I also write books. My most recent publications are:

[Improve Your Communication Skills](#) (Kogan Page)

[How to Manage Meetings](#) (Kogan Page)

[How to Solve Almost Any Problem](#) (Pearson)

My blog is here:

http://justwriteonline.typepad.com/distributed_intelligence/

You'll find my latest thoughts on various subjects, a live CV, and a couple of videos of me training.