



*From Left: George W. Bush, J.F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King*

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## The Power of Speech!

***On 20th September 2001 most of us heard at least some of President George W. Bush's speech to congress. It was delivered 9 days after the horrific terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre. Speeches play a huge role in making history. We remember the words of leaders decades afterwards. Speeches can unite people in a common cause. They can inspire vision, and call entire nations to arms.***

### George Bush vs Al Gore

Bush was previously criticised for bumbling his way through speeches. But this landmark speech was hailed by commentators as the best given by a US president. So regardless of whether or not you agree with his foreign policies, let's look at this speech in isolation. The interesting thing is that the structure bears similar hallmarks to other historic addresses. During the elections prior, Gore was viewed as an intelligent polished presenter. But he failed to allow for applause when making monumental statements, diluting the effect. Bush may have a poor reputation as a presenter, but he certainly rose to the occasion in response to the crisis in a presidential manner – or at least his speech writers did. His latest speech was interrupted 30 times by applause, including 24 standing ovations. He successfully conveyed a deep seated belief in his cause. He appeared strong, resolute, and defiant, components we look for in presentations. People need to believe. So when confronted with a presenter who is convincing, they tend to buy it - and they bought Bush.

### Presentation Techniques Used

CNN's Jeff Greenfield commented that Bush's speech was "iron clad" due to the tough talk, contrasted with "tenderness" in connection with fear of uncertainty. For example, "Every nation in every region now has a decision to

make: Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists". And "Americans are asking, 'What is expected of us?' I ask you to live your lives and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight. And I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat."

Bush also made effective use of analogies. For example, "Al Qaeda is to terror what the Mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money. Its goal is remaking the world and imposing its radical beliefs on people everywhere". He later likened Al Qaeda to fascism, Nazism and totalitarianism.

Of all the tactics used, alliteration links Bush's speech to JF Kennedy, Martin Luther King and others. For example with the word, "*fight*" he said, "This is not, however, just America's *fight*. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's *fight*. This is civilisation's *fight*. This is the *fight* of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom". Here is another example using the words, "*we will*": "*We will* rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. *We will* not tire. *We will* not falter and *we will* not fail" - shades of Churchill's, "*We will* fight them on the beaches".

Kennedy's immortal "'Ich bin ein Berliner" speech delivered in front of the infamous Berlin Wall was similarly structured: "There are many people in the world who really don't understand ... what is the great issue between the free world and the Communist world. *Let them come to Berlin*. There are some who say that communism is the wave of the future. *Let them come to Berlin*. And there are some who say in Europe and elsewhere we can work with the Communists. *Let them come to Berlin*. And there are even a few who say that it is true that communism is an evil system, but it permits us to make economic progress. *Lass' sie nach Berlin kommen. Let them come to Berlin*." The words in German are a rapport building technique that drove his Berlin audience wild in appreciation. Likewise, King's, "I Have A Dream" speech consisted of repetition of the title and, "Let freedom ring".

And when we heard Bush's statement, "Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done", we are reminded of the structure used by Kennedy, "... ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country".

## **Business Presentations**

Can such eloquent tactics be used in business presentations? Yes. For example, repeated use of the words, "*No other company*" might sound like this: "It is a fact that *no other company* invests as much on R & D. *No other company* operates in this many countries. *No other company* has a network that even comes close to our coverage on this entire planet."

Presentation skills are increasingly important in business. There are more committee based decisions requiring us to stand in front of entire groups of people when selling ideas. The above shows techniques can be learned. Such skills can set us apart, even where selling of commodities is involved.

The power of speech is used to sway entire nations. And it is also effectively used to sway commercial decisions every day.

*For comprehensive training on this subject, ask about, "Power Presentations", a 2 day advanced programme by Advantage. Included is a study of the structure of famous speeches.*