

Do you remember standing in front of an audience — palms sweating, heart racing, feeling your breath leave you? Maybe that is not your story. What about having a lot of ideas that you wanted to convey, but when you began to speak the words were jumbled? The message was lost on your intended audience and the opportunity was lost. Have you ever been in the audience of a really bad speech? A cringe-worthy toast? A persuasive speech that just did not hit the mark?

It is often observed that the only fear greater than public speaking is death. The thought of public speaking and death causes anxiety, stress, and a flood of negative emotions. This text can help ease the anxiety and stress of public speaking and help address other issues that will positively impact your views and understanding of public speaking, as well as frameworks for solid delivery and message understanding in a multitude of public-speaking situations.

The basic understanding of public speaking is problematic. It does not encompass all the connected pieces that can help someone be successful. More than just speaking, public speaking is understanding and managing anxiety and fears, positioning the purpose, building the framework, and providing the support beams of organizational structure; securing the message with research, ethics, and accountability; and using breath and non-verbals with all the other components to transport the speaker to success.

Public speaking and general communication outside of languages is not usually taught in schools. I began "public speaking" in a one-room church in North Little Rock, Arkansas, where every year I would deliver my *Easter Speech*. Every Sunday, I saw my grandmother report on church announcements and the preacher deliver a moving sermon selection based on the Bible. There were examples and practical experience related to public speaking. In junior high school (or middle school, for some of you), I participated in various public-speaking extracurricular activities. I entered, and won quite a few, competitions where I did plays and poetry in Spanish. Speech and debate competitions also included informative and extemporaneous readings where I found a lot of success. The culmination of my high school career was as the graduation speaker for my class.

My journey at Purdue University began in management, where I ultimately switched lanes to complete a degree in Organizational Communication with double minors in management and supervision. Communication was the road to success because of my exposure facilitating conference seminars on leadership, diversity, and other business topics; my ability to excel in sales (retail and automotive); and how I drove my own career by articulating my value (public speaking in interviews and elevator pitches). You can now find me keynoting

major conferences in STEM and other industries; facilitating diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism sessions; developing and leading learning and development divisions for large organizations; and as an adjunct professor at one of the most respected universities in the United States.

This toolbox/text helps each individual to understand what tools to use and when they are appropriate. We communicate every day in hundreds of ways: our lives can be better and our life journeys more successful with intentional work on our communication and, specifically, public speaking. *Public Speaking: Building a Bridge to Success* has put public speaking in context for the speaker who wants to overcome anxiety, learn the frameworks, and use the tools to build their own bridge to success. Success takes intentional work and accountability. The guarantee is that you are provided with the tools and if you put in the work, you will be successful. It is proven. Students, before the end of class, have reported being able to secure jobs, being better prepared for other class presentations, and boosting their own business ventures because of a better foundation in public speaking. The anonymous comments submitted also included helping students to overcome anxiety and having fun.

This is the text that will shift the future of public speaking. It is meant as a catalyst to transport students to a holistic view of public speaking and the vehicle that will drive them to further success. Public speaking is the one competency that is needed in 95% of all jobs — traditional employment and entrepreneurship. It is not a soft skill; it is a foundational skill. I invite you to start building the future.