HOW IDEAS SURVIVE

PATRICK WINSTON'S HOW TO SPEAK · A WORKING SHEET

01 HOW TO START

- ☐ ~~**A joke**~~ — The room is still putting laptops away and has not adjusted to your voice. It falls flat, and you have spent your first impression.
- ☐ **An empowerment promise** — What they will be able to do at the end that they cannot do now. Not a topic — a topic asks for an hour on faith.

> *"At the end of this hour you will know things about X you don't know now, and one of them will make a difference."*

02 FOUR SAMPLES

Four habits running the whole time. Each repairs a specific way an audience loses the thread.

- ☐ **Cycle** — Go round the subject, again, and again. About a fifth of the room is fogged out at any moment — and it is a different fifth each time.
- ☐ **Build a fence** — Say what the idea is *not*, so it is not filed under the nearest thing they already know. "Mine may look like theirs, except theirs is exponential."
- ☐ **Verbal punctuation** — Number things. Restate the outline. Seams let a drifting listener find where everyone else is.
- ☐ **Ask a question** — Wait **seven seconds**. Not too obvious (embarrassing to answer), not too hard (nothing to say).

03 TIME & PLACE

- ☐ **11 a.m.** — Awake, not post-meal, not worn down.
- ☐ **Well lit** — Dim light says sleep. Keep them full up.
- ☐ **Cased** — Stand in the room beforehand.
- ☐ **Populated** — More than half full. Needn't be packed.

> *To the AV desk: "Lights full up." — "But the slides read better dark." — "It is extremely hard to see slides through closed eyelids."*

04 BOARDS & PROPS

A board is for **informing**. Slides are for **exposing**. Teaching is the first job; a conference talk is the second.

- ☐ **Graphic** — You can draw, not only list.
- ☐ **Speed** — A hand writes at about the rate a room absorbs. Slides go far faster than anyone can follow.
- ☐ **A target** — It gives your hands somewhere to be — not in your pockets, not behind your back.
- ☐ **Props** — A physical demonstration is remembered when the argument is not. Use one thing, and let it carry weight.

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SLIDES, JOB TALKS, STOPPING

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05 TEN SLIDE CRIMES

01	**Too many words**	They read faster than you speak, so the slide wins and you become the distraction.
02	**Reading them aloud**	People know how to read. Remove the text and you are no longer licensed to say it.
03	**Standing away**	Speaker one side, screen the other, and the room watches a tennis match.
04	**Background junk**	Template furniture carries no information. Delete first.
05	**Logos**	Nobody needs telling forty times whose deck it is.
06	**A title on each**	Say it instead. Buys attention back for you.
07	**Bullets**	Once the words are few, the bullets do nothing.
08	**Type under 40pt**	Not legibility — a small size is what lets you fit too many words on.
09	**Laser pointer**	You must turn your head, and eye contact is gone. Use a numbered arrow.
10	**Too heavy**	Print the deck, lay it on a table. You will see there is no air in it.

> *One exception, once per talk: a slide so overwhelming that failing to understand it is the point.*

06 JOB TALKS

☐	**Five minutes**	That is how long you have to establish **vision** and that you have **done something**. Both, or you have lost.
☐	**Vision**	A problem somebody cares about, plus something new in your approach to it.
☐	**Done something**	List the steps needed to get there. You need not have finished them — you must be able to name them.
☐	**Rehearse to strangers**	People who know your work hallucinate material that is not there. That includes your supervisor.

07 WINSTON'S STAR — WORK THAT GETS REMEMBERED

SYMBOL	SLOGAN	SURPRISE	SALIENT	STORY
Something to point at	A handle, in a phrase	Contradicts the assumption	Sticks out — not "important"	How, why, what it cost

08 HOW TO STOP

☐	**Final slide**	**Contributions.** Not Conclusions (nobody cares), not Questions? (never written down), not The End, not a wall of collaborators — credit those on slide one.
☐	**Final words**	A joke works here, where it failed at the start. So does a benediction.
☐	~~**Thank you**~~	A weak move as the last thing you say: it casts the hour as a favour the room did you. Once applause starts, mouth it freely.
☐	**Salute them**	Say something true about what it was worth to be in that room, with those people.

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