



3 Strategies to Persuade Any Audience

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Say you're in a packed courtroom full of eager listeners.

The case is a serious one involving murder. In order to prove that the defendant is guilty, the prosecutor calls to the stand the pathologist who did the autopsy. The doctor stands in front of the jury and gives the raw facts, the medical details of the incident. Then, the defense attorney rises and turns to the jurors and pleads the case against his client. He tells of his defendant's life, of his record as a family man and an outstanding member of the community. He talks about the man's personality and lifestyle with passion and gusto.

Now, who would be more convincing to you, the doctor or the lawyer?

The doctor appeals to logic, while the lawyer appeals to emotion. The people in the courtroom as well as the jurors have been touched and convinced that this man is like them, possibly better than most people, even. Now, we're not going to try and solve this case, but strictly based on the styles of the two, we can clearly see that the lawyer is more of a storyteller, while the doctor is your average presenter.

Who do you think truly knows how to persuade the audience?

A speech can be a powerful tool for many reasons. In many cases, speeches are simply used as a way of telling a story or to deliver a message. In this sense, if the speaker isn't careful, it's easy to make the speech feel one directional. However, when a speaker gives a speech of persuasion they intend to enact a response in the audience, or 'receiver of the message', creating multiple channels of communication.

These types of speeches can range anywhere from a political debate, to prosecuting a criminal, to a simple sales pitch. The common goal in persuasive speeches is to influence the audience's view on a certain subject—whether that means changing their opinion completely or simply strengthening an already existing view.

While it takes skill and practice to be a great persuasive speaker, anyone can do it. It's all about understanding your role as a speaker, knowing the audience you're talking to, and appealing to your audience's hearts and minds. In order to best accomplish this, the world's best speakers use a variety of arguments and strategies, most of which can be summed up into the three rhetorical appeals: ethos, logos, and pathos. When used effectively, these three appeals can be powerful tools for achieving a speaker's persuasive goal.

Ethos (Ethical Appeal)

Persuading the audience by using the character/credibility of the speaker.

You only have 60 seconds to capture your audience's attention, so it is crucial that you engage your audience immediately when giving a speech. But in a persuasive speech, it's not simply enough to capture your audience's attention; the speaker must also quickly establish their credibility. This can be done using the ethical appeal known as 'ethos'.

Ethos is related to the persona or reputation associated with the speaker. This persona is constructed based on the credentials and reliability of a speaker, and can often be established prior to a speech or presentation in situations where the speaker is widely known to the audience. Basically, ethos is what signifies to the audience that the speaker knows what they're talking about.

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Here are 3 easy ways for a speaker to establish a favorable ethos:

- 1. In ethos, the main thing a speaker needs to do is convince the audience that they know what they're talking about.** After all, how are you going to sell someone a product you know nothing about? This includes knowing both sides of an argument and presenting each of them accurately. This helps assure the audience that you've at least done your research on the subject. A simple way to do this can be humbly talking about a credible achievement that you have done that is considered impressive for the audience.
- 2. Also, in order to use this strategy effectively, it's important for a speaker to understand the audience to which they'll be speaking.** Your primary contact (client, event organizer, host, etc.) can be one of your best resources for audience information. But use other resources as well. Look up past periodicals geared toward the audience or event, interview members of the past or current audience, or ask previous speakers about their experience with the audience. By having this background knowledge the speaker can research their subject matter, and then tailor their message in a way that resonates with that specific audience. Questions to ask yourself on understanding your audience are:

- What does the audience expect from me?
- What are the three main takeaways my audience would find important?
- If applicable, what medium (presentation tool) am I going to use to best reach my audience?
- What do I want my listeners to do with the information I give them?
- What does my audience already know about the topic?
- What are possible questions or objections my topic may raise?
- Is there technical information that may confuse my audience?
- Am I careful not to offend anybody when speaking about controversial issues such as religion, race, or politics?
- If speaking to a foreign audience, am I sure that none of my material can be considered offensive?

3. Citing credible sources is also a must. For example, if you were trying to persuade your audience to use a certain pharmaceutical product, and you yourself were not a doctor or pharmacist, you might reference or quote known physicians. An audience can forgive the fact that you're not a certified expert on the subject that you're presenting, but they may not forgive you for not making an effort to provide an expert's opinion. Make sure though that who you quote is well known to your audience. If the person isn't well known, you can also cite their achievements.

Citing credible sources is also a good example of another rhetorical appeal known as logos.

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Logos (Logical Appeal)

Persuading the audience by using reason to justify the speaker's argument.

Have you ever found yourself arguing with a friend over something you knew to be true but just couldn't find a way to convince them to believe you? Logos may have been a helpful strategy to use in such a situation. Logos is the logical appeal based largely in facts or logic and attempts to appeal to a person's ability to reason.

Every presentation is essentially considered an argument. Whether it's for money, support, or reshaping an audience's belief, if you're not arguing for something, why are you speaking? No one wants to just hear facts that they already know. That's a waste of time. An audience wants to hear a speaker that will shape, challenge, or refine the crowd's belief. With logos, this requires factual arguments against their current beliefs. Utilizing logos can help you increase your power of persuasion, as the audience believes you have the knowledge to lead them.

Here are 3 easy ways of understanding the strategy of the logical appeal, logos, effectively:

- 1. The strategy behind logos is not to just to spit out a fact or number and have that be your argument, but rather to use factual or agreed upon information to provide a foundation for your argument.** By starting off with a statement that both audience and speaker can agree upon, this provides an easier hill to climb over. As the audience now knows you understand their current viewpoint, they can be more open to listening to your argument. Starting with a fact they don't agree upon requires you to back that fact up with more information.
- 2. This strategy follows an “if” “then” logic—“if” this is true “then” would this not also be true?** This strategy uses a fact or event that can be compared to the current subject to prove its logic. If you are able to simplify your argument to where it's easily understood, your “if” “then” statement will be more clear.
- 3. Logos gives the audience a tangible comparison and is especially useful because it's extremely difficult to argue with sound logic.** It's hard to argue with the facts. Just make sure you can back up your facts and cite your sources when needed.

However, there are always those individuals who require a completely different approach in order to be persuaded, maybe one with a more personal touch. This is where the emotional appeal known as pathos might be particularly useful.

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Pathos (Emotional Appeal)

Persuading the audience by appealing to their emotions

Pathos appeals to the audience in a way that relies on their emotional or personal connection to the subject matter.

There are several ways a speaker can utilize this strategy, some more obvious than others.

Here are four easy ways a speaker can use the emotional appeal, pathos, effectively:

- 1. In these situations, it is common for visuals to depict scenes that are meant to invoke a strong emotional response in viewers.** Some of the more obvious examples include speeches or presentations that use visual aids such as images or videos. For example, an image of an otter covered in oil may be shown to residents along the Gulf Coast to invoke guilt or anger toward big oil companies.
- 2. The same response could be achieved through storytelling.** However, visuals are especially useful with a less confident speaker or a more emotionally vulnerable audience.

Conveying to the audience a ‘Utopian’ vision—of what life could be like compared to how it actually is—can be an useful tool for invoking an emotional response in an audience.

With a volatile factor like emotion, it is important to know when to use an emotional appeal and when not to. In some instances, such a direct manipulation of an audience’s emotions can get in the way of the issues or subject being discussed. In these situations it may be best to avoid using emotional appeals, or approach it in a way that isn’t as obvious or intrusive.

- 4. A common way of using this strategy in a more subtle way is by attempting to connect with the audience on a personal level.** This technique could also fall into the category of an ethical appeal. Speakers often use this strategy in situations where there is an obvious divide between speaker and audience, such as age, ethnicity, or financial status. In these situations, it’s important for the speaker to address these issues in a way that removes the stigma and puts the two sides on an even playing field. If used effectively, this strategy can create a connection between the two sides in which the audience feels that their beliefs and values are being considered and therefore become emotionally involved.

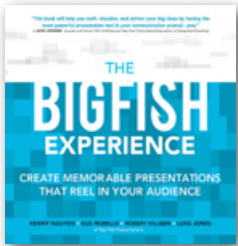
Ultimately, even though speeches of persuasion are so common, they are often difficult to deliver successfully, especially using all three strategies. When used effectively these appeals can serve as powerful tools for achieving the goal of persuasion.

The hard part is that by executing all three strategies a speaker must know the audience, know the subject, and know precisely when to use emotion vs. logic. This comes only through routine practice of public speaking and relentless learning of your topic.

The world's best speakers understand this and practice their power of persuasion regularly.

And by reading this, now you know understand it too. **So what are you waiting for? Go build your dream persuasive speech that can move mountains. 🚀**

Info



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS | **Kenny Nguyen** is the founder and CEO of Big Fish Presentations. He was named the 2012 CEO Student Entrepreneur of the Year by Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO). **Gus Murillo** is the president and COO of Big Fish Presentations. He has been recognized as a Kairos50 member and awarded for this achievement at the New York Stock Exchange. **Robert Killeen** is the lead copywriter at Big Fish Presentations. **Luke Jones** was the first copywriter at Big Fish Presentations. He is now an advertising associate at Deveney.

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