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Stressing a Developmental Approach Toward Persuasion in Interscholastic Forensics

Jim Schnell

A variety of models exist for teaching persuasive speaking to beginning speakers. A common shortcoming of models is that they require additional instruction to ensure student understanding. The Developmental Speech Sequence Model (DSSM) is an approach that can be applied effectively with beginning forensics competitors.

The 10-point model described in this report is detailed but it also allows the speaker degrees of creative freedom. Forensics coaches can modify use of this model depending on the experience and skill level of the beginning competitor, allowing for a more customized approach that can benefit the student. Ten points within three sections comprise the DSSM: introduction, body, and conclusion.

Justification for this approach is also recognized via the evolution of the information age and corresponding new communication technologies. These new communication technologies expand the forms and formats for expression and message creation. The benefits of this type of developmental approach establish primary points the speaker can use as guideposts. As current and future generations of students advance into forensics competition, they will benefit from these types of developmental themes.

Introduction

1. Opening (to orient the audience with the speaker)
2. Objective of Speech (to clarify the speaker's purpose)
3. Overview of Main Ideas (to orient the audience with the speaker's perspective on his/her purpose)

Body

1. Statement of Problem (The specific problem the speaker is trying to persuade the audience to overcome. State why the audience should be interested in the topic.)
2. Statement of Solution (The solution to the problem that the speaker is trying to persuade the audience to adopt.)
3. Statement of Rationale (Why the intended solution is the most logical answer to the problem.)
4. Statement of Implementation (How the intended solution can be put into effect. What action the audience needs to take.)

Conclusion

1. Review of Main Ideas (to summarize the speaker's perspective on his/her purpose)

2. Restatement of Objective (to ensure clarification and relevance of speaker purpose)
3. Closing (to acknowledge the audience's time and interest)

Use of the DSSM can best be exemplified through application of the model with an actual topic. The following three paragraphs highlight the DSSM through a persuasive presentation on teeth flossing. This topic was selected from a survey of mid-western forensics coaches regarding health care topics.

Introduction

1. Opening—"Good afternoon, my name is Mary Anne Smith..."
2. Objective of Speech—"Today I would like to talk to you about the need for teeth flossing..."
3. Overview—"Much of my presentation will describe findings from the American Dental Association [ADA] that substantiate the benefits of dental flossing..."

Body

1. Statement of Problem—"The ADA reports 67% of all Americans will suffer from severe dental decay before the age of 70. Forty-eight percent of this group will have brushed regularly but still been unable to effectively combat tooth decay. Could you be in this one-third of our population?"
2. Statement of Solution—"I am moved to speak to you about this topic today because the ADA reports a vast majority of Americans suffering from severe tooth decay could avoid this painful situation simply by flossing their teeth daily..."
3. Statement of Rationale—"Although brushing with toothpaste is helpful and makes your mouth fresh, it is flossing with dental floss that removes food and plaque from between teeth and gums where tooth decay begins and does most damage..."
4. Statement of Implementation—"You can begin to effectively fight tooth decay today. You can do it in five minutes in your home and it will cost about \$1.50. Merely visit your local pharmacy, purchase a package of dental floss, and ask your pharmacist for flossing instructions. ADA flossing instructions are readily available from your pharmacy or local dentist office..."

Conclusion

1. Review—"Again, it is flossing that effectively fights tooth decay, not merely brushing..."
2. Restatement of Objective—"Your first step towards effective oral hygiene is less time consuming than washing your hair. This is not merely opinion. It is scientific fact."

3. Closing—"Awareness about this topic provided me with one simple way I can help keep my life time health care costs down. I hope our time together today has convinced you..."

The DSSM approach parallels the well-known Motivated Sequence developed by Alan Monroe (Ehninger, Gronbeck, McKerrow, & Monroe, 1986, pp. 153-155). An application of the DSSM posits the topic can be stated as a problem and this problem can be followed with a solution to the problem. Development of the solution outlines the intended results that can be realized. The DSSM, though somewhat similar to the Motivated Sequence, provides further elaboration in the areas of problem definition and solution implementation. This is not to suggest that a problem/solution type of development is the only approach that can be used for persuasive speaking in forensics competition.

Monroe describes the basic points of the Motivated Sequence in his original description of this model (Monroe, 1935, pp. vii-x). He outlines five steps: Attention, Need, Satisfaction, Visualization, and Action. The objective of the Attention Step is to gain and maintain the attention of the audience with a subtopic that is related to your primary topic. The Need Step poses a need (or reason) for the audience to be interested in your presentation. The Satisfaction Step provides an answer to the need. The Visualization Step describes results that can be attained by using the Satisfaction Step. The Action Step instructs what action needs to be taken to satisfy the established need. Both the Motivated Sequence and DSSM are appropriate in interscholastic forensics competition.

However, the DSSM's step-by-step approach can be especially helpful for the beginning competitor because of the additional direction. Forensics judging criteria can vary significantly and this can be confusing for the new competitor. When evaluating speeches using the DSSM, evaluation can be based on the DSSM main ideas. Other evaluation criteria can include: 1) assigned time frame; 2) delivery and adaptation to audience; 3) verbal and nonverbal factors; and, 4) ability to persuade to action. Thus, the beginning competitor can learn basic evaluation considerations and build from these as his/her skills become more sophisticated.

Persuasive speaking skills are obviously useful in forensics competition, the classroom, business, and the professions. The importance of persuasive speaking is emphasized from a number of perspectives. The following perspectives serve to clarify the role of persuasive speaking in contrast with informational speaking. Miller, Burgoon, and Burgoon (1984) offer a complete summary of attitude change research that describes the role of persuasive appeals. Basic research on latitudes of acceptance and rejection is developed by Sherif, Sherif, and Nenbergall (1965). Liska (1978, pp. 85-92) outlines the role of credibility and how it varies from situation to situation and topic to topic. These perspectives help provide a foundation for contemporary persuasive speaking and they highlight relevant concerns. The DSSM clearly builds on these concerns.

Response to the DSSM has been positive. The beginning forensics competitor benefits from DSSM usage as he/she has a concrete understanding of process. Speakers deliver with increased confidence as they are fully aware of what

is expected of them (but not at the expense of creativity). As new speakers improve their persuasive skills they have a firm theoretical foundation from which to build and refer as needed.

The relevance of the DSSM is especially clear given developments with social interactive media. These new forms of communicative expression alter the interactive landscape that we function within. As such, young public speakers have grown in a period where there has been less structure regarding standard forms of persuasive development. The DSSM provides helpful underpinnings in this regard but not at the expense of innovative, and more spontaneous, expression that is a hallmark of the new communication technologies.

Looking toward the future, this type of framework will continue to benefit the grooming of young public speakers as it has an inherent flexibility that can be adapted to various applications regarding form and content. This type of flexibility will be essential as we experience the evolution of new communication technologies in that new forms of communication will spawn altered forms of logic and premises. Clarity and flexibility will continue to be beneficial.

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