

***"Speak like a CEO is practical, helpful,  
insightful, and comforting."***

**—Rosabeth Moss Kanter,  
author of the national bestseller *Confidence***

# SPEAK LIKE A CEO

**SECRETS FOR COMMANDING  
ATTENTION AND GETTING RESULTS**

**SUZANNE BATES**

**TOP CEO CONSULTANT AND  
AWARD-WINNING TELEVISION ANCHOR**

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# SPEAK LIKE A CEO

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江苏工业学院图书馆  
SECRETS FOR COMMANDING  
ATTENTION AND GETTING RESULTS  
新 书 章

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**SUZANNE BATES**

**McGraw-Hill**

New York Chicago San Francisco Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City  
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## Praise for *Speak like a CEO*

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*“Speak like a CEO is practical, helpful, insightful, and comforting. Suzanne Bates helps leaders (even the most podium-shy) learn how to find their natural and authentic voice. And she does this with an informed understanding of the real everyday work of leaders.”*

—ROSABETH MOSS KANTER, Author of the National Bestseller *Confidence: How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and End*

*“Suzanne Bates’s advice is concise and practical. Communication within your organization and with the media is critical to image and success. This book will help every executive do a better job.”*

—CHRIS HANSEN, Dateline NBC Correspondent

*“Suzanne Bates’s book provides a wealth of usable information in an easy-to-use format that will prove useful and effective for leaders in all sectors: public, private, or not-for-profit. At the end of the day, whether you are the CEO of a company or a government leader, the efficacy of your leadership is dependent on not only the quality of your ideas but your ability to effectively communicate them. Execution depends on energizing and engaging key groups of influencers, and communication that engenders support and enthusiasm is a necessary skill.”*

—JANE SWIFT, Former Governor of Massachusetts

*“It is neither the smartest nor the hardest working CEO who succeeds in business. It is the one who best communicates his or her firm’s vision to customers, vendors, and employees. Speak like a CEO shows you how.”*

—TOM STEMBERG, CEO of Staples

*“Speak like a CEO is a must read for any professional who recognizes the key to success: building relationships. Whether you’re giving a speech, meeting with employees, or networking with potential customers, this book will teach you how to master the art of communication so you can convey your message with warmth, authenticity, and conviction. If you want a big edge over the competition, you need to read this book!”*

—CHERYL RICHARDSON, Author, *Take Time for Your Life*

*“Every CEO needs this step-by-step primer on how to speak authentically. Speak like a CEO shows leaders how to prepare for the unexpected.”*

—VICKI DONLAN, Publisher, *Women’s Business*

*“Must reading for anybody who wants to make a connection—whether it’s through a TV screen, in a boardroom, or on a stage.”*

—MILES O’BRIEN, CNN News Anchor

*“One of the most concise, direct, impactful studies, not only on what it takes to be your best at public speaking, but more importantly, what it takes to lead. It is not a one-time read. In preparing for each new public address, I try to emphasize one or another of Suzanne’s techniques for improving communication. It really works. It can transform the anxiety of public speaking into positive anticipation.”*

—TIMOTHY J. BARBERICH, Chairman and CEO, Sepracor, Inc.

*“All managers will benefit from reading Suzanne Bates’s book Speak like a CEO. Today, with so many competing alternatives, leadership requires being able to communicate well the company’s opportunity and vision. A leader must be constantly recruiting employees, candidates, customers, suppliers, and investors to that vision. The better the leadership—the faster the pace—the more immediate the success.”*

—BENJAMIN NYE, Partner, Bain Capital Ventures

*“In Speak like a CEO, Suzanne Bates points out that the skill set needed to rise within an organization does not usually include the single skill most needed as one rises closer to the top: the ability to communicate. In a book that manages to encourage personalization of style even as it prescribes the steps that need to be taken to become a more effective speaker and presenter, Bates succeeds by showing rather than telling. In doing so, it becomes clear that Speak like a CEO is for any of us who wish to stand up in front of an audience with greater confidence, preparedness, and ability to connect. Clearly it is not just a book for CEOs.”*

—RUSSELL T. ABBOTT, Principal, Treflie Capital Management

*“Suzanne has written a book based on solid research and nailed key concepts regarding communication and leadership in a clear, concise, and entertaining way.”*

—ANNE HAWLEY STEVENS, Founder and Managing Partner, ClearRock, Inc.

*“A practical how-to guide. Reading this book may not make you a CEO, but it should make you sound like one.”*

—CHARLES STEIN, Business Columnist, *Boston Globe*

*“Executive presence, leadership, and style—three great attributes that can easily be achieved by reading this book.”*

—MARY LOU ANDRE, Author, *Ready to Wear: An Expert's Guide to Choosing and Using Your Wardrobe*

*“I was amazed at how accurately this book captures the challenges that CEOs face everyday. Speak like a CEO is insightful, honest, and instructive. It is a must read for people who want to be taken seriously as a public speaker.”*

—PAMELA J. MONTPELIER, President and CEO, Strata Bank

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Bates, Suzanne.

Speak like a CEO : secrets for commanding attention and getting results / Suzanne Bates.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 0-07-145151-X

1. Communication in management. 2. Business presentations. 3. Oral communication. I. Title.

HD50.3 .B38 2005

658.4'52—dc22

2004026461

*To Drew and Meghan*

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7 8 9 10 11 DOC/DOC 0 9 8 7 6

ISBN 0-07-145151-X

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# Preface

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BEING THE TOP PERSON in any organization is a great accomplishment, but it's tough. Today, people expect more than ever of their leaders. Whether you are CEO, president, managing partner, executive director, owner, publisher, editor, king, or commander in chief, people expect more. You work hard and make the most of luck to reach the top. Then you work harder to keep the job.

If you aspire to the top job, you not only have to know your *business*—you have to know how to communicate with everyone else inside and outside the business. The higher you go, and the more visible you are, the more communication counts. You're competing in a global world with *instant* communication. There is no forgiveness for the leader who can't keep up.

My company is in the business of improving executive performance with better communications. I call it "Tuning the Voice of Leadership." This book shares techniques and skills that have helped many executives and professionals do just that.

Once you arrive in the top jobs, you're expected to know what to do. Often we find our clients are surprised. Their early roles have not prepared them for the speaking roles. As you move up the ladder, you don't necessarily get opportunities to do what you need to when you're the boss. You've been promoted for your business skill; now you have to develop a whole new set of competencies.

Why do you need to speak well if you're a leader or if you aspire to be? It's simple: the smartest people aren't necessarily the ones who rise to the top. It's the ones who can communicate well. If you don't learn to speak like a leader, you are in danger of being passed over for your dream job. This book will show you how to develop a personalized plan for mastering the skills you need.

Whether you are the boss or you want to be, this book addresses some of the missing links. You will learn the principles for communicating *like a leader*—the things they don't tell you in college or even on your way up.

## Why I Wrote This Book

When I began coaching executives after twenty years in television news, I was struck by how little formal training leaders had in public speaking. Some had never attended any formal classes or worked with a coach. Some had been through a day or two of group training. Yet, they were expected to speak to large groups, deliver major keynotes, appear at important industry conferences, lead board meetings, talk to news reporters, and manage other high-pressure situations. I realized that there was a need for a book that provides a *sophisticated* approach to speaking well and projecting authentic leadership.

In this book, you will discover some of the secrets that I have discovered during my years in the media and then as an executive coach. The goal of this book is to share ideas that can help you develop a credible, authoritative leadership presence. The ideas and programs should shorten the learning curve and eliminate the pain of trial and error. If you incorporate these ideas and work the programs, it will transform you from a so-so speaker or presenter to a good one.

## Who Should Read This Book?

Even if you have experience making presentations; running meetings; talking to reporters; or participating in panels, conferences, and seminars, you will learn valuable lessons on how to make it in the big leagues of business here. Even professionals in the field—television and radio hosts,

news anchors, and people who make a living at speaking—are lifelong learners when it comes to communication skill. Top businesspeople must invest time every year in improving their communication skills if they want to have an impact as thought leaders in their industries.

## What You Will Learn

The advice in this book goes beyond what you might find in a one-size-fits-all book on public speaking. This is not a standard book on presentation skills—it is a book that emphasizes the communication skills *leaders* must have to succeed. When you finish this book, you will be able to create a personalized plan for self-development and be well on your way to becoming an authentic and credible speaker in front of crowds and cameras.

Through exercises and self-assessments, you'll learn to recognize and develop your own style. You'll find nuts-and-bolts advice on how to improve speeches, presentations, and media interviews in both content and style. Tips and techniques will help you develop your own authentic, natural style and provide you with last-minute help to reduce the preperformance jitters. There's also advice on how to speak in sound bites for TV, radio, or print. You'll find out how to handle tough questions from a pack of reporters, ways to warm up an audience and keep people engaged—plus much more.

Beyond the mechanics of speaking and appearing like a leader, you'll learn how to win the trust of others so that they become willing to listen to your ideas, understand your vision, and execute your strategies. The various chapters feature numerous examples of leaders who speak well and explanations of how they do it so you can adapt it to your own authentic speaking style.

## How to Get the Most out of This Book: You Decide the Best Plan for You

The book includes practical advice, inspiration, and a blueprint for developing your own authentic speaking style. There are several ways to use the book—it's up to you.

- You can read the text all the way through to get an overview of how to speak like a CEO or an authentic leader.
- You can work on one aspect of communication skills over the coming months, especially if the subject is new to you. You may, for example, feel confident giving speeches but not as comfortable handling the press. Whatever you believe is a priority, turn directly to that chapter and begin.
- After you have read the book, you can refer to the end of each of the “situation” chapters in Part 2 for tips to help you prepare for speeches, presentations, meetings, and media interviews. Look for the “Summary” section, with entries listed by the categories “Last-minute tip,” “If you have more time,” and “Plan for ongoing improvement.”
- Finally, you can use this book as a complete coaching guide: read it through, and work the strategies and recommended plans in Part 3 to create your own coaching plan. You may also want to hire a coach; Part 3 includes advice on what to do and how to guarantee your success.

Many people believe that speaking is a “nice-to-have” or “soft” skill that should have little impact on their ability to rise to the top. But on the balance sheet of business, not knowing how to speak is a liability. No one who is serious about leading an organization would ignore a liability. Those who are serious would take note and start doing the things that build the asset side of the balance sheet.

In my experience, leaders really want and need information about how to speak well. While there are many books and courses on public speaking, most of them tend to focus on just the basics of presentation skills. There is absolutely nothing wrong with these books—read them! But if you believe you are beyond the basics, and you want to join the ranks of great leaders who speak well, read on. What you want is not only possible, but it is likely, if you apply what you learn here.

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# Acknowledgments

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MANY FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES have made this book possible. I am deeply grateful for the advice, encouragement, and support of Jenna Furdon, Ken Lizotte, Karen Hansen, Donya Dickerson, Lara Murphy, Mary Glenn, Tara Frier, Margrette Mondillo, Annie Stevens, Chris Storr, Mary Lou Andre, Marcia Abbott, Paula Lyons, Ann Conway, Jim Norman, Janet Patterson, Eleanor Uddo, Vickie Sullivan, Marcia Reynolds, Karen Friedman, Cheryl Richardson, Aleta Koman, Ginger Applegarth, Ginny Rehberg, Kasey Kaufman, Frank Ciota, Lisa Zankman, Margery Myers, Bob Lobel, Vicki Donlan, Kathy Venne, Gayle Sierens, and Mom and Dad.

CEOs and leaders have generously contributed their time and wisdom. I am indebted to Charlie Baker, President and CEO, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care; Judy George, founder and CEO, Domain Home Furnishings; Tom Goemaat, President and CEO, Shawmut Design and Construction; John Hamill, Chairman and CEO, Sovereign Bank of New England; Paul Levy, CEO, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (Harvard); Larry Lucchino, CEO, Boston Red Sox; Phil Lussier, President, Institutional Division, Citistreet; Chris Moore, CEO, Live Planet; Lori Morrisette, VP Human Resources, Citistreet; Ann Murphy, VP, O'Neill Associates; Tom O'Neill, President and CEO, O'Neill Associates; Peter Rollins, Chief Executives Club, Boston College; Dan Wolf, founder, President, and CEO, Cape Air and Nantucket Airlines; and Arnold Zetcher, President and CEO, Talbots.

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# Introduction

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IF YOU'VE EVER HAD a great boss, chances are that boss knew how to communicate well. Leaders who communicate well have a big advantage over those who come to the job with just experience and technical skill. Experience and technical skill are assumed in those who rise to the top. Leaders who communicate well succeed because they can also *articulate* vision, *share* wisdom, and *motivate* others to action.

Leaders have different styles of communicating. There is no one right way. There is no cookie-cutter approach to communicating as a leader. The most successful leaders blend an authentic, unique style with the best techniques and become extremely effective.

Leaders do not succeed when they copy, imitate, or adopt someone else's style. Leaders succeed when they do it their way. People see them as genuine leaders when they are *genuine*. Authenticity inspires trust. Trust creates willingness. Willingness creates successful organizations.

A unique, authentic style is critical to a leader's success. You have to communicate in your unique way. Yes, you have to know the rules of the road to drive the car, or you won't get where you are going. But once you know the rules, you must drive your own car, your way. You must develop your own, authentic voice of leadership. *Speak like a CEO* will help you learn the rules of the road—the secrets of communicating well—and find your unique voice. You will discover how to be you and be a leader.

*Speak like a CEO* isn't going to tell you who to be. You have to figure out who you are. You have to learn the rules of the road *and* find your own authentic voice of leadership if you want to speak like a CEO.

Finding your unique voice is tremendously powerful. It helps you transcend your title, to reach a position of true leadership. Your authentic voice is why you were hired for your job and how you will get people to listen so you can succeed. You, and only you, have been brought to this organization at this time because of your way of doing things. You owe it to yourself and your organization to allow that authentic voice to be heard.

It is a lot easier to be you than to pretend to be someone you are not. A lot of people put on power suits and look the part. There's nothing wrong with a great suit, but an ordinary leader in a great suit is still an ordinary leader—not a person who inspires trust. The real you must emerge and lead in order for your enterprise to succeed.

If you are a leader, or want to be, you owe it to yourself and your organization to communicate well, in your unique authentic style. You cannot be mediocre. You cannot be ordinary or average. A mediocre or average communicator risks being marginalized or deemed irrelevant. A marginalized or irrelevant leader is dangerous to an organization. You have to communicate well, your way, so people believe in you. People must believe in you to be willing to follow.

This is a different kind of book on speaking—it is for CEOs and people who want to be leaders and speak with an authentic voice. You will learn far more than the basics of presentation style or media interviews or leading meetings; you will learn what you need to do to find that unique leadership voice. Whether you are the CEO or *want* to be the CEO someday, you have an opportunity right now, today, to develop and grow one of your greatest assets—the authentic voice of leadership.

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PART 1

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# The Secrets

What CEOs and Leaders Know

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