# User-Friendly Speech Frameworks

The Framework of a great presentation is invisible to your audience but, like the skeleton of a great building, is critical to holding it together. What the audience hears is *content*, but you need good *framework* to hang content on. Because people are not reading your presentation, but listening to it, we want a framework that works for that. So don't write out your presentation, *chunk it out*.

Chunked structure is the clearest and easiest for listeners. And it brings good shape to every presentation from the simple and straightforward to the complex and sophisticated. Think of a chunk as a box of content. Inside are three things: your point, its development, and its support.
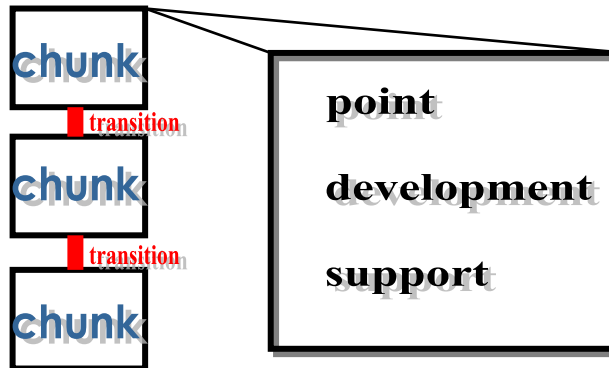
What's a *point*? A point is the answer to the listener's question, "Why am I listening to this?" If a listener really did raise a hand during a presentation and ask just that, the speaker would reply, "Because…" and then here would come the *point*. Making the point is the presenter's job, but presenters often skip it. There is a strong tendency to offer a lot of detail, leaving the listeners to derive the point. Maybe it seems that making the point is a statement of the obvious. If it is, the speaker may be aiming too low. More likely the structure of the presentation was not point-based.

Development **is the argument, the reasoning, the examination**—*whatever advances the listeners' thinking on your point.* The more complex, new, or controversial your point, the more development it probably gets. You can add as much development as your point needs as long as all the information you offer coheres to the same point.

And then there's *support*. Examples, stats, graphs, stories, and images perform a single function— *they support your points*. Stories and pictures are easier for listeners to remember than arguments and reasoning, in fact easier than the points themselves. If your points are well supported with the vividness of good examples, then the chain of memory will lead from the example back to the point. You don't, however, want listeners noticing your charts or anecdotes but missing your points. "He talked a lot about the Superbowl." "She had a really funny story about rafting." Examples can be funny or dramatic, many or few, but if they are not supporting a point, they don't belong in the chunk.

Good framework is very freeing. Inside each chunk, you can shift the point, development, and support around in whatever arrangement makes the most sense for what you have to say. On the other hand, you can follow a simple pattern repeatedly, because listeners are content-driven and not aware of framework unless it interferes with their ability to register content.

Finally, *transitions* between chunks act as guides to the listener and the speaker. They should be functional. They may link the last chunk to the next one, or they might signal a change of focus. If your transition is a question, make it a really good one to which the audience would say, "I was just going to ask that."

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Transition
   ''So there's a great opportunity in front of us. But it's not going to be given to us: we will have to work for it. But how? What's our strategy for staking out a protected position in a very competitive market? That's a big question – as complex as it is important.

Chunk

--------------------------------Development-------------------------------
"There are three factors we need to consider to develop a smart strategy.
The first factor is an obvious one. Our strategy must be based on something that we can do well. We've got to be honest about what our strengths are, or what we can build as strengths, and make sure that our strategy emphasizes those.

"Second, we can't have a strategy that brings us to where the biggest competitors are strongest – that's like taking a knife to a gun fight. We want to pick a strategy that our competitors can't execute well. Then we'll be taking a gun to a knife fight.

"Last, the most important factor of all. We must pick something that customers care about a great deal. What does it matter if we're good at something and our competitors aren't, if customers just give it a big old yawn?

"So this is the puzzle we need to solve: find something our customers care about, that competitors aren't good at, and that we can do very well. That's that sweet spot in the middle of the diagram here.

--------------------------------Support-------------------------------
"Let's try out a strategy and see how it stacks up.

"What if our strategy was to meet or beat everyone else's price? Maybe we could do it well for a while, but it would be tough. Our costs won't be as low as the big guys. And even if we could do it, they're good at it too. Better than us.

"And what about the last one. Do customers care? Well, of course customers would rather pay less than pay more, all things equal. But all things aren't equal – there are other factors that matter.

"Last May, J.D. Power, the big customer satisfaction research company, asked [our kind of] customers what mattered most to them in the retail experience. Customers rated the importance of four factors: price, the store facility, store displays, and the sales staff.

"And of the four, price came in… fourth. This doesn't mean that price is unimportant. But if we think it's the number one consideration for every customer who walks into the store, we're wrong.

"It's difficult to pass this test, isn't it? But we've done it: we have identified a strategy that measures up. I want to tell you now what it is, and then spend some time going deep into why it is right for us.

--------------------------------Point-------------------------------
"Our strategy – is to provide a differentiated customer experience."