

SPEAK LIKE A CHAMPION

A DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO MASTERING THE ART OF
CONVERSATION IN A WAY THAT WILL INSPIRE
OTHERS TO JOIN YOUR CAUSE

SOHAIL ZINDANI

Researcher, Keynote Speaker, Strengths & Happiness Activist,
Leadership, Talent and Performance Consultant

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This book is available at a special quantity discounts for the use in corporate training programs. Please contact **inspire@sohailzindani.com** for pricing and further details.

To my daughter, **Diya!**

All major transformations happen when a great idea is powerfully and meaningfully communicated. It's a quite comprehensible narrative that for the world to change for the better, great ideas need to spread. For an idea to spread, it must be easily understood. For the idea being easily understood, it must be spoken with utmost tact and simplicity – because it's only when the idea is easily understood that it becomes actionable.

SPEAKING LIKE A CHAMPION IS EASY

Thank you for taking time out and reading “Speak like a Champion”.

In this book, you are going to be introduced to some powerful ideas that will lay the foundation for you to dramatically improve your conversation, speaking and interaction skills.

The ideas shared in the following pages are real life challenges and their conception was strongly influenced by the fields of behavioral, cognitive and positive psychology. Most of them aim to challenge you and they will inevitably evoke weird and sometimes even negative emotions. My only demand is that, for someone to achieve unconscious competence at any skill, one needs to endure the so called “pain period.”

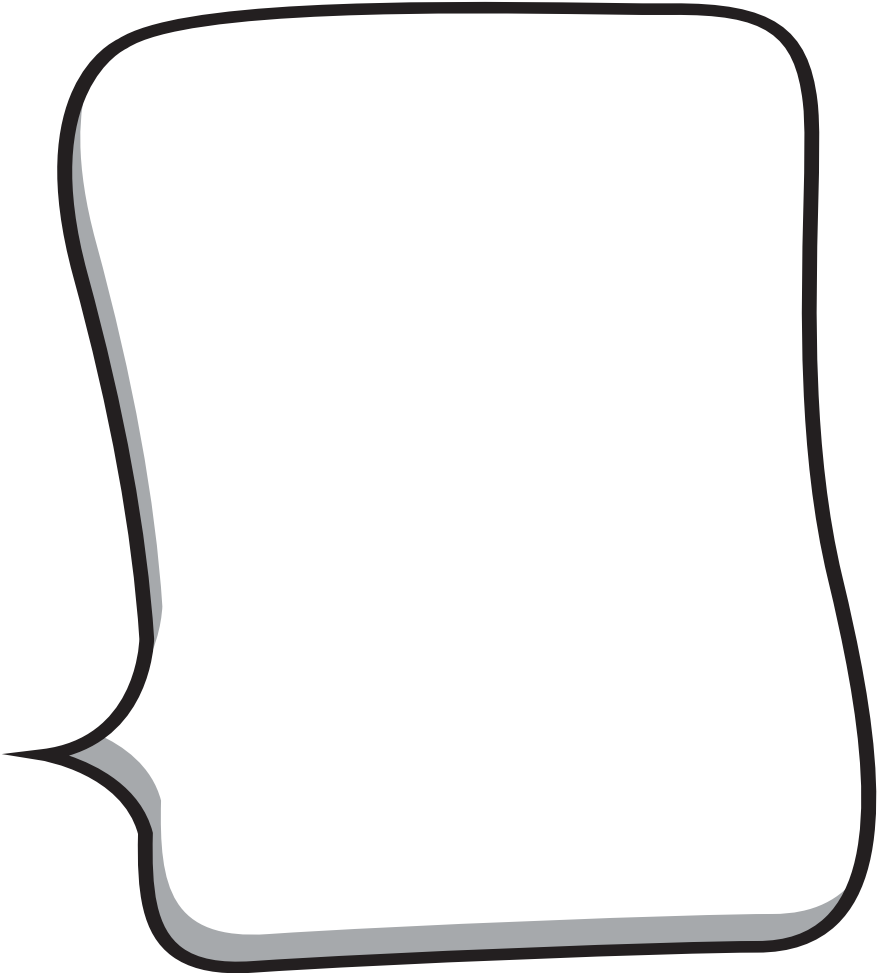
Your persistence, ambition and dedication to your cause will eventually determine your success and the level of competence you will achieve in the skill of speaking. Don't get discouraged if things get challenging. No person ever became a great speaker overnight. Stay committed, have patience and whenever you need guidance and a motivation boost, don't hesitate to contact me at szindani@sohailzindani.com.

Your path to becoming a great speaker starts here!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sohail Zindani". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

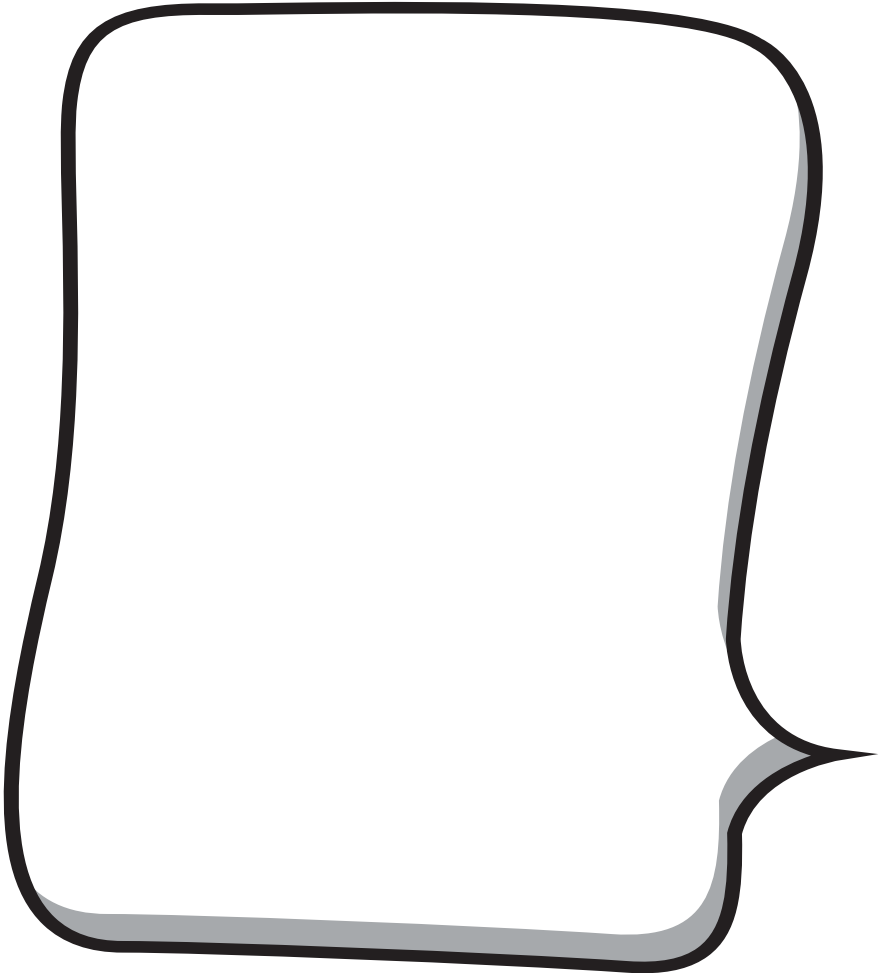
SPEAKERS YOU ADMIRE

All of us need role models when starting down a new path. Are there people you admire who are good speakers, who communicate well in a variety of situations? What makes them great? Why do they stand out?

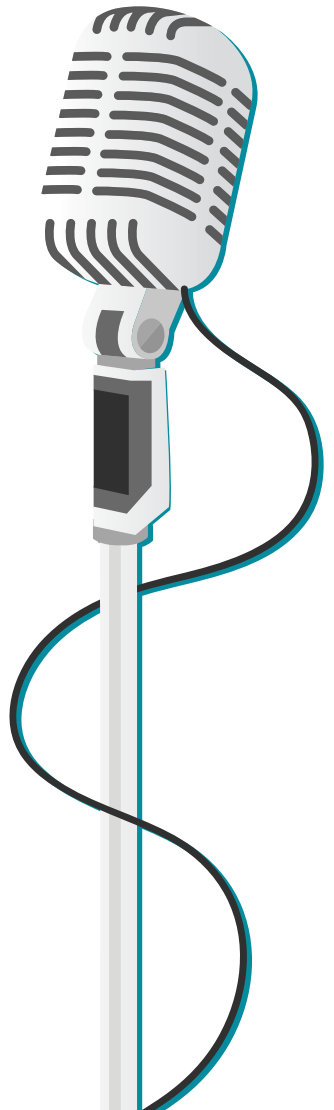


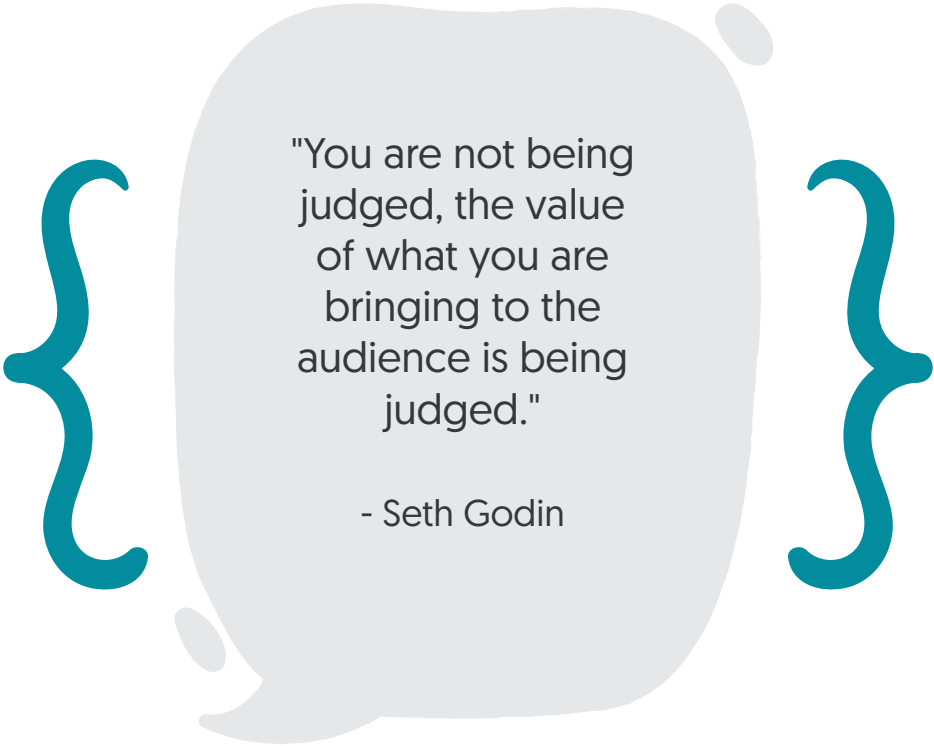
BRAINSTORM YOUR GOALS

Analyze what makes these good speakers effective. Then, reflecting on your own strengths and needs, take these attributes and write down what you would like to adopt as your own. What skills would you like to have? What would you like people to say about you as a speaker?



— LET THE —
**JOURNEY
BEGIN**





"You are not being
judged, the value
of what you are
bringing to the
audience is being
judged."

- Seth Godin

SPEAK TO THE LISTENERS FIRST

You articulate a cause and you'll get them: the supporters and the skeptics. In the digitally connected world, this is even more understandable.

TO BEGIN WITH, THE GOAL IS TO SPEAK TO THOSE WHO ARE ATTRACTED TO OUR MESSAGE, NOT TO CONVINCING OR 'PUSH' OUR IDEAS TO THE SKEPTICS.

As a leader at any level, energy preservation is very critical. When we attempt to convince others that we are right, we are taking a position to which they'll love to take an opposing position. The best way to get momentum for our ideas is to focus our time and energy on those who believe what we believe, to stand for the cause, and invite others to come along of their own free will and choice.

Note that it's not about running away from critics. It's just about gaining the right momentum. Most innovative ideas are diffused in the bud. Why? Because those wonderful ideas are exposed to skeptics and not to nurturers.

As a leader, take your ideas to early adopters. This is what children do the best. They just know the art of convincing by creating the initial support momentum.

The general rule is that the majority is more skeptical and less willing to accept ideas until someone else has tried it first. Yes, we need the majority on our side if we wish to change the world or built on a cause, but it's the first movers and early adopters that inspire them to do it.



Wise men speak because
they have something to say;
Fools because
they have to say something.

-Plato



BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

It's quite simple. Before you hit the road, know your destination first. How do you want people to feel when they leave your presentation? What are you trying to achieve? What do you want them to do with your ideas? What's the one idea you want to make sure sinks in?

When you start with the end in mind, it completely changes the ambiance of your presence. It adds up to more confidence and builds more clarity. It allows you to tailor every anecdote you share, every perspective you represent. This can completely transform your preparation phase.

Now, rather than planning what you want to say first, think about the statement you want to end with - the idea that summarizes the entire presentation.

Then figure out what will need to come before that to get you there. It gets excitement now!

When presenting new material, some speakers, including myself, will walk on stage with nothing more than the destination in mind. I tell stories and share experiences that everyone can relate to and strengthen the core idea that I am trying to propagate. This certainly comes with experience and practice. In the meantime, no matter if it's a prepared talk, you can still begin with the end in mind.

OWN THE ROOM

When you are in the front, you own the room. The entire space belongs to you. When you have a group that is willing to listen, feels the value in it, and you as a speaker know your purpose, then owning the room feels fulfilling because you've set the stage for your idea to inspire others.

You own the room. Now what? Show it now!

Here are a few ideas to help:

WALK



Walk. Simply walk. A lot of people I coach on speaking ask me about techniques to overcome the 'initial anxiety' on stage. My answer is simple. Walk. Yes, walk. When you get your feet stuck at a place, the gravity starts pulling your head and heart down as well. Don't let it happen.

I normally recommend walking to the podium/stage/mike from a distance. Place yourself slightly away from the headlight spot. This allows you to absorb the energies in the room, boosts your blood circulation and helps you reduce your initial anxiety.

WATCH



You might have observed that many successful speakers (and few not so successful) begin to speak as they're still walking onto the stage. It works for them and I have absolutely no problem with that. However, as you have turned towards me for advice, I'll suggest an alternate plan. I suggest that one of the best ways to get your audience's attention from the beginning of your presentation is to pause before you speak and WATCH them. Make eye contact with a couple of people in the audience. The traditional wisdom might tell you to avoid the eye contact for maintaining your personal confidence, I am just not sold to this nonsense. It's a very mediocre way of handling stage anxiety. A leader's way should not be so naïve.

So, making an eye contact, and taking a very brief pause to begin with [don't forget to place a wide smile on your face], is an effective way to connect with others at a very human level. This has worked for me incredibly well. As a leader, you need to love the audience. And love is expressed in making an eye contact – not by avoiding it. You may even find that once you're connected to the audience, you might start more powerfully than what you have initially planned.

WANDER



The way you wander on the stage has the power to enhance your message. Have you seen a lion moving in the cage? Compare it with any other animal and you'll know the difference. To own the stage, you must move!

Great speakers have a natural flow on stage. Their gestures are smart and smooth. They naturally move within the space they're given. I have a quick fix technique for you. Start with a "V" movement. Decide on a center point. Mark it if you can. And then, move in the "V" pattern. Just one word of caution. When you reach the upper limit of "V" and head back towards the center point, walk in the reverse pattern. This allows you to keep your eye contact with the audience active, and so your ownership of the room stays intact.

SPEAK ON THINGS YOU KNOW AND CARE ABOUT


Now I know it's not always possible, but then, the power it carries cannot be denied as well.

Have you ever noticed how passionately parents speak about their kids? It's not because they're champion speakers, it's because they care so much about their kids!

When you speak about what you love or what you are passionate about, you transmit positive and contagious energies that the audience can easily feel.

But yes, at least make one rule. Stick to speaking only about things you understand. We can't be an expert in everything and too often, we are made to feel like we need to be. Don't belittle yourself by saying that you don't know much about the topic. In fact, admitting what we don't know actually helps people trust us even more when we talk about what we do know.

Our attempt to be an expert about something we don't know much about, can be perceived as inauthentic and the impact of the rest of our message can suffer. If you've been invited to speak or present an idea, it's because the audience is interested in you and your ideas. Speak about what you know and more importantly what you really care about. When you do, you'll naturally speak with more authenticity, passion and energy and you're more likely to inspire others.



"If you want to
connect, you must
let them reflect."
- Darren Lacroix

GO SLOW. YES, SLOW

It's easy to speak fast, but it's nearly impossible to speak slowly. I've been very keen in observing what makes the world's most captivating speakers and out of a few overlapping hints, this is one important hint.

When you are experienced, polished and credible, you don't speak to impress or prove yourself. You speak to simply share what you know or what you believe.

This very mindset completely alters the entire feel of your presentation.

To speak like a champion, remember that speaking as if you are playing a rapid-fire round with Karan Johar won't help. Those with more experience and exposure often speak slowly and with more thought behind what they say. When you speak slowly, it suggests wisdom. But it's slowly, not too slowly. To push the myth out, let me make it clear that speaking slowly doesn't suggest that you are less passionate or not prepared about your topic. It actually ensures that those who are listening to you will understand what you're talking about.

One of the best ways to get comfortable with going slow is to record yourself and hear yourself as others hear you; as you listen to the recording, notice the following:

- Pace - Will someone listening to you for the first time catch everything you say?
- Emphasis - Often, the best way to make a point is to emphasize key words as you slow your pace.
- Pauses - Are you giving enough time for powerful thoughts or ideas to sink in before you move on? It's my favorite!!!
- Volume – Are you audible? Slow is about the speed of speech, not volume of speech.

BUILD THE MOMENTUM – ONE PERSON AT A TIME

Many people ask me if introverts can be good at public speaking. This may have been a good question for me, if I would have not been a high-order introvert myself. Yes, an introvert.

So, then how do I manage to speak so comfortably in front of audiences of hundreds or thousands?

It's simple. I just multiply my interpersonal skills. I speak to one person at a time. Rather than being all over the room, I make eye contact with one person and deliver the entire sentence or thought to that person. Then I do the same with another pair of eye. Here you go! The secret is, I have a series of one-on-one conversations.

This takes practice and is another great way to connect with your audience like a champion. You may find that there are some members of your audience who are "constipated". They have their arms crossed, hearts closed and they just don't want to be there. Don't focus your attention on these people or try to convince them to get onboard with your message.

You'll feel much more relaxed and comfortable if you speak to the individuals who are open, engaged, nodding their heads or smiling as you speak.

Allow their energy to inspire you and in turn, you'll inspire more of them; perhaps even a constipated soul or two as well.

KEEP IT HUMAN

You are the exact same person on stage as you are off stage. Trust me. You are. Those who are authentic, speak and act consistently regardless of where they are.

I understand the importance of customizing for the audience. But that's about customizing the content. Not the individual.

Rather than being worried about who people think you should be, be who you really are. This makes your mind much relaxed and it can alternatively focus on inspiring people with the message.

I am yet to meet anyone on earth who is genuinely like me. I feel you've had the same feeling. Right? So why bother trying to be or act as someone else.

When you are natural, your audience will be rooting for you. Your energies will be contagious. They will want you to succeed, even if you happen to make a mistake. On the other hand, when you attempt to present yourself in a way that doesn't reflect who you really are, your audience will sense it, will trust you less, and be much less forgiving.

IT'S OK TO GET 'LOST'

Speakers, including myself, rarely use notes. I feel it's very freeing not to use notes. It allows me to add more body language to my words. Now this comes with a cost. At times, I get lost. Stuck. But that's ok, isn't it?! It's the temptation to never get lost during the presentation that has made the very process so difficult. Losing your train of thought on stage can be scary, but it doesn't have to be necessarily embarrassing.

Remember, it's you who has lost the train of thought but the audience is still absorbing what you just said.

It's also important to know that the audience knows what you tell them through verbal and nonverbal communication. The secret is, the audience only knows you're lost if you tell them you are – and in my experience, the nonverbal expression of embarrassment and confusion do the real damage.

Here are a few tips to help you out of the 'lost' situation:

- If you get lost, go quiet. Try to avoid 'um' or 'aaaa'. A little silence is OK. Much like going slow, it helps your points sink in. The posture during this moment of silence will say it all. Be strong!
- Take a sip of water. It's my favorite. Taking a quick break to wet your whistle is perfectly acceptable and can provide some extra time for you to find your place.
- If the context of presentation allows, ask participants to take a moment to reflect on what you've been discussing. It can be even better if you encourage them to share their observations with the person sitting next to them.
- Remember the point, "Keep it Human". When you connect at a human level, your audience will support you when you are lost. I can literally assure it.

ENJOY IT

When you're having fun, you'll connect with more people. Be grateful for the opportunity to share your ideas. Celebrate the moment! For some of us that's easier said than done. Often, we allow our nervousness to get in the way of the enjoyment of presenting our ideas.

Let me tell you something very powerful.

Symptoms of excitement are almost identical to those of nervousness.

Think about this, [sweaty palms, butterflies, increased heart rate] are the exact same symptoms in both the emotions. It's just a matter of changing our interpretation.

Say it loudly, 'This is exciting!' rather than thinking 'I'm so nervous!'

ACCEPT THE APPLAUSE

The applause you receive after a presentation is a gift. Accept it gratefully! I've often seen speakers and presenters try to downplay applause or simply walk off stage.

In fact, most of us are taught to reject compliments as a sign of humility. It's the audience's way of expressing appreciation for the value you brought to them. To reject that appreciation is like rejecting a gift.

While your natural inclination may be to walk off stage, grab your water bottle or otherwise shy away from the applause, stay where you are, look at individuals in the eye and say, 'thank you'.

Applause helps you in two ways:

- It's a way to measure the impact of your message. The type of applause tells you how your message was received. It's valuable information. No feedback form can do it.
- Nothing syncs in well with your heartbeat than the applause you receive from participants. It boosts your morale, regulates the music that your heartbeat generates, and makes you feel like a champion. Embrace it!



“To speak, and to speak well, are two things. A fool may talk, but a wise man speaks.”

- Ben Jonson, British Poet and Dramatist

8 SECRETS FOR SPEAKING LIKE A CHAMPION

I've always been glued to the skills of world-class speakers and presenters. They are different, yet, I've been keenly observing the commonalities. Here are those 8 common grounds that almost all champion speakers play on:



TALK ABOUT BIG IDEAS

It's all about the big idea. There is no great speech without a great idea.



SPEAK IN THE MOMENT

Nothing connects with your audiences more than the situation they are in. Even stand-up comedians know it.



KEEP IT SIMPLE

All great speakers have literally no temptation for keeping it complex. Instead, they all show obsession for keeping it simple. Again, the idea is to connect – not impress.



BE A STRAIGHT SHOOTER

Audiences love sincerity. Beating about the bush creates distrust, confusion and uncertainty. Champion speakers shoot straight.



BE AN OPTIMIST

Taking the contagiousness factor in account, all great speakers are full-on optimist about the context in which they are speaking. Remember, hope creates involvement.



FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

Nearly all great speakers focus on the future. Learning from the past, understanding the present, but most importantly, focusing on the future.



BE REAL

Enough said. Period.



STAND FOR SOMETHING

You need to stand for something, what you want your audience to do after you are done speaking? Your speech should be embodiment of the cause or the big idea you are presenting.



"Only the prepared speaker deserves to be confident."

- **Dale Carnegie**

THE BEGINNING

All good things come to an end and, if you've read this far, I hope you have enjoyed the book and reading it has been a great use of your time. I now call it the beginning. Beginning of a life full of thrill and excitement for speaking and inspiring people.

Top secret: You cannot learn how to swim by reading a book on 'swimming'. You learn swimming by 'swimming'. Same is true for speaking. I can only share ideas and few techniques – but it all starts with your next speech or presentation. All the best!

If you enjoyed this book, please recommend it to your friends and people you care about. You can let me know your thoughts by sending me an email at szindani@sohailzindani.com.

BRING SPEAK LIKE A CHAMPION TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

Your success as a leader depends on your ability to inspire people to come together to take action. Whether you are meeting with your team, speaking with a client or presenting to your board, this 1-day workshop is designed to teach you how to think, act and communicate. We will equip you with tools to convey your ideas with clarity to inspire those around you to act.

IN THIS WORKSHOP, YOU WILL:

Communicate your ideas in a way that inspires.

Every one of us has the capacity to inspire others. The way we do it is by thinking, acting and communicating from your strengths. You will learn communication and storytelling skills that can be applied to spark meaningful change in all situations — from one-on-one conversations to team meetings and keynote presentations.

Create content that pulls people in.

There is a difference between a charismatic and an inspiring communicator. The charismatic leaves us thinking how amazing they are. The inspiring leaves us feeling how powerful we are. We will teach you how to approach and structure your content in a way that will deeply connect and move those around you.

You can learn more at www.sohailzindani.com
or contact us directly at inspire@sohailzindani.com.

ABOUT AUTHOR

For more than a decade now, Sohail is leading a movement to transform the way we develop people. His strengths-based approach is thoroughly embedded in all the learning solutions he offers. He believes in uniqueness of human potential and advocates it with his unmatched enthusiasm and pragmatic approach. Sohail Zindani is a student and teacher of leadership & talent development.



He has devoted his life to sharing his thinking to help other leaders and organizations develop an agile learning culture. Sohail's unconventional and disruptive views on talent, learning, leadership and business have attracted significant attention. Sohail spends a significant time studying individuals, teams and organizations to understand what makes world-class performers, summarizing it, and sharing it with the world.

In addition to his work in the corporate sector, Sohail has a passion for learning and teaching in the social sectors, including education, healthcare, social ventures, and other cause-driven nonprofits.

Sohail Zindani addresses over 50,000 people across Pakistan and other countries each year through his keynote presentations, workshops and seminars, captivating audiences with his subtle humor, research based insights, real life cases and anecdotes that inspire people, teams and organizations to be more, achieve more and give more.

Sohail lives in Karachi, Pakistan and at various airport departure lounges.

“Sohail beautifully summarizes his years of experience as a speaker in this little treasure book. He writes his thoughts frill-free to connect with people in the most natural way; the Sohail way.”

Farhad Karamally

OD Consultant, Leadership Facilitator, Strategy Designer,
Author of 'Pukh Theory and Karahi Theory'

“Sohail Zindani has an open and engaging writing style which makes for an enjoyable read. I would highly recommend everyone who is interested to master the art of conversation and speaking, to read and learn from one of the best.”

Prof. Sattar Bawany, CMEC

Chief Executive Officer
Centre for Executive Education [CEE Global], Malaysia

“Sohail distills the essentials of speaking in his signature simplistic manner and if you master his simple yet outstanding techniques, you will surely inspire others to join your cause.”

Jamshed Ahmed

Deputy Chief Executive Officer, PharmEvo (Pvt) Limited

“A simple, no-nonsense, step by step, real-world guide to uplift your communication skills. And that too from the magician of public speaking and human connection - Sohail Zindani. You cannot not afford to read this book. Strongly recommended.”

Kaiser Abbas

Award-Winning Success Coach & Motivational Speaker.
Business Psychologist, Author of 'Tick Tick Dollar'