

THE WALK-UP PROTOCOL FOR SPEAKERS

Own the Room Before You Say a Word

*A practical guide to the 30 seconds before you speak,
the moments around your break, and the room you leave behind.*

Last week I sat in the audience for a keynote. The message was fabulous, genuinely one of the better talks I've heard this year. But by the time I walked out, that's not what I remembered.

The music started late and added nothing. When the speaker finally walked on stage, some random country drinking song was cut off mid-phrase. Behind him, the same slide loop that had been running before he spoke kept running through the entire message. The same slide set, the whole time, whether it fit or not. When he finished, the loop kept looping and some vaguely appropriate music drifted in behind it. Then, when it was time for the room to clear, someone in the back queued up sound effects. The kind a twelve-year-old would find funny.

*The message was fabulous. But the room didn't get all of it because
the frequency on either side of it diminished the talking.*

Here's the part most speakers never think about: some of the most critical moments of your session aren't ones you control by talking. They're the thirty seconds before you start, and the ten seconds after you start. You'll take care of the ten. Let me help you with the thirty before, the ones on either side of your break (if you take one), and after you finish.

The Challenge

Every session has two or three moments where forces outside your talking points set the tone of the room: Pre-Game, the optional Break, and Post-Game. Pros leave nothing to chance. Amateurs walk into a room, accept whatever frequency happens to be there, and try to build from it. That's backwards. If the opening of your session is the most important moment you have, the room must already be at the right frequency before you say a word, because you don't get time at the start to build it. It must be ready to launch the moment you launch.

*Do I sound like a control freak? Yes!
Because I refuse to leave the outcome of the day to chance.*

The Pre-Game Plan

The goal: the audience is at the optimum frequency the moment you begin.

- Know your target frequency before anything else. Stage lights, audience lights, seating, snacks, music, microphones. Every one of them either helps or hurts it.
- Nobody should ever arrive to a silent, blank room. Start the music and a looping presentation at least five minutes before the first person might arrive.
- The music stops the instant you start, not before. My Pre-Game playlist is exactly 25 minutes and 10 seconds long. I know when it's time to start, because my music told me so.
- Never cut a song in the middle. A half-finished song disrupts the frequency and reads as amateur, no matter how strong your opening line is.
- Build an intentional, engineered, curated playlist. Every song in it has exactly one job: get the waiting room ready for you.

The Break Plan (Optional)

The goal: the break has a purpose, a length, and an ending you never have to watch a clock for.

- Treat the break as a designed part of the presentation, not a gap in it.
- Build a curated playlist that runs exactly as long as you want the break to run.
- Let the music be your clock, not your watch. My break list runs 10 minutes, 15 seconds. I never check the time. I know that when the third song starts, I have three minutes and forty seconds to be back on stage.
- When the last chorus hits, I'm ready, and so is the room.

The Post-Game Plan

The goal: the feeling you want the audience to leave with is the last thing the room experiences.

- Decide the one feeling you want people to walk out with. Your closing loop and playlist need to reinforce it, not compete with it or undercut it.
- Build a looping presentation that echoes your message.
- Build a curated playlist that runs at least as long as your last guest stays. Taking down the music is the last thing you do, not an afterthought.
- This works the same way whether you're closing a meditative session or sending a room off to battle. The principle doesn't change, only the frequency does.

The Callback

Think back to that keynote. The speaker did the hard part. He built and delivered a message that actually landed. What he left on the floor cost him nothing to fix. Frequency doesn't require more material, and it doesn't require more talent. It requires a plan.

Don't be amateur night. Set your frequency before you say a word.

Want to chat about setting the right frequency in your room? Grab some time at <https://tidycal.com/walk-up-protocol> and let's chat.