

WHAT TO WRITE

As mentioned in the speaker paper instructions, I'm looking for your ability to critically think in your final paper. Don't recap the speaker's talk. I'm not looking for in a blow-by-blow description of the presentation. Instead pick out a few comments that really resonated with you. I'd rather see you thoughtfully analyze three interesting points than to simply waterski through a dozen ideas. Take the points you select and really dig into them. Pull them apart. Share personal anecdotes. Use analogies. Draw conclusions and have an opinion. That's what I'm looking for.

BAD EXAMPLE

Here is the kind of writing I want people to avoid:

*Dan was really cool. He mentioned that "not doing something [was] the best way to fail." I totally agree with that. And I know it's true because he tried something and he was successful. I think that proves he knows what he's talking about. Plus his slides were really cool. Another thing Dan talked about was his ...*

GOOD EXAMPLE

Here's the kind of writing and thinking I'm looking for:

*Something really struck me in Dan's closing comments. In speaking of how he proactively went after the design jobs he landed, Dan mentioned that "not doing something [was] the best way to fail."*

*We can always DO something. How many of us have avoided risk or change, especially in employment, because we were afraid of rejection? Afraid of looking stupid? Or even afraid of success? The reasons vary, but one thing is sure, doing nothing insures failure at the gate. I think there is a certain audacity to success. You have to stick your neck out to attain it. Now if you don't have the chops to perform a job, then I think it is prudent to forbear until you acquire needed skill. However, should you hold back if you, in fact, have the skills, but just lack the experience? I agree with Dan. Give it a try. Apply for that job. Court that client. Submit that portfolio. The worst injury we could suffer is a bruised ego. But the best thing we could gain is a break.*

*I am reminded of my wife's experience in law school some years ago. She attended UOP's McGeorge School of Law here in Sacramento. When she initially told me of her plan to apply, all I could think of was: "How are we going to afford the tuition?" She acknowledged it was a challenge, but she wanted to try to get in, then worry about the logistics. She didn't stand still on the funding dilemma, though. She diligently applied for federal and state financial aid, AND she went the extra mile and filled out paperwork for every private scholarship she thought she might qualify for. This was not an easy process as some applications required laborious essays. In the end, she was accepted into McGeorge, but that didn't surprise me—she had always been an excellent student. What shocked me was her financial aid award: the Dean's Scholarship! This was essentially a full ride for all four years. The only thing we had to shoulder through school was the cost of her books.*

*In the course of formalizing her award with the financial aid office, she learned an interesting bit of trivia from a clerk. Many scholarships were not completely disbursed each year and sometimes they were retained altogether. The reason? There weren't enough candidates. And it wasn't that there was a dearth of qualified applicants out there. Apparently people lost heart when it came to filling out the forms. They failed because they never applied. Woody Allen once said "eighty percent of success is showing up." In this case, it was doing the paperwork.*

*Well, then, why not? Why not succeed? If Dan's maxim is sound, then the opposite must be true as well: "Doing something is the best way to succeed."*