



# DILGinsider

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Five information officers of the DILG Central Office flex their writing muscles by participating in a training program on "How to Write Powerful Speeches and Press Releases" facilitated by Susan "Toots" V. Ople (sitting second from left) together with attendees of other government agencies at Bayview Park Hotel, Manila.

## PACS ENFORCES SKILLS ON SPEECH AND PRESS RELEASE WRITING

**G**overnment sometimes tends to talk to itself," said Susan "Toots" V. Ople, a communication specialist and the speaker on "How to Write Powerful Speeches and Press Releases" of the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute which was recently held and participated by information officers of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) – Central Office and other government offices.

Ople gave several practical tips on the subject matter as she draws rich experience as a writer for one former President, two former Foreign Affairs secretaries, five senators, and several other personalities up to now.

To address the problem of coming up with rather technical and boring speech of government officials, Ople advises to write it in a manner that is conversational because speech is meant to be heard, not read. Also, a speech ought to have the right mix of emotions and details that the audience can connect to.

"It should not be clinical because it won't be remembered. Every speech has a job to do. It's your responsibility to find out what that job is: to inform? to persuade? to assure everyone?" she asked participants including DILG-CO information officers Anna-Lissa K. Cariaso, Marilou E. Domingiano, Nesreen C. Abdulrauf, Ma. Evelyn B. Castino-Quilas, and Paul Dominique D. Tejada.

"When a government official speaks, the audience is waiting to hear answers to their silent questions: 'What's in it for me? How can you help me and our family?' Ople pointed out during her lecture at the Bayview Hotel, Roxas Boulevard, Manila on September 22, 2016.

Writers may sometimes have a "writer's block" or weariness. However, Ople urged writers to think of the "first time, last time rule".

"The speaking engagement of your boss may be the first time and last time that an audience of an event will have a chance to hear from him or her. Make that only chance memorable. Again, every speech has a job to do. Enjoy writing for the audience," said Ople.

Further, an effective and applauded speech, she said, has memorable and "sticky" lines. It may be in the form of humor which comes unexpected or a story on family which anyone can easily relate to. "It's comfortable and makes the speaker human."

"Go for the familiar. Go for popular culture. Hugot lines are okay. The audience will think, 'Kuwela pala siya. Tao rin siya. Maaabot rin siya,'" Ople said.

Moreover, speechwriters must not be afraid to ask questions. Ople said the speech may be written with some questions to be asked to an audience. "That way, an audience will appreciate that a speaker is talking to them and not just reading a written speech."

Ople further recapped the basic rules on speechwriting, "Spend time researching about the audience, the event and its theme. Be careful of plagiarism. It is a discipline in itself. Take time to read aloud your draft speech which must have a central idea. Make your words picturesque. A speech must show, not tell, and writing is in the rewriting."

The ending of a speech, she said, must always have a call to action which tells an audience how they can help to the central idea talked about by a speaker. "It should be uplifting and moves the audience to action."

### Dos and don'ts in PR

Meanwhile, in writing press releases (PRs), Ople stressed that writers must be cautious of the "curse of knowledge", that is, being technical in writing.

Common errors in drafting PRs include not having clear point of view, weak body because of no corroborating information, and lengthy and tepid quotes.

In sending PRs to media outlets, Ople recommends doing it on or before 11 am and latest at 2 pm to be in time with the story conference of newsrooms.

"When the reputation of your office is at stake, do not delay your PR or statement. Don't say 'no comment' because it means yes," she said.

Additionally, she said, "Introduce your boss (i.e. Secretary of the Department). Damihan niyo ang photo release such as in social media."

### Social media management

The communication training program was complemented with a talk on basic tips on managing social media account of a government agency or personality.

Estelle Ople-Osorio recommended to "think visual" when planning to post in Facebook or Twitter.

"Include visuals in your social media plan. A litmus test if it would be a hit is the question: Would you share it on your wall?" she said.

Like writing a speech, Estelle also advised putting emotion, humaneness, and using language or terms that an audience can easily connect with.

-Nesreen C. Abdulrauf, PACS-ICRD

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