



21 Top Speakers for the 21st Century

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Top Speakers of the 20th Century

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COVER
story



AMERICANS HAVE NEVER BEEN AT A LOSS FOR WORDS. And in the 20th century especially, they had a lot to say. A mind-boggling array of proselytizers pushed everything from far-out fashions to isolationism. Some, like Louis Farrakhan, divided communities with loquacious sermons. Others, like Neil Armstrong, connected a nation with 10 brief words. In the corporate world, provocateurs Stephen Covey and Tom Peters inspired people to change

themselves along with their companies.

In the ensuing millennium, we're likely to lend an ear to even more mouths as America's burgeoning population vocalizes its beliefs, desires, and emotions in traditional forums—lectures, rallies, town meetings—and new, as-yet-unimagined technological media. Below, a selection of 20 influential speakers from this century, and 21 to take business audiences into the next millennium.

ALAN J. PARISSE



Alan J. Parisse isn't a motivator; he's a "thought provoker" who rouses audiences to action. Like others in this group of speakers, Parisse uses wisdom, practicality, and humor to challenge people to think creatively about the changes around them.

A consultant and author of several books, including *Power Marketing: The 100 Best Strategies for Financial Professionals*, Parisse illuminates points that steer listeners toward solutions. He stresses the importance of getting to know customers, because if you understand them, you'll be better able to cater to them. For example, "among bank securities reps, the average age is 28, and the average customer 69, so you have almost exclusively young people selling almost exclusively to old people," he says. "Every generation has a rhythm and you need to learn that generation's rhythm." Bottom line: Relating to your customer will make the customer feel good and make you look good.

Parisse, backed by an MBA and 25 years of work experience, is able to relate to diverse audiences because he's worked in a variety of fields, from truck driving to investment banking. Because Parisse has been in many team situations, you listen when he encourages employee team to achieve shared visions and goals.