How to Own the Room
This discussion guide includes everything you need to discuss the Own The Room video and methodology and to practice the skills the video introduces.

PRE-MEETING PREP

- Remind everyone to watch the Own The Room video at leanin.org/owntheroom (if you’re not planning to watch it during the meeting)
- Remind everyone to bring a copy of this PDF
- Remind everyone to bring their One Action Update (if you’re doing this)
Meeting Agenda

1. Check-In
   Warm up, catch up, and get going

   Approx. 20 minutes

2. Educational Activities
   Learn from experts and one another

   Approx. 55 minutes

   • **Activity 1: Key Takeaways**  
     Your presentation is not about you, it’s about the audience

   • **Activity 2: Practice skills**  
     Eliminate weak language, and develop powerful language, through fun games and exercises

   • **Activity 3: Give a mini speech**  
     Prepare and deliver a one-minute speech for your group using your improved skills and techniques

3. One Action
   Commit to using your new and improved voice in a public or professional situation

   Approx. 7 minutes

Brought to you in partnership with…

communication and executive training company Own The Room. For more tips, resources, and information about hosting an Own The Room training at your company, visit owntheroom.com/training-programs/.
1 Check-In

Warm up, catch up, and get going

Approx. 20 minutes

STEP 1: ICEBREAKER

Group activity

Approx. 10 minutes

An icebreaker is a powerful tool to help us become present with one another and ourselves.

- Use your fingers to share your answers to these questions with your Circle:
  - How much do you like public speaking? (0 = I hate it, 10 = I love it)
  - How would you rate your current skills as a public speaker? How much do you want to improve? (for example, currently a 4, want to be an 8)

- Take a few minutes to think about this question:
  - Why do you want to improve your public speaking skills?

- Go around the Circle and share your reasons (30 seconds each).

STEP 2: MEMBER UPDATES

Group activity

1 minute or less per member

Once you’re warmed up, go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It’s OK not to have one every month!)

If you have a One Action Update, share that with your Circle at the same time. (A One Action is one concrete action you committed to take at your last meeting; the goal of a One Action is to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.)

For example, a member update might go like this: “Since our last meeting, I asked my boss for a big assignment and got it. I’m thrilled but a little nervous [personal update]. For my One Action, I asked that coworker I’ve been struggling with out for lunch. She immediately said yes, and I was surprised by how easily we got along. I can see it helping in the office, and we’re going out for lunch again next week—her invite! [One Action Update].”
Activity 1: Review key takeaways

Individual or group activity

5 minutes

• **Your job as a speaker or presenter is to grab the spotlight**
  Once you have it, you can redirect it onto your topic or issue, an individual, the audience—wherever and however you want. But you can’t do anything useful with the spotlight if you don’t first command it for yourself.

• **The first few times you speak in public, it will feel awkward and uncomfortable, and you will make mistakes**
  It gets easier each time, because you will improve and grow more confident with practice. You must cross the valley of awkward before you can summit the mountain of smooth.

• **Remember, your presentation is not about you, it’s about the audience**
  Focus on your audience and your message, and the magic will happen.

• **When you have a chance to lead a presentation or speak up at a meeting, take it**
  Trust your instincts more, and be quicker to act on them.

Activity 2: Practice skills

Approx. 30 minutes

Eliminate weak language and develop powerful language through fun games and exercises.

**EXERCISE 1: BECOME A 4D SPEAKER**

4D speaking is when your use of space harmonizes with the content. You become a more dynamic and engaging speaker when you use the whole area you have to work with to tell your story instead of standing in one place.

To practice using your space, break into pairs and spend 5 minutes total on this exercise.
Speaking partner:

1. Pretend you are onstage in front of a thousand people and you have 30 seconds to tell the audience the places you have lived. You are going to use the stage to emphasize your words.

2. Think of your speaking space as a map (whether a world map or just your city). As you explain the places you have lived, move to the place on the map you are describing in your story. Each time you talk about a new place, move on the map.

3. You have 30 seconds to tell your story, so keep it simple and concise.

Non-speaking partner:

1. Film your partner telling their 4D story.

2. Once finished, play it back and tell them two things they did well.

Then switch roles.

**Action item:** In your next presentation, change your position in the room or on the stage at least three times to practice being more engaging and memorable for the audience.

**EXERCISE 2: START WITH A SCENE**

When you start your presentations, you need to surprise, connect with, and hook your audience. If you start with “Hi, my name is ... I’m really glad to be here” or “Today I’m going to talk about ... ,” your audience’s attention fades because you aren’t saying anything surprising.

Instead, start with a scene: tell them a story, ask them a question, or present them with a problem that needs a solution. Be different. Be memorable.

**To practice starting with a scene, break into pairs and spend 5 minutes total on this exercise.**

Speaking partner:

1. You have 30 seconds to introduce yourself to your entire company on a video conference call, but you can’t say your name in the first sentence

2. Instead, start with what you do: think of the problem you solve for your organization, or how your job helps the world. Describe it in a creative way such as a question, a statistic, a problem, or a brief story.

3. Once you’ve started with this creative way of introducing what you do, you can say your name and title at the end of your introduction.
Non-speaking partner:

1. Film your partner introducing themselves creatively.
2. Once finished, play it back and tell them two things they did well.

Then switch roles.

EXERCISE 3: ELIMINATE WEAK LANGUAGE

One of the quickest ways to improve your public speaking skills, and increase your confidence, is to eliminate weak language. Weak language is any word or phrase that does not add value to your message (words or phrases like “um,” “basically,” “let me start by saying,” “at the end of the day,” “what I’m trying to say is ...”).

To practice eliminating weak language, take 1 minute to brainstorm the weak language words you hear every day, writing them on a whiteboard or flip chart. Then break into pairs and spend 5 minutes total on this exercise.

Speaking partner:

1. You will be given a question. You’ll have 30 seconds to answer it, and your goal is to use no weak language: no “um,” “uhhh,” “I think,” etc.
2. The question is, “Where do you see yourself in five years?”

Non-speaking partner:

1. Each time your partner uses weak language, point it out by saying “ding.” Hold up your finger(s), counting each time they use weak language. Switch roles and start over.

EXERCISE 4: USE STRONG LANGUAGE TO PAINT PICTURES

We are using strong language when we paint pictures and evoke emotions in the minds and hearts of our audience. This allows us to establish an emotional connection, engaging the audience in our presentation.

As a Circle, practice using strong language by spending 5 minutes on this exercise.

1. Select a member of the Circle who is wearing a bright-colored item of clothing.
2. As you go around the Circle, each member takes a turn describing the item of clothing in one or two sentences.
3. Ask the person wearing the bright-colored item to choose which description they will remember the most, and explain why.

Share with your Circle: 1 minute each, 10 minutes total.

• Share your “aha” moment from the strong language experiment with your Circle.
Activity 3: Give a mini speech

🔍 Group activity
⏰ Approx. 20 minutes

Spend 5 minutes preparing a one-minute speech about a time in your life when you were proud of yourself. Give yourself permission to be creative, fearless, and take chances.

Make notes for your speech in the space below.

My proud moment:

Each person has 1 minute to present their speech to the Circle and then ask for 1 minute of feedback. Ask for three things you did well and one area where you need to improve. Always focus on the positive. Building on your strengths is the best way to get better at something.

Make notes on the group’s feedback here:

Three things I did well:

1.

2.

3.

One area where I need to improve:
3 One Action
The little push you need to go for it

We recommend you close every meeting by committing to a “One Action”—one concrete thing you’re going to do before your next Circle meeting to step outside your comfort zone or practice a new skill.

This week, you might use your Circle to keep you accountable. Take 2 minutes to identify an opportunity for you to speak in public in the next month. It does not have to be a formal presentation at work. You can speak before a community or volunteer group, address your child’s class, or speak in a meeting.

Now write it down.

My opportunity to speak in public this month:

SHARE YOUR ONE ACTION WITH YOUR CIRCLE

30 seconds each

One by one, go around your Circle and complete the following statement:

• This month, I commit to speaking in public at…

Move quickly from member to member, and consider cheering one another on as you go.
More information from the Own The Room team:
Own The Room’s interactive learning programs empower leaders at all levels with breakthrough skills they need to succeed.

What makes our methodology unique?
Own The Room believes in teaching for how people learn today: quickly, and by doing. Through their trademarked, experiential methodology, you’ll learn actionable techniques in minutes, not months. Using insights from their expert coaching staff and advisors, experience training thousands of leaders around the globe, and a methodology honed over twenty-five years, their suite of cutting-edge learning solutions is applicable for any audience.

Interested in more from Own the Room?
For more tips, resources, and information about hosting an Own The Room training at your company, visit https://owntheroom.com/training-programs.