KESTON SCHOOL

WORK & WEALTH · FREE SAMPLE

Speak Up in Meetings

Prepare, find your moment and say your idea clearly at work

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will know how to prepare one useful point before any meeting, find a natural way into the conversation, say your idea in about thirty seconds, and recover calmly when you are interrupted or dismissed, so your ideas get heard instead of staying in your notebook.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Speak Up in Meetings Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

The Idea You Didn't Say

Recognize the quiet-in-meetings pattern, why it is not a character flaw, and why telling yourself to be confident rarely changes it.

It is Tuesday, 10:40, and the weekly team meeting is drifting toward the same old problem: the client reports keep going out late. You have a simple fix in your head. Move the internal review one day earlier, and give one person the final sign-off. You turn the sentence over a few times, wondering whether it is too obvious, whether someone already tried it, whether now is the right moment. Then a colleague across the table says almost exactly what you were thinking. Your manager nods. “Great idea, let’s do that.” The meeting moves on, and you write a small, frustrated note in the margin of your notebook.

If that scene feels familiar, this book is for you.

The quiet pattern

Most people who stay silent in meetings are not short of ideas. They usually have plenty. What they lack is a reliable way to get those ideas out of their head and into the room at the right moment.

The pattern tends to look like this:

- You prepare thoughts before the meeting but rarely use them.
- You notice a good point, then wait for a better moment that never comes.
- You speak up only when asked directly, and then say more than you meant to.
- You leave meetings replaying what you could have said.
- You share your best ideas afterward, in a private message or a hallway chat, where they get less credit and less impact.

None of this means something is wrong with you. Many thoughtful, careful, capable people work exactly this way. The habits that make you good at your job, such as thinking before you speak, checking your facts and caring about the quality of what you say, are the same habits that keep you quiet in a fast conversation.

It is not your personality

It is tempting to explain silence with a label. “I’m an introvert.” “I’m just not a meetings person.” “I’m shy.” Labels can be useful for understanding yourself, but they become a trap when they turn into a reason nothing can change.

Speaking up in a meeting is a skill made of small, learnable parts: knowing what you want to say, recognizing an opening, using a few words to step in, and saying your point briefly. Some people picked these parts up early, often without noticing. Others never had to, or learned the opposite: that it was safer to stay quiet.

Introverts can be excellent contributors in meetings. They often listen more closely, notice what others missed and speak with more precision when they do talk. The goal of this book is not to turn you into the loudest voice in the room. It is to make sure your voice is in the room at all.

Why “just be more confident” fails

The most common advice for quiet people is some version of “be more confident” or “just say it.” It sounds reasonable. It rarely works.

Here is why. Confidence is mostly a result, not a starting point. People feel confident about things they have done many times with acceptable results. Telling yourself to feel confident before you have that track record is like telling yourself to feel rested after a short night. The instruction does not reach the part of you that decides.

The advice also skips the practical problem. Even a very confident person would struggle to speak up if they did not know what they wanted to say, could not find a gap in the conversation and had no idea how to phrase it in a few seconds. Those are method problems, and method problems have method solutions.

> **Key idea:** You do not need to feel confident before you speak. You need a plan small enough to follow while you still feel nervous.

The chapters ahead give you that plan: one principle and three tools. You prepare a single point before the meeting. You learn a handful of ways to step into the conversation. You say your idea in about thirty seconds and then stop. Confidence tends to follow once you have done this a few dozen times.

What this book will and will not do

This is a practical book about everyday workplace meetings: team check-ins, project updates, planning sessions, client calls and video meetings. It covers preparation, timing, wording, voice and recovery when things go badly.

It is not a public-speaking course, and it does not promise you will never feel nervous. Some nerves are normal and even useful; they mean you care. If your fear of speaking is so strong that it affects your sleep, your health or your ability to do your job, that is worth discussing with a doctor or a qualified mental health professional. The tools here can still help, but they are not a substitute for that support.

Try this: a one-week meeting log

For the next seven days, keep a short log for every meeting you attend. It takes about two minutes per meeting, right after it ends. Use the matching page in your workbook or a note on your phone.

For each meeting, write down:

1. **The meeting:** name and roughly how many people were there.
2. **Did I speak?** Yes or no. If yes, roughly when: start, middle or end.
3. **What I wanted to say but did not:** one line.
4. **What stopped me:** pick the closest reason. Not sure it was good enough. Could not find a gap. Someone more senior was talking. Did not know how to phrase it. Ran out of time.
5. **How I felt afterward:** one word.

Do not try to change anything yet. Just watch. Most people find a clear pattern within a week: perhaps you speak freely in small meetings but disappear in large ones, or you always have a point but lose it while waiting for the perfect moment. That pattern tells you which tools in this book will help you most.

At the end of the week, circle the one meeting you most want to speak up in next time. We will use it throughout the book.

Next, we look at what is happening in your head and in the room during those few seconds when you almost speak.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Staying silent in meetings is a learned pattern, not a fixed personality trait.
- Pep talks fail because the problem is method and timing, not courage alone.
- A one-week meeting log shows exactly where your voice goes missing.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 The Idea You Didn't Say

Keep a one-week meeting log. Two minutes after each meeting.

FILL IN

My one-week meeting log

Meeting	Spoke? When	What I didn't say	What stopped me

RATE IT

How often do I leave meetings replaying what I could have said?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · Almost never

10 · After every meeting

The pattern I noticed this week:

The one meeting I most want to speak up in next time (circle it in my calendar):

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Speak Up in Meetings and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 The Idea You Didn't Say

02 Why Good Ideas Stay Quiet

03 What Silence Costs You

04 Early Beats Perfect

05 Prepare Before You Walk In

06 Find Your Way In

07 Say It in Thirty Seconds

08 Speaking Up in Real Meetings

09 When It Doesn't Go Well

10 Make It a Meeting Habit

11 A Voice People Expect

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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