

LESSON-23

HOW TO KEEP YOUR PRESENTATION INTERESTING

How you communicate is just as important as what you say.

1. Analyzing an Audience
2. Avoiding Common Pitfalls Made by Presenters
3. Bad Delivery Habits
4. Don't Go Blank During Your Presentation
5. Eliminating Filler Words and Actions
6. 4 Easy Steps to a Great Presentation
7. Getting Your Nerves Under Control Before a Presentation
8. Giving Your First Public Presentation
9. Integrating Movement in Presentations
10. Keeping Your Audience Awake During a Video
11. Making Eye Contact with Your Audience
12. Overcoming the Fear of Presenting
13. Planning Breaks During Presentations
14. Presenting to Different Types of Audiences
15. Putting Your Best Image Forward
16. Rules for Team Presentations
17. 6 Tips for Keeping Your Presentation Interesting
18. Size Does Matter!
19. Successful Q & A
20. Tips for Using Your Voice Effectively
21. The Truth About Laser Pointers
22. Top Ten Mistakes Made by Presenters
23. Using a Presentation Assistant
24. Using Multimedia Projector Remote Controls
25. Working with Room Layout

VISUALS

Your audience wants you to show them what you are talking about - literally. Use color graphics, slides, and handouts to get your message across. Research shows that your audience will remember more when you use visual aids to reinforce your words.

Ditch the Podium

Don't get stuck using the podium as a security blanket. Get out in front of your audience and interact with them. You don't have to zoom around the room, but make sure you occasionally move around especially when the audience is large.

Use Eye Contact

You are the presenter and the attention is on you. Make sure you maintain eye contact with your audience. As a general rule, you should make eye contact with an audience member for three to five seconds. Also you should try to make eye contact with all areas of the room, including the back of the room.

Focus on Your Audience

Visuals are designed to provide your audience with reinforcement of your verbal points. They are not supposed to be a presentation crutch.

Be Who You Are

Don't try and be something you are not. Audiences can smell a fake in a minute. Develop your own presentation style and use it!

Skip the Speech

The worst speakers are those who read straight off their notes. Use notes as reminders, but try not to read them. It is far better to speak naturally and use notes to keep yourself on target.

Once Upon A Time . . .

When telling a story during a presentation, it is not necessary to start at the beginning and tell the entire story detail by detail. Instead, edit your story so it includes enough background information to make it clear by focuses your efforts on the most salient points. The best presentation stories are simple, clear, concise and relate to your message!

Creating Warmth with Your Stance

Many audiences perceive presenters who stand squarely in front of the audience to be more formal and less friendly than those presenters who stand at a 45-degree angle to the audience. If you are looking to create a little more warmth with your audience, try integrating the 45-degree stance into your presentation delivery.

Avoiding Common Pitfalls Made by Presenters

Don't get caught up in the common mistakes of most presenters. By being aware of the following pitfalls, you can successfully navigate your way to a winning presentation.

Avoid Overdosing on Experts

Many speakers quote so many experts and resources they lose credibility. It's important to be aware of expert knowledge and even to include it where relevant in your presentation. But the presentation IS your presentation. Your audience should see you as the authority on the subject!

Communicating with Your Audience

Anyone can speak to an audience. You get up to say what you have to say and sit down. The real question is, "Did your audience get it?"

Great presenters don't speak to their audiences; they communicate with them. They consider a presentation a dialogue - and the audience is important.

Maintain Control

If you cannot control your audience, you cannot control your presentation. Given the right circumstances, you may lose control of the audience if questions get out of hand. The best way to handle this situation is to answer succinctly when a question is asked - then move on. Use your agenda to refocus the audience to the task at hand and redirect other questions for a time later in the presentation. Remember you are the speaker and you need to be in control of your audience. Be direct, but always be friendly!

Say “I Don’t Know” but . . .

Those words are OK to say. When you don’t know a specific answer, don’t bluff. If you are wrong you will lose credibility with your audience. The best way to handle this situation is to say you will find out and get back to them. At the next break, make a few calls to see if you can find out the answer. If you get an answer, provide that information to the group after the break. If not, be sure to follow up with the audience member after the presentation. Either way you will maintain your credibility.

Resist the Urge to Overload

Don’t overload your audience with information. When you develop the content of your presentation it is important to remember that your audience needs enough information to make an informed decision, but not every piece of information you have researched for the last ten years. Your presentation should be clear, concise and to the point! Keep it simple!

Know Your Audience!

When speaking to an audience of less than 10 people, make sure you know everyone’s name! If necessary, use nametags to aid your memory. If you don’t want to appear as though you need nametags, consider place cards. These appear courteous for all.

Using Handouts

Using handouts can help you clarify your message and reinforce key points. Charts, graphs, a copy of the presentation slides, and supporting documents all make good handouts. Just remember not to overwhelm your audience with too much handout information!

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Analyzing an Audience

One of the keys to developing effective presentations is learning how to analyze an audience - before you ever begin speaking. For example, assume you are speaking to a sales team who has just gone through a rough quarter. If you are aware of this fact before you write your presentation, you can include the type of information that would be most helpful, and avoid the kind of information that would be most harmful.

Presenters learn about their audiences from a variety of sources. Consider doing the following before a presentation:

- Interview the organization/company executives in charge of the meeting/event
- Interview a sampling of the audience members
- Review company/organization literature
- Research company/industry news via the Internet, magazines, newspapers, etc.

- Research associates within the industry

More importantly, try to answer the following questions in an effort to learn as much as possible about your audience.

1. Who is in your audience?

In order to give an effective presentation, you need to know as much as possible about your audience. Find out key demographics of the audience and determine how familiar they are with the subject of your presentation.

2. What does your audience want?

One goal of your presentation is to meet the expectations of your audience. So, focus on the audience's wants and needs. The success of your presentation depends on your ability to address those wants and needs.

3. Why are you presenting?

As you learn more about your audience and their expectations, it is important to do a self-evaluation as well. Are you comfortable speaking to this audience about this subject? Are you the right person for the presentation? How can you prepare to "be" the right person?

4. When/Where is your presentation?

Many presenters forget this step. Time and place are important considerations to consider when planning your presentations. Studies show that afternoon audiences respond differently than morning audiences. Typically, afternoon audiences require additional breaks because they have a reduced attention span. In addition, the venue in which you present may have a significant impact on your presentation. Presenting at a breakfast luncheon for example, requires more planning than a presentation in a standard conference room.

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Don’t Go Blank During Your Presentation

You have your audience following intently along. You are going like gangbusters, but then all of a sudden you lose your train of thought. You can’t quite remember where you are or where you are going . . . O.K., now you are beginning to panic . . . The first thing to remember is that this situation happens to everyone at some point in time! The key to solving this problem is knowing how to recover, without losing a beat. Here are some sure-fire ways to get your presentation back on track.

1. Don’t Freak Out

First and foremost, relax. Don’t go into a panic. Audiences can sense panic, and, like sharks, they look for it. Take a deep breath and relax!

2. Always Have Notes

Speakers should always have their speaker notes within reach. After you take a breath and relax, glance at your notes for an idea or trigger to get you back on track. Don’t rapidly flip through them like you are searching for the winning lotto numbers; just glance over them in a way that will refresh your memory!

Once you have what you need, pick up where you left off. Audiences don’t mind when you refer to your notes. The trick to using notes well is to make it look deliberate. Don’t try to get a frantic glimpse of them. Just look at them when necessary and then put them aside.

3. Have “Lifeboat” Questions

The other way to buy some time is to have back-up “lifeboat” questions. These questions should relate to your topic and be broad enough to take some time for your audience to answer, yet not so specific they need to review your presentation. While the audience is working on answering your question, you will have time to get back into the groove of your presentation.

Sample Questions

1. Reviewing the points just covered, how do they relate to the top projects in your department?
2. Identify how these points could have helped you in your last project. What would you have done differently?
3. Select the point you feel is most valuable and explain how you will integrate it into your current project.

Audience Pick-Me-Up

Pull your audience back into your presentation with a planned disruption. Audiences often drift off after about 15 minutes on continuous presenting. Bring them back with a change of pace. Get out from behind the podium and move around the room, use props to demonstrate a point, or take a short break if necessary. Your audience will appreciate the “pick-me-up”.

Everyone Makes Mistakes

All presenters make mistakes. Don't draw attention to your mistakes by interrupting your presentation with apologies. Repeated apologies will wear thin on an audience and you will lose credibility. Instead, effective presenters simply correct their mistakes and move on. Most audiences will never even notice them.

Eliminating Filler Words and Actions

Have you ever attended a presentation - one in which you knew the presenter - and have been astounded by how a seemingly articulate person disappears under pressure? All of a sudden, the colleague who speaks clearly and is respected by his team members stammers and stutters. He interjects “um” and “uh” in every other sentence. Why does this happen?

In general, when speakers say these filler words or do other filler actions (such as licking their lips), they do so unconsciously. They make these sounds or do these actions at a transition point - when they are getting ready to move on to another topic or offer an example. The simple act of switching from one topic to another demands a transition, and when one is not determined, the unconscious fills in. So, for some, it is a less-than-articulate “uh”, and for others it is scratching the head. In either case, the behavior can be stopped.

The best way to eliminate filler words and actions is to substitute one behavior for another. So at points of transition, or whenever you feel the need to inject filler, simply PAUSE. Take a deep breath and gather your thoughts. The pause that seems so long to you, pulse-racing, head-pounding, is actually a welcome respite for your audience. They, too need a filler in order to concentrate.

4 Easy Steps to a Great Presentation

Developing a presentation can be a daunting task. What do you do first? Write down notes, choose a slide template, look for research? Maybe a bit of everything? In general, there are four steps to creating a great presentation and they aren't what many people first consider. In fact, most people delve right into choosing artwork or thinking about the organization without considering the important background questions first.

Step 1 - Background

Before you begin to develop the content of your presentation, you need to know the basics: who you are presenting to, what is the specific topic to cover, what is the format of the presentation, etc. Be sure to look at [Giving Your First Public Presentation](#) and [Analyzing an Audience](#) to make sure you tailor your presentation to the audience's needs.

Step 2a - Content

Once you have finalized the background information, it's time to develop the "meat" of your presentation. This can be the most important task. Check out: [Brainstorming with Sticky Notes](#) and [The 4 Key Components of Content](#).

Step 2b - Visuals

You also need to create effective visual aids that emphasize key content points. Consult [The Numbers on Why You Need Visuals](#) if you want to understand the impact of visual aids. Then, go to the [Presenter's Online Resources](#) to download a great PowerPoint template or to find some new clip art.

Step 3 - Delivery

Once you have created your presentation, it's time to practice your delivery skills. Be sure to check out: [Making Eye Contact with Your Audience](#), [Integrating Movement in Presentations](#), [6 Tips for Keeping Your Presentation Interesting](#) for quick tips on improving your delivery technique.

Step 4 - Final Presentation

You have finished your presentation, practiced your delivery, and packed up your visual aids. You think you are set to go. BUT, do you remember how to set up the projector and connect your laptop? Have you saved a backup copy of your presentation on disk? Don't let technical difficulties kill an otherwise successful presentation.

The [Mobile Presenter's Checklist](#) ensures you have everything you need for your presentation.

Not sure which cable is which? [Projector Cables 101](#) shows you what you need to know. Get step-by-step information on [Connecting Laptops to Projectors](#) and [Connecting PowerBooks to Projectors](#).

Speaking to a large audience? Check out [Connecting Projectors to Public Address Systems](#) or [External Speakers](#).

The "ME" Rule

What's in it for "ME"? Make sure you specifically detail (at the beginning of your presentation) how the audience will benefit from listening to you . . . getting your audience to "buy in" to the benefits of your presentation is a key factor in your overall success!

Use Visual Aids as Enforcement

Use visual aids to your advantage! Reinforce key messages in a presentation with effective visual aids. Research shows the most effective presenters use a combination of verbal and visual communication methods to reach their audiences.

Getting Your Nerves Under Control Before a Presentation

It is no secret that many people do not like to get up in front of an audience to give a presentation. The simple fear of presenting often creates a great amount of nervous energy for a speaker. If this situation strikes you, what can you do with this nervous energy?

The best presenters learn how to take their nervous energy and transform it into presentation presence! By practicing the exercise tips below, you can turn your fear into a presentation strength. Go for it!

Exercise A: Breathe - Relax - Breathe

Take some deep breaths. Let the air out slowly. Repeat.

Stretch your muscles. Start with your neck, legs and arms.

Repeat the breathing exercises.

Finally, take a moment and close your eyes. Focus on being totally relaxed and prepared. Open your eyes and you should be ready to go!

Exercise B: The Walk

Take a few minutes and stroll through the presentation room before your audience arrives. Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation in various spots in the room. The goal is to make the room feel as if it were your space for success!

Exercise C: Greetings

Take the fear out of the “audience” by greeting them as they enter the room. Say “hello”, shake their hands, and start building “friendship” bridges. This simple action can take the mystery out of an audience and help you gain immediate impact as a presenter.

Giving Your First Public Presentation

Your boss just told you that you will be speaking next week at a luncheon meeting of the local professional marketing association. She said your topic should relate to the award-winning marketing campaign you just completed, but she didn't elaborate on details. You are excited but very nervous. You have never given a presentation before a large group and you don't know where to start. Have no fear! The following checklist should help you get the background information you need to develop an effective presentation.

General Information

1. Who will be attending?
2. How does your topic relate to the attendees?
3. Does this group understand the technical/industry language you may use in your presentation?
4. How long do you need to speak?
5. What is the preferred style to present?
6. Will there be Q&A?
7. What is the name of the sponsoring organization and key contact information?

Audience Information

1. What is the audience size?
2. What are the basic demographics of the audience (age, gender, race, religion, education level, socioeconomic level, etc.)?
3. What are some of the related interests of the audience?
4. What will the audience be wearing (audience attire)?

5. What will be the disposition of the audience (friendly, supportive, neutral, hostile)?
6. What is the knowledge level of the audience regarding your presentation topic?

Once you have the basic information about your audience, you need to get more information about the logistics of your presentation. This information is critical. You don't want to get caught preparing an hour-long presentation to later find you were to appear on an expert panel for Q&A.

Venue Information

1. When is the presentation (time/date/location)?
2. What information exists regarding the event?
3. What is the venue for the presentation?
4. What is the room setup?
5. If you need A/V equipment, can the staff supply the equipment you need?
6. Will there be other speakers? In what order will they speak? What are their topics?
7. Will someone introduce you? What is his/her contact information?
8. Will there be press coverage?
9. Who is responsible for travel and hotel arrangements/expenses?

Integrating Movement in Presentations

Movement is the key to breaking down the psychological space barriers that exist between the speaker and the audience. As a presenter, you notice this automatic barrier when you give a presentation. You are the speaker - they are the audience, and the audience is on the other side of an imaginary line. In order to break down this artificial barrier, it is imperative that you "cross the line". The easiest and most effective way to do this is through movement.

A speaker should establish three positions in the room to which he/she travels throughout the presentation. The first of these positions is the home position. This position is where you spend most of your time during the presentation. In order to maximize your interaction with the audience, you should refrain from using the podium as this position.

The second position is designed to create a change of pace and increase interest in your presentation. The second position can be used as a staging area to review visuals such as flipcharts, transparencies or electronic slides. This position is usually directly across from the home position, on the same side of the room. This juxtaposition creates a sense of balance.

The third position is designed for special points in your presentation, and it should be used sparingly. This position is the only one that crosses the imaginary line between you and the audience. When you enter this space, you bridge the gap between you and your audience.

Movement is not complicated to incorporate into a presentation: it simply requires planning. Before your next presentation, arrive early and establish your three positions. Practice when and how you will use these positions. Soon you will learn how to effectively use movement in your presentation.

Movement is as easy as 1-2-3!

Position 1

Home position

Position 2

Visual position

Position 3

High-impact position

Keeping Your Audience Awake During a Video

Videos are a great way to add visual pizzazz to presentations. However, videos can backfire on you if they put your audience to sleep. Below are some easy tips on how to hold an audience's attention during a video.

Give a preview

Before you show the video, tell your audience what the video is about, what to look for, and what questions you will discuss when it is over. Setting expectations for an audience helps to keep them tuned in while they watch.

Break before the video

Take a break before showing the video. Your audience will be more refreshed and ready to actively view the video when they come back. Be careful though - sometimes people perceive a video as "optional". If you let an audience know you will use the information in the video later in the presentation, they will be sure to watch it.

Listen for the last line

Tell your audience that the most important part of the video is the very last line (if it is in any way true). When you offer this information, your audience will pay close attention to the whole video in an effort to absorb "why" the conclusion is the most important part.

Bonus Video Tips!

- Make sure that your video pertains to the overall message of your presentation.
- Edit your video so that it does not drag on. Only show the segments relevant to your presentation.

Planning Breaks During Presentations

Effectively planning breaks throughout a presentation keeps an audience alert and interested. As a general rule, you should take a 10-minute break for every hour you speak. Audiences get restless if you do not allow them to stretch, go to the restroom, return a page, etc. In addition, it is difficult for audience members to intently focus on your presentation for an extended period of time. By planning systematic breaks, you enable your audience to focus their attention on you.

Below are some planning tips for breaks.

Plan breaks at strategic points

While it is important to take a break every hour or so, don't stop midway through a key presentation point to take a break. Make sure you finish a point or topic and then take a break.

Set a return time

Don't tell your audience how long a break is. Instead, give them a specific time to return. This avoids any speculation.

Vary the lengths of breaks

Consider, for example, offering a 5-minute break after the first hour of a lengthy presentation. This allows your audience to get a drink of water and run to the restroom. Because the presentation has just begun, their "needs" should be minimal. Give them 15

minutes for the second break. This allows the audience to take care of more time-consuming items. When you allow your audience time to take care of their “outside” items, they can be more attentive and focused when they return.

Ask for their input

If you are unsure of your audience’s needs, ask them how much time they need. In coming to a consensus about the break, you establish psychological agreement with them to return on time. It really does work!

Presenting to Different Types of Audiences

Every audience is unique - but types of audiences have specific, common needs. Knowing the “make-up” of your audience is key to successfully communicating with them. Below are several types of audiences that speakers typically encounter and tips on how to effectively interact with them.

The Executives

When making a presentation to your direct superiors or other executive managers, make sure the tone and manner in which you present reflects a “suggestive” tone. This type of presentation is more formal than others. As a subordinate, you want to make sure you don’t come off as lecturing to your audience or presenting yourself as “one of them”. Instead, make a series of suggestions or recommended course of “actions” to your audience. Also, just in case there are questions, always have the facts and figures to back up your recommendations.

The Peer Group

The key to successfully communicating to this audience is setting a tone of mutual respect and sharing. When presenting to your peers, it is important that you draw them into the presentation by asking them for their opinions, experiences and feedback.

The Team

The key to presenting to your own team is using the word “we”. If you are part of a group, it is important to acknowledge group success as well as accept group blame.

Special Interest Groups

The key to communicating with this audience is relating your topic to the “issue” of the special interest group. By showing the audience you understand their issue, you can make an emotional connection with them. Once you have established such a connection, the audience is ready to truly listen to you. Consider the following example:

A corporate executive from a large health care provider was going to make a luncheon presentation to a women’s health group. To gain the interest of her audience, the executive focused on how her organization developed a free health clinic for inner city women. In doing so, she related her presentation message to an issue that was important to her audience. It was a great success!

Mixed Groups

When you have a combination of groups, it is important to structure your presentation so that within the first minutes of presenting, you are able to reach out and connect with each subgroup. Depending on the make-up of your audience, you may want to focus your presentation on the main subgroup within your audience. Just make sure you also plan ways to involve the other audience subgroups.

Putting Your Best Image Forward

It is extremely important as a presenter to project a positive image. Audiences evaluate not only what is presented, but who presents it. They may think the information you present is great, but if they are unsure of who is delivering it, you still may not convince your audience to do what you want them to do. Remember the messenger is just as important as the message.

Research shows you have seven seconds before your audience starts forming an opinion about you. That's not a lot of time to put your best foot forward. The key factors in a speaker's image include dress, attitude, tone and knowledge. Fine tuning these factors can help you develop a powerful image. Below are some tips to help you develop the image you want to project to your audience!

Dress

- Your dress should communicate a professional image.
- Dress should be conservative unless you know otherwise.
- Men should typically wear a suit.
- Women should wear a suit or skirt and jacket.
- Clothes should be clean and neatly pressed.
- Shoes should be shined.
- You should evaluate the level of dress of your audience and dress one level up.
- Power colors include navy blue, dark gray, and most jewel tones.

Extra Tips for Women!

- Pearls add credibility.
- Dangling jewelry is distracting.

Attitude

The only attitude that is appropriate for a presentation is an upbeat positive one! No audience wants to listen to an unenthusiastic, disinterested speaker. If you don't have a positive attitude about what you are talking about, why should your audience? There may be on occasion when a speaker should have something other than an upbeat attitude, but this is the exception and not the rule.

Tone

When speaking with your audience, your tone should be confident but not authoritative. The trick is to speak to your audience in a way in which you convey yourself as knowledgeable and confident, but not authoritative or overbearing.

Be sure you speak slowly enough for the audience to follow you. People are frustrated by fast speakers and tend to view those speakers as nervous. When covering the important points, slow down. Audiences will focus in on those specific points, and such concentration will help them retain information after the presentation is over.

Knowledge

Make sure you know what you are talking about! There is nothing more frightening than giving a presentation about something you don't know about. Make yourself take the time necessary to research anything you don't know.