

## How To Give Powerful Presentations

In spite of the popularity of cross-training, most people as a rule aren't asked to do something totally out of their field. Physicians aren't asked to do root canals, dentists aren't asked to balance their clients' books, CPA's aren't asked to sell cars, and salespeople aren't asked to build bridges.

But almost everyone in a corporate or professional setting these days is expected, even required, to give presentations. Public speaking is a profession which requires training and practice just like any other. Yet we're constantly being pushed to the front of the room to sell, educate, persuade, dazzle and shine. It can be scary for some and downright debilitating for others.

I've had clients who think nothing of starting up or running a business yet become like jellyfish when they have to give a major presentation. So what do you do? The best help is to get professional coaching. In the meantime, here are my ten "P's" of Personable, Professional Presentations.

**1. The Plan.** In choosing your topic, realize the best speakers speak from their own experiences. It's good to have references from (other) experts, but remember you're the specialist here or you wouldn't have been asked to speak. During the planning phase find out all you can about your listeners, location, and latitude. Customize your talk to your audience. Know how to get to your venue then arrive early. Know what's expected of you and stay within your time frame.

**2. The Preparation.** Mark Twain said, "It usually takes me three weeks at least to prepare a good impromptu speech." The best way is to write your talk, then speak from notes highlighting what you want to cover. The second best way is to write the speech out and practice it until you can do it without referring frequently to your script. The worst ways are reading it with little eye contact or memorizing it (unless you're a professional actor).

**3. The Presentation.** The most important aspect is the visual – how you look, eye contact, body language, gestures and the visuals you use. If you look nervous, it destroys your message. As someone said, it's all right to have butterflies, just make them fly in formation. The next important element is vocal – how you speak, the tone, pitch, clarity, volume and quality of your voice. The final element is verbal – the actual words you say. It's important to be accurate and, yes, entertaining. The bottom line is that *how* you deliver the talk makes more of an impression on your audience than *what* you say. Audiences will forgive you for making mistakes, but not for boring them or wasting their time.

**4. A Positive Attitude.** This is a hard one when you're feeling scared and nervous. And it's the best way to stop the jitters. The key is to be prepared, then get your ego out of the way and stop thinking about how the audience might judge you and think about what you can do for them. It's always about your listeners, not yourself. They want you to do well. You know you can do it!

**5. Be Physically (and mentally) Fit.** This means taking care of yourself daily. Eat right, exercise, meditate, and get enough rest especially the night before. You must have real physical and mental energy; you can't fake it.

**6. Practice!**

**7. Practice!**

**8. Practice!** The more you practice and hone your presentation, the better it will be when you give it. And the more you give actual presentations, the better you'll get at it. In fact it's the only way to master public speaking.

**9. Play.** You thought I was going to say "pray." That's always a good idea; I do it before every talk. Then Play. Relax and have fun. Giving a speech isn't brain surgery, even if you would prefer a lobotomy to having to give one. Personal stories are the most interesting part of any presentation that's ever been given and what people will remember most. Be naturally humorous rather than telling jokes.

**10. Pick a Professional Coach.** If you really want to be good at giving presentations, hire a coach. You can also take classes or join Toastmasters. Practice first in front of someone trained to give you good, honest feedback and who wants you to excel!

For a free tip sheet on giving presentations send me an email with the words "Speech Tips" in the subject line.

Bravo! Encore!

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