

## Presentation Tips for Speaking Before A Large Audience

January 2003

In addition to rehearsal, preparing to deliver a successful presentation requires a combination of techniques, including attention to:

- Content
- Delivery skills
- Audience size
- Room set up
- Positive visualizing

### Rehearsal

- Rehearse your presentation aloud whenever you find yourself alone
- Rehearse with *more* energy than you would use on the actual day of delivery
- SMILE! See what you look like delivering your presentation - videotape yourself, or deliver your presentation in front of a mirror
- Timing is critical to effective delivery, so practice your content paying attention to your pace; use a stop watch
  - When you rehearse, practice different body language techniques. Deliver your presentation standing up and sitting down.
  - Practice your eye contact with specific objects in the room
- Spend 30% of your presentation rehearsal on the first five and last five minutes of your presentation
- Practice in front of other people and seek honest feedback on content and delivery
- If possible, practice giving your presentation in the room where you will be presenting. This will raise your comfort level.
- Practice – arrive early and speak into the microphone ahead of time to attain level of comfort on the stage/in the room

### Content

- Craft a strong opening and close; memorize them
- Arrive early and introduce yourself to some of the audience members before starting your presentation or call some attendees before the session
  - Elicit information about their roles, challenges, objectives that you can weave into your presentation
- Organize content to focus on three key points
  - Outline what you will cover so the audience knows where you are going
- It is important to engage your audience right at the start of your presentation. You can do this by making the presentation interactive and posing two or three subject-relevant questions to the audience in your opening, and periodically throughout your presentation. Ask for show of hands for large audiences.

## **Delivery Skills**

- Delivering a message to other people is made up of three components, visual, vocal and verbal. The visual component usually carries the most weight with audience members – a person’s body language, posture, eye contact and facial expressions are the main areas of focus.
- Your objective is to be comfortable and controlled while you are presenting. You want the audience to see that you are relaxed and in control.
- Breathe
  - Before you go on stage, take several deep breaths. Make sure you get a comfortable breathing pace and that you do not breathe too shallow or too fast.
  - If your breathing gets out of control, pause, take a deep breath and stay quiet until breathing is controlled. Smile at the audience and start again.

### *Eye Contact*

- Before listeners can participate in your presentation they have to know that you’re talking to them. Making eye contact with your audience is crucial in order to establish a dialogue.
- Speak to one person for at least 3-5 seconds, then move on

### *Posture*

- For standing presentations, stand up straight and place your feet about 6 to 8 inches apart, parallel to each other with your toes pointed straight ahead to achieve a comfortable speaking position. Flex your knees and put your weight on the balls of your feet.
- Keep your posture open with arms relaxed down at your sides. Don’t cross your arms, it appears defensive.
- Hold your head and chin up. Having your chin raised gives you the aura of being in control.
- When seated, don’t slouch or appear too comfortable or relaxed. Sit straight up in your chair, spine straight, with your feet flat on the floor and hands open on the table. Lean forward slightly.

### *Movement*

- If using a podium or lectern, place it where you want it. Use a podium or lectern as little as possible. Remember that standing behind the lectern or podium separates you from audience members.
  - Getting closer to your audience increases their attention and interest. It also encourages response if you are asking questions.
- Consider using a wireless microphone if the microphone is located on the podium or lectern
- Do not rock back and forth on your legs

### *Gestures*

- Avoid putting your hands in your pockets. If unavoidable, empty your pockets of change and keys before presenting. Never play with change in your pockets.
- Eliminate clasping your hands in a praying position
- Use open gestures to reinforce what you are saying
  - Gestures should be varied. Repetition can be distracting to audience members. You may find them watching your gestures instead of listening to the presentation.
  - You can use your fingers to represent numbers (e.g., first, I will cover...second,...third,... and raise one, two and three fingers)
- Nodding your head and smiling are effective ways to emphasize what you are saying
- Gestures are visual reinforcements of the words and ideas you are trying to communicate to your audience

### **Engaging Your Audience**

- As mentioned earlier, interactive presentations are more effective than “lecture” presentations or monologues
  - Team presentations with alternating sections and interjections can be very effective in holding audience attention
- Use name of the group you are presenting to or names of people you know in the audience. By personalizing your presentation, the audience perceives you as talking *about* them rather than *to* them.
- Always allow time for Q&A. Remember to control the flow of the Q&A session to avoid spiraling off the topic. Keep your answers concise. Practice answering a series of questions.

### **Room Set Up**

- Arrange the room set-up, when possible, to maximize your comfort level, eye contact and interaction with the audience

### **Positive Visualizing**

- Change your “what if” scenarios. Anxieties associated with stage fright are fears about something that hasn’t happened yet. As a speaking engagement approaches, rather than anticipating all the bad things that can happen and the “what-ifs”: “What if I forget what I'm going to say?” “What if my presentation is too long; not long enough?” Turn that energy around to make it work for you instead of against you.
  - Replace these scenarios with positive what-ifs: “What if I do a great job?” “What if exposing my insecurities makes me seem more real to my audience and more approachable?” “What if this experience gives me a whole new level of self-confidence and advances my career?”

- Another technique: prior to speaking, visualize the presentation having just finished, and the audience clapping and cheering. Picture the entire audience on their feet, hear the applause and the cheering, feel the warmth of feeling they hold for you, you can almost smell the success as you shake hands with your admiring followers. This has the effect of implanting positive subconscious messages in your mind, and will counteract negative thoughts.

## **10 Tips For Successful Public Speaking**

### **1) Know the room**

- Familiarize yourself with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early, walk around and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.

### **2) Know the audience**

- Greet some of the audience as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than strangers.

### **3) Know your material**

- Practice your speech

### **4) Relax**

- Ease tension by doing exercises; breathe

### **5) Visualize yourself giving your speech**

- When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful

### **6) Realize that people want you to succeed**

- Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative, and entertaining. They don't want you to fail.

### **7) Don't apologize**

- If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you may be calling attention to something the audience hadn't noticed

### **8) Concentrate on the message – not the medium**

- Focus your attention on your audience, not on yourself

### **9) Turn nervousness into positive energy**

- Harness your nervous energy and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm

### **10) Gain experience**

- Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking

Sources:

*Charnley & Røstvold*

[www.powerpointers.com](http://www.powerpointers.com)

[www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org)