

THE KEYS TO POWERFUL PRESENTATIONS

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Have you ever wondered how some people seem to "improvise" almost perfectly when giving a presentation? Everything seems to flow as if they knew exactly all the circumstances they would be facing. Those people seem to have tapped into some "secret" knowledge on how to spontaneously provide a cohesive sales message.

Often it's our presentation skills that can make or break a sale, regardless of the quality of our product. The good news is that we all can possess the keys that will give us access to the presentation skills that will close sales.

If you feel you could improve on your presentation skills, think back on a young man who actually stuttered when he spoke. During one key speech, he fainted. Yet we all remember Winston Churchill as one of the greatest orators of all time. What was his secret?

After analysing presentations I have made around the world, I have discovered the "secrets" that have made my presentations a success. Let me share them with you:

Begin strong. Grab them right away. As a salesperson, we only have those first few critical seconds to make a lasting impression. Perhaps start with an impressive statistic or a rhetorical question. When I teach presentation skills, sometimes I'll ask my group, "How many of you want to make more money?" Then I allow a little time to go by, and say, "Fine, stick with me for the next hour and I'll help you learn how to ask for it."

Have one theme. The mind can take in only so much information at one time. Make sure not to give your audience information overload. Develop a structure, with up to three main points, and back them up with support that revolves around one central theme.

Use simple, action-oriented language. Simple is not elementary; what you're doing is making it easy to understand and digest. Keep in mind my acronym E.A.S.Y.:

- E** -- Enthusiasm and Energy are key; be alive and vital when you present.
- A** -- Articulate your message. Clarity is essential.
- S** -- Simple, Short and to the point. I believe in the K.I.S.S. principle--keep it short and sweet.
- Y** -- Your audience--focus on them. This also helps take the focus off your nervousness and inhibitions. End with emotion, appeal to what matters most--hope, pride, love, profit--paint a word picture that your audience can see by the words you draw.

Keep in mind that it's not always what you say; it's how you say it. Probably the most neglected aspect of a person's image is our voice, yet the quality of our voice will have a profound effect on how we're perceived.

Research tells us that when we present, several things are taken into account by the receiver. Our voice inflection and modulation accounts for 37%, our appearance 55%, and what we actually say is only 8% of our message.

When you're preparing for your next presentation--whether it's a sales call, a meeting with your team, or a presentation to your boss and higher management-- keep these 10 survival skills in mind:

1. Act excited and eager to share your information. Dale Carnegie always said this was critical to taking the "stage". Plus it will come from a place of passion.
2. Use evidence and research to call for action. Know at least 150% of what people might ask. Keep extra visual aids in your bag to bring out during questions, when they're really paying attention.
3. Be animated, while being yourself. It's hard enough to remember all that you need to, so develop your own style. It's great to emulate others, just be the real you when you present.
4. Be aware of your hands and gestures. Your body is the number one visual aid. Practice in front of a mirror, watch your face and your gestures. Also, don't be a talking head behind a podium. Develop natural and graceful gestures. Maybe walk around a bit to create a more relaxed relationship with your audience.
5. Vary your voice pattern. Also use pauses to add drama, suspense, and to make a point. Watch television for examples. Even everyday news is better communicated with an effective presenter.
6. Keep your posture straight and natural. This takes practice, and the payoff is total confidence and control.
7. Know your audience. Sometimes it goes beyond basic research. For example, dressing appropriately for your audience could impress them. You'll have a more conservative look if presenting to a "Wall Street" crowd. Or you might be more casual in front of a creative group in the entertainment field. Of course, my rule is to always be professional and tasteful.
8. Relate to your audience with your eyes. It's been said that the eyes are the windows to the soul. Look at people when you present. The rule of thumb is to look at one person for at least three to five seconds, or as long as it takes to make a complete thought.
9. Be organised and prepared. As a salesperson you have a destination--to close a sale. When you have a road map, you increase your chances of getting there. It's amazing how much more confident we feel when we know our material and are organised. Prepare, and rehearse. Rehearse means to "re-hear" your presentation.
10. Know how to answer questions and objections. And do it in a non-defensive way. We must always pursue that we, as the commercial used to say, "never let them see you sweat."

Have a positive feeling about what you're presenting and project to your listeners the value and significance of the radio station that they're tuned into all day long- WII-FM--What's In It For Me!