



So, You Think Your Job Doesn't Require You to Present – Think Again!

We have been told time after time that one of people's top fears is the fear of public speaking; in fact for many people it ranks higher than death! Whether or not your employees actually have to deliver formal presentations or speeches, you may want to consider the skills that make presenters effective and how they apply to the day to day work of the employees on your team.

We have noticed a sharp rise in the number of participants in our Presentation Skills program at one of our client organizations. When we inquired we found out that when employees apply for new positions and attend their interviews, they are asked to deliver a presentation. Some presentations are short and some are long, depending on the position being applied for, but everyone presents. Why? Well, this organization believes that in their role as providers of service for both internal and external customers, every employee delivers presentations every day. They may be in the way they answer the phone, in the way they present ideas at meetings, in the way they provide information to clients – but the skills are the same whether the employee is in front of a formal audience, or speaking one-on-one to someone who needs their support. So what can you and your employees bring to your jobs that will cause people to take notice?

- **Look and sound like you want to be there.** To suggest that every time we speak to someone we need to smile broadly is a bit extreme, but there is no excuse for looking or sounding bored or irritated either. We usually tell people "Think about what your face would look like, your voice would sound like if you were looking forward to this conversation" and suddenly their eyes brighten and faces become more receptive. That's when they are at the top of their game and will score points with customers.
- **Focus on the message.** Most meetings are restricted by time and ideas need to be presented succinctly and with impact. Therefore, it is better to talk about a single theme, than to cram multiple points into an on-going stream of consciousness. Think of the one thing you want the group to take from your message, reinforce it with one or two supporting arguments and then stop talking.
- **Remember, it isn't a race.** There is a fine balance between speaking quickly enough that your enthusiasm shows, and speaking so quickly that your message is lost. This is particularly true when employees are on the phone or participating in a web meeting. Make a practice of organizing your thoughts so that the ideas flow, expressing them clearly and at a pace that is easy to understand. Don't let your great ideas get lost because people don't have the energy to keep up.

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- **Keep it simple.** There is something to be said for the KISS principle “Keep it simple ... seriously!” One of the surest ways to lose your audience, whether they are a customer on the phone, colleagues at a meeting table or panellists on an interview team, is to try to dazzle people with your depth of knowledge. Your listeners will stay tuned for about two minutes, and that is being generous, before they decide the baffle-gab isn't worth their time and energy. Learning to streamline your thoughts, explaining your ideas simply and getting to the crux of the issue will win you points every time.
- **Read out loud.** What has reading out loud got to do with presenting? Most adults don't read out loud very well – they stutter over words, lose track and deliver with a monotone. The problem is these are the same skills they bring when they speak to customers or present at a meeting. The best way to smooth out your vocal presentation is to pull out a book or magazine and read out loud for 10 minutes every day for two weeks. Practice pace of speech, tone, and enunciation and then bring those skills to each conversation you have at work.
- **Finish with a bang.** Even with the best presentation, listeners often only remember the last point they heard, so don't waste the opportunity to form an impression. Use your wrap up as an opportunity to summarize the main points, to provide more food for thought and to leave people feeling positive about working with you.

Your employees may never love delivering formal speeches but that doesn't mean they can't use the skills great presenters use to increase their effectiveness at work. By making the message clear and relevant, the audience will relate and walk away feeling better than when they walked in. The joy that you will feel when you've given an inspiring speech is definitely worth the effort. Good luck!

Links: <http://www.howtoadvice.com/SpeakSoOthersListen>

<http://www.creativekeys.net/PowerfulPresentations/article1025.html>