

**Speakers sometimes overlook the Golden Rule, I fear.**

**They go ahead and give a speech that they would hate to hear.**

- Charles Osgood

# Presentation Skills and Techniques



By Lori Jamieson

## Preparation

Defining the Purpose

- To inform: You will be delivering the oral equivalent of a written report; members of the audience may offer comments or ask questions.
- To persuade or collaborate: You are providing information to increase the audience's understanding or sway their opinion; to persuade, you may have to consider an appeal to emotion, as well as reason.

Think beyond what you are going to do during the presentation. Focus instead on what the audience will do after the presentation as a result of your comments.

## Analyzing the Audience

How many? Who are they? Will they be receptive, hostile or indifferent? Do they care about what you will be discussing? How much do they already know about the subject? Do they already know you? Do they respect your judgement?

For an uninterested or disinterested audience, delivery is the key to success. Be as dynamic and interesting as possible and use supporting material that will draw in the audience.

## Gathering the Information for the Presentation

- In an information presentation, you will be presenting facts.

- In a persuasive one, anecdotes, quotations and dramatic examples may be as effective as evidence or statistics.
- Be sure the information is accurate and specific. Examine your own assumptions!
- Emphasize ideas of great interest to the audience. Think about ways to make this information relevant to them, and not just to you.

## Organizing the Material

Remember that listeners, unlike readers, cannot review what has gone before. To help memory, it's good to build in some repetition. Tell them what you are going to say, say it, and then tell them what you have said.

Use a "you" approach that is positive and directly related to the audience's interest. Use clear, vivid language and explain the relationship between your subject and familiar ideas. This helps keep the audience's attention and convinces people that your points are relevant.

Think of a presentation as having:

- an introduction that previews
- a body that develops in a three-part structure
- a close that reviews

What are the audiences' expectations about information?

- If you identify a problem, the audience expects a solution.
- If you pose a question, the audience expects an answer.
- If you summarize the past, the audience expects you to draw a lesson for the present.
- If you declare that something is wrong, the audience expects you to say what is right.
- If you present a general overview, the audience expects you to illustrate with specifics.

Structure for good or positive news:

- put the good news first
- give supporting details
- close with goodwill statements

Structure for indifferent or negative news:

- begin with neutral opening statements
- give reasons leading to this bad news
- state the bad news as positively as possible
- state the suggestion, expectation or alternative
- close with goodwill statements

## Estimating Length

The average person can speak at the rate of about one paragraph per minute, or about 125 to 150 words per minute. In a 10-minute presentation, you could take two minutes to explain each of three points, using roughly 300 words for each, use one minute each for the introduction and the conclusion, and two minutes to interact with the audience.

Draw word pictures for the audience. Your points will have more effect if you put them in visual terms. Images have impact and stimulate memory.

## Audio-Visual Aids

Use audio-visual aids to emphasize, clarify or summarize important information. They should connect the audience to you and your message. What do you need to use, what are you comfortable in using, what do you have confidence in?

- Overheads
  - Keep them simple and uncluttered
  - Use upper and lower case; NOT ALL UPPER CASE
  - Use large-sized letters
  - Use a pencil or pointer by the item to which you are referring
  - Turn off the projector when you are finished referring to the transparency to reduce the distraction of light and noise
- Flip Chart
- Slide Projector
- Tape Recorder
- Video

Watch for more tips in the Fall issue on the delivery of your presentation, how to cope with nerves, holding the audience's attention and handling questions, as well as a checklist for evaluating a speech or presentation.

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