

It's show time !

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"An ounce of energy, is worth a pound of technique." -- Roger Ailes

Leadership is selling – whether it be to your service club, business or public sector organisation. And selling is talking. Yes, talking by having a *conversation with your audience*.

If you cannot persuade, convince and sell your idea, plan, product or service then your organization is in jeopardy.

So you've done your rehearsals! In front of a mirror, with a buddy or with a small test group. Rehearse, rehearse and rehearse. If not, you will become a victim of the 5 P's. Poor Planning Produces Poor Performances.

If you can, audio record your presentation or videotape it. Play it back, re-record your changes..... perfect your speech.

Do not rehearse silently..... rehearse out loud. Hear your tone, pace and emphasis.... Hear what works well and what does not. Do you have a logical flow? Are you stumbling over words because there is not a logical flow?

You are the message

Remember that you are the message, not your PowerPoint, not the podium, not your notes. How do you look:

- Dress – professional and appropriate to the audience.
- Well-groomed.
- Confident - if you have completed the planning and preparation, confidence will follow. Your gestures should be natural, spontaneous and lively. Relax and show relevant emotions through your facial expressions.
- Smile. Your smile will melt your audience. Use it.
- What is your self-talk? Remember, you become what you think. Your self-talk should be – *"I am an effective and proven presenter."* Note the present tense.
- Speech. An area to perhaps focus for a moment.

Just listen to commercials on the radio. The deeper a voice, the greater its believability. Pay attention to voices and notice:

Normal Voice Range occurs shortly after you talk (assuming the voice is not too high or too low). This is the level others recognise you, as being you.

Pitch is the level (high/low) of your voice. A pleasing one is mixed, high at times, low at others.

Pace is the number of words per minute. We use 145 words per minute on average. The older you get, the slower the pace.

P-a-u-s-e-s are the breaks we build into our speeches, so the listener can think. But you must gain confidence in order to use pauses. Confidence comes through knowing your material.

Projection is the way we emphasise clarity and tone. If you lack confidence, the lack of projection will give it away. You will sound uncertain and that will be recognised instantly.

As soon as the voice rises above Normal Voice Range, the believability of the message diminishes. The minute it drops below the norm, the believability of the message increases.

Get feedback on how your voice projects and practice making it distinctive with clarity, pitch and pace.

Factors influencing listener impressions

Professor Mehrabian of the University of California conducted extensive research involving many different speakers and audiences to identify which factors most influenced listener impressions. The results were surprising:

55% by the speaker's non-verbal communication. (facial expressions and body language)

38% by the speaker's voice quality, tone, pitch, volume and variation.

Only 7% were the words themselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is show time!

Meet, greet and incorporate

Arrive early, not just to check out the logistics but to meet attendees and learn what is important to them. During your presentation you can refer to your conversations, acknowledge some members of the audience and, if appropriate refer to them in your talk.

Perhaps sit through prior sessions and then piggyback off that prior session.

Now it is time to transition your audience from their everyday lives and struggles to paying attention to you and what you have to share. That first impression will determine whether or not they will listen and trust you. If you don't make a striking first impression, you may lose the audience for the rest of the presentation.

The person introducing you has set the stage for your performance. Strangely, by starting with a p-a-u-s-e you will capture their attention. Now it is time to develop an instant rapport. Consider opening with a question. Open-ended questions are a great way to grab attention and arouse curiosity. The question should be intriguing and tie right into your presentation theme.

For example a newspaper editor asked to talk on the freedom of the press opened with:

"I have been asked to talk about what I consider to be the most important challenge facing mankind, and I have the answer." P-A-U-S-E *He set the hook.*

Then he went on to say “The greatest challenge facing mankind is the challenge of distinguishing reality from fantasy, truth from propaganda.....”

Your opening must be just as powerful.

Be aware of your fillers

Most of us use “fillers.” “Ah,” “Um” and “Shall we say” are some of the common ones. Once someone tells you which fillers you use, you will become immediately aware, and not use them again.

Losing the nerves

The 5 P's -- Poor Planning Produces Poor Performances. Honestly, planning and rehearsals are the best way to lose your nervousness. Imagine your success and imagine the audience acting on your information or being overjoyed by the celebration you are sharing.

Be positive and visualize your success - your audience wants you to succeed.

Don't use alcohol or caffeine. In the middle of your presentation your mouth will be like the Sahara desert and no amount of water at that point will save you.

You have met, greeted and now you can incorporate. Concentrate on remembering faces, names and topics of discussion so that during your presentation you can weave in the conversations.

Check out all the logistics. Yes, right down to checking that the PowerPoint and microphone work. Lesson learnt: sometimes they don't. Additionally, make sure you have water on the podium.

Now it is your quiet time. Use the time to get yourself centered on your audience and take a final run through of your material *Believe in yourself.*

Warm up the audience. Use the pause following your introduction and if you tell jokes then tell one (perhaps one against yourself) relevant to your presentation. If you are not a joke-teller, then use an open-ended question to grip their attention.

Pace. *Most of us talk too fast, slow it down.* Have a “spotter” in the audience.... Look for the person and slow down if they indicate.

The other benefit of a spotter is that they can provide you with objectivity on where you need to improve. Most of us know what we have done right but a spotter can look at audience reaction to see what is working and what is not.

The 3-second rule. You have the audience to your left of the stage, the center and then the right. Even where there are bright lights and you cannot see the audience imagine you can. Stop and look at them for 3 seconds, move to the next spot in the audience stop for 3 seconds and then move on. Continue this throughout your entire presentation and use that smile. They want you to succeed.

Audience Interaction -- to really bond with your audience wherever it is practical try to get participation. Never, never assume they have read anything.

Your Grand Finale

Do a look-back on what the audience now knows as a result of your presentation. As you repeat your key points you are also helping your audience to better retain your information.

End with your call to action. This is your time to sell your idea, plan, product, service or celebration.

Send your audience away buzzing!