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5 Presentation Secrets That Will Change Your Life

By Debbie Bailey

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You've been asked to give an important presentation. A lot is riding on how well you can deliver. The problem is, you're not sure where to begin. The last class you took on presentation skills told you to tie your hands behind your back and blend in with everyone else. Is that really a good approach?

The answer is a LOUD and RESONATING NO WAY.

If you want to WOW your audience, you have to STAND UP and STAND OUT!

Here are 5 Presentation Secrets designed to help you see an immediate and dramatic improvement in your presentation performance.

Secret #1 – Manage Your Anxiety So That It Doesn't Manage YOU!

Most of the nervous symptoms you experience before a presentation are exactly the same as those you feel when excited. To the body adrenaline is very simply-ENERGY. If we call it energy or excitement it is good, if we call it anxiety, it is bad. The first step toward successfully managing your anxiety is to remove the negative label and rename that feeling you have right before you step up to the podium, EXCITEMENT. Tell yourself that you are excited about the opportunity to speak in front of this group. "Excitement" is a much more manageable and positive emotion than "anxiety." Then use your excitement to energize you and help you communicate your enthusiasm to your audience.

Secret #2 – When It Comes To Your Delivery Style, Be More Of Who You Really Are!

Everyone has their own innate "style" of presenting. Your style is made up of many different aspects of your delivery, including your body, voice, face, the way you use language, level of formality, etc. The trick, within your style, is to be more of who you really are, which means knowing and then capitalizing on your greatest delivery strengths.

Many presenters focus too much attention on their words. With words only accounting for 7% of your power as a presenter, spending too much energy on the words alone is a big mistake. Your nonverbal delivery style-also called your presentation personality--accounts for 97% of your power as a

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presenter. To improve your chances for success, focus on the real source of your power—your nonverbal communication such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, movement, proximity, clothing, vocal variety, rate, loudness, and silent pauses.

Secret #3 – Give the Audience All the Enthusiasm You Want Back!

You can't expect an audience to be enthusiastic about a product or program you aren't excited about. Presentation author Doug Stanart concluded, "Your audience will have just about as much excitement about your presentation as you do, and no more." Enthusiasm is very catchy. Most audiences will match your level of enthusiasm pound for pound.

According to the Lamalle Report on Top Executives of the 1990s, one of the most important factors in

determining financial success by those earning over \$250,000 is being enthusiastic and having a positive attitude (46%). Apparently, along with being incredibly enthusiastic, successful people never underestimate the power of positive thinking.

Why does having a positive attitude matter so much? Research solidly indicates that expectations influence behavior meaning if you expect to succeed, it is likely that you will and if you expect to fail, you are more likely to be unsuccessful. Expectations create outcomes because we work toward the outcome we expect, even if it is failure. Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or think you can't—you are right."

Enthusiasm has amazing transformational powers. As you release your energy using positive nonverbal behaviors (gestures, movement, loud voice, etc.), you will begin to relax. And, your audience will quickly become excited. It works like magic! Watch how easily you can transfer your enthusiasm to your audience.

Secret #4 – NEVER Apologize, Confess, Or Make Excuses!

Presenters say the darndest things..."I'm sorry but I have a cold today so my voice may sound a little funny" (apology) OR "I just found out about this presentation yesterday, so I didn't have as much time to prepare as I would have liked" (excuse) OR EVEN "I'm so nervous..." (confession). It is always surprising how often and how easily presenters use these NEGATIVE phrases.

Up until now, that is.

If you want to WOW your audience, you have to adopt and live by the motto: NO APOLOGIES, NO EXCUSES, NO CONFESSIONS.

When you APOLOGIZE, MAKE AN EXCUSE, or CONFESS at any time during your presentation, you are in essence saying to the audience, "Don't expect a lot from me today because I'll disappoint you." Instead of APOLOGIZING—"I'm sorry I didn't bring in a sample, but I couldn't arrange it on such short notice," try framing it in the positive, "I am working on getting you a sample and I can deliver it next week." Instead of making EXCUSES, put your energy into delivering the best possible presentation

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and then stand behind your performance—"I did the best job I could given the circumstances." And limit your CONFESSIONS—especially those the audience has no business knowing such as "I'm so nervous"—to church!

Secret #5 – Get Your Audience Involved In Your Presentation!

People are notoriously BAD listeners. In fact, the attention span of the average American is just nine seconds. That means every nine seconds each member of your audience takes a little mental vacation from the taxing work of listening to your presentation.

With so much fading in and out, it makes sense that the audience remembers only about 20% of what they hear. Stated conversely, the audience will FORGET nearly everything you say (80% of it anyway). Retention improves when you add a visual element to your presentation, but it still is rather dismal at 50% (don't celebrate yet, they are still forgetting half of your presentation!). And that's just immediate recall. I'm sorry to say that it gets worse as time elapses.

So how do you get the audience to remember MORE of your presentation for longer periods of time?

To raise your audience's remembering quotient, you have to engage them in your presentation, getting them to actively participate in it. Your goal is to transform the audience from passive listeners to active participants.

The six best ways I've found to engage the audience in your presentation is to:

1. Ask the audience a question
2. Take a poll
3. Involve the audience in a demonstration
4. Give the audience a test
5. Give the audience a listening assignment
6. Employ a gimmick

When an audience participates in a presentation, they are fully engaged in the presentation. This means that every part of them is involved in the presentation—their hearts, minds, and bodies. The voice inside their head that thinks of all kinds of extraneous, random thoughts, is for once, silent while they focus solely on your presentation. This concentrated focus enables them to remember so much more!

For much more about these and other Presentation Secrets, check out the book "15 Presentation Secrets: How to WOW Even the Toughest Audience," by Debbie Bailey available at trainer2go.com/ebooks.html.

Debbie Bailey is author of the book "15 Presentation Secrets – How to WOW Even the Toughest Audience." She is well known for her presentation skills classes. Debbie possesses a Masters Degree in Professional Communications and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech Communication.

Creating Your Presentation Success With a Positive "I Can" Attitude

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Over the years, I have worked with hundreds of presenters who had a negative script running through their head before each presentation. Their self-talk sounded something like this, "I should have prepared more. I wanted to do so much more but I ran out of time. I'm not a very good presenter. I don't think this is going to go very well. If I had a few more days, I could do much better." And so on and so on.

This constant mental berating of oneself is very dangerous. Not only does it increase your anxiety about presenting, it helps shape the outcome of failure. We believe we won't do well and so we manufacture that failure to confirm what we already know to be true.

How incredibly self-defeating is that?

The goal of your presentation preparation is to do EVERYTHING necessary to be prepared for your presentation and then change that negative self-talk into a more positive dialogue that increases self-esteem, reduces anxiety, and sets up the expectation of success. Before a presentation, you should be telling yourself, "I am ready. I've done everything I could to prepare. I know my stuff. I am going to do very well." This will enable you to think positively about your presentation and carry that positive attitude into your actual presentation.

What amazes me is how much more difficult it is to be kind to ourselves and believe in our success than it is to demean and berate ourselves and expect to fail.

The things we say to ourselves undoubtedly influence our feelings and our attitudes. Instead of telling yourself that you aren't ready or that you wanted to be more prepared, why not try adjusting your attitude to the positive side of life—"I am ready and I am going to give a good presentation." Then watch as your positive outlook creates a positive outcome!

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