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Presenting Yourself

By Dr. Joseph Sommerville

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Anytime employers are asked about the skills they value most in employees, it's always in the top five. Senior managers and executives frequently cite it as one of the keys to their achievements. Business coaches, leadership development specialists and peak performance experts say it's essential to success. "It" is the ability to communicate ideas clearly and persuasively. Yet, it's often one of the most overlooked areas of personal development. Despite the fact that we spend up to 60% of our workday communicating, people rarely spend time trying to improve their communication skills. One reason for the neglect is that communication is often labelled a "soft skill." When budgets are tight, training in a soft skill slides down the list of priorities and up the list of things to cut. Given it's importance in the workplace however, a more accurate label would be "essential skill."

One of the most visible forms of communication in the workplace is the presentation. Yet in the process of helping professionals transform themselves into more effective communicators, my greatest obstacle is frequently the misconception people have concerning the role and nature of presentations in their professional lives. A comment I regularly hear is "I don't give presentations."

If you believe this, you need to expand your thinking about what constitutes a "presentation." What usually comes to mind is an event where you are standing in front of an audience and speaking for ten minutes to an hour. But presentations come in many more varieties than the formal situation I've just described.

The common thread running through what might at first seem to be rather diverse activities is an effort on the part of one person to communicate with others. And regardless of the message, you're always presenting yourself. In fact, you're presenting yourself every time you:

1. Motivate people to accept change
2. Launch a new program
3. Give a safety briefing at work
4. Solicit Donations for a charity
5. Train people to use software

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6. Unveil a new policy
7. Present opening arguments in a trial
8. Convince a jury of the merits of your case
9. Give a sales presentation
10. Report your 3rd quarter sales results
11. Pitch for an account
12. Calm angry employees
13. Instil confidence in customers
14. Introduce a speaker
15. Facilitate a discussion
16. Depose a witness
17. Reassure stakeholders

18. Honor a community leader
19. Deliver an orientation to new employees
20. Reinforce commitment to an idea
21. Entertain an after dinner crowd
22. Change attitudes or beliefs
23. Accept an Award
24. Persuade prospects to buy
25. Talk to a service group
26. Position your service or product
27. Ask for a promotion
28. Promote your brand
29. Apologize for a mistake
30. Answer questions
31. Arouse interest in a new product
32. Explain how something works
33. Attract Investors to your business
34. Demonstrate your product
35. Negotiate a deal
36. Conduct a meeting
37. Express your support for a candidate
38. Articulate your vision as a leader
39. State your point of view at a meeting
40. Question a witness
41. Gather information from a patient
42. Teach a Professional CE course
43. Eulogize a friend or colleague
44. Spark interest in your new product
45. Review an employee's performance
46. Speak on behalf of your organization
47. Approach prospects for a first appointment
48. Address a group of shareholders
49. Discuss alternative solutions to a problem

50. Interview for a job

Make no mistake about it: just like death and taxes, presentations in some form are an inevitable part of your working life. Ignore them at your own peril. Anytime you communicate you are presenting yourself. People will make judgments about your competency, your credibility and your character based on the quality of that communication.

The good news is that when you make the commitment to improve your presentation of self, you will have gained a skill that is transferable to dozens of other situations. When you learn how to plan your communication strategically, how to analyze and adapt to different audiences, how to craft compelling words and phrases and how to deliver your message in a way that commands attention, you'll have a powerful set of tools with a lot of portability. They will contribute to your success in any job you may hold in the future.

If you recognize that you could use improvement in this area of your professional life, it's important to get started now. Read books and articles on becoming a more effective communicator. Consider taking a continuing education course through your professional or trade association. Your local university or

community college probably offers courses that range from one day workshops to semester long classes. It's an investment of your time that has a guaranteed return.

Dr. Joseph Sommerville helps professionals create more persuasive messages. He is the President of Peak Communication Performance (www.peakcp.com), a Houston-based firm working worldwide to help professionals develop skills in strategic communication. Contact him at Sommerville@Peakcp.Com

Presenting Your Case

By John Colanzi

Presenting Your Case by John Colanzi

When you're putting your sales pieces together, you can learn a lot from lawyers.

Whether it's a defense attorney or the prosecution, the first thing a lawyer does is read the jury members.

He does his best to get inside their heads to determine exactly what will get them to decide in his favor. The best lawyers are great people readers.

You must learn what people's hot buttons are just as any good attorney does. Also like a good lawyer, you

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must realize your audience reacts on an emotional level.

When you're presenting your case you must grab them by their emotions.

He also appeals to all their senses. So should your sales letters.

If you're selling food, your letter should literally make them water at the mouth.

If you're selling opportunity offers, the reader should be made to see all the goodies their new found money will bring.

So how do the legal beagles accomplish this?

They study every bit of the evidence. You should study your product or service as just as diligently.

Once they've gathered all the facts, they're ready to present their case.

Your headline should be as well thought out as their opening words. You should get your customers' attention as compellingly as they capture their jury's.

Once they've got a jury's attention they begin banging out the evidence. In the same manner you should be

banging out your offers benefits.

Bam ... Bam ... Bam!

Once they've grabbed the jury by their emotions and pounded out every point to make their case, they give their closing statement and ask the jury for the verdict they've made the case for.

The same applies to your sales letter.

Grab their emotions, pound out your benefits and build your case. Then you're ready to ask them to pull out their wallets and place their order.

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Start presenting your case and the sales will come.

John Colanzi has been writing for the Internet for 3 years. He has shown hundreds of webmasters how to use mindset medication to join the ranks of the successful, prosperous marketers. Subscribe now to his "Street Smart Marketing Newsletter get over \$130 in Free Reprint Rights.
mailto:streetsmart@rapidreply.net



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