

Ten Quick Presentation Skills Tips for Outstanding Presentations

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It's that time again...the monthly meeting. You break out in a cold sweat just thinking about it. Whether you present to your managers or your employees you are saying to yourself:

- What if I mess up during my presentation?
- What if I repeat myself during my presentation?
- What if the audience doesn't like my presentation?
- What if I forget a part of my presentation?
- What if I look nervous during my presentation?

It's okay! You're not the only one feeling this way. The Book of Lists states that the #1 fear is public speaking. This fear is greater than the fear of death.

Well, I have the answers to your fears and can help you become an outstanding presenter. These 10 tips will help you gain outstanding presentation skills, overcome public speaking anxiety, and become more confident making presentations that achieve results.

1. Start with an End in Mind

Ask yourself, "Why am I speaking?" "What do I want the audience to do after listening to my speech?" This will help you focus on the message you want to share with your audience. It will help you focus on who is your audience, the key points, and what you want your audience to do after listening to you.

2. Keep It Simple

Keep your presentation simple by learning to "speak to express instead of speaking to impress." What I mean by speaking to impress is when you see speakers using \$5 words for \$2 situations during speeches and they look uncomfortable doing it. Another example of this is when presenters overuse PowerPoint. Your audience will soon lose interest in what you are saying.

Also keep it simple with the structure of your speech. An opening, body with three major points, and a closing will help you connect with your audience.

Just be sincere, concise, and simple in your presentation and you will always connect with your audience.

3. Practice, Practice, Practice

Master your presentation by practicing. Here's the secret to practicing. First read your speech to yourself 2-3 times. This allows you to work out the majority of the rough spots in your presentation before you start rehearsing.

Then rehearse in front of a mirror or even better a video camera or tape player. Also try to rehearse in front of someone whose opinion you value.

Then practice as close as possible to your speaking environment. For example, if you will be speaking behind a lectern, practice with your notes on an ironing board.

4. Visualize Success

Before going to sleep the night before a presentation I take time to visualize the success of the presentation. The key to making visualization work for you is involving as many senses (sound, touch, sight, smell, etc.) as possible in your visualization. Have you ever had a dream where it seemed so real you awoke in a cold sweat (You don't need to tell me what the dream was)? It was because you used all your senses and that dream became so real to you that you needed to escape from it.

Visualize yourself giving a successful presentation where you see yourself as a confident presenter, hear yourself handling questions, etc. Visualize successful presentations so that it becomes real.

5. Eat the Elephant

I ask the timeless question, “How do you eat an elephant?” Piece by piece. The same answer applies to presenting to a group. How do you present to a group? Person to person. Break the group into individuals.

“How do I present to a large group?” is one of the biggest questions people have when giving presentations. Get personal. Whenever possible, I will make sure I arrive early to the room I’m presenting in and plant myself by the entrance. I will then greet as many people as possible that walk through the door. I will shake their hands and let them know I am glad they came. Here’s a tip for guaranteeing a positive audience:

As you greet, look for pleasant, upbeat people. Then say something like, “I’m especially glad you made it today. As a matter of fact there’s a sit in the front row with your name on it. Please enjoy!”

The audience member will usually chuckle and you started the personalization process. Also this allows you to stack all the friendly audience members in the front rows. It’s always nice to see friendly faces in the front row.

Remember, when giving a presentation, it’s not about your needs or concerns. It’s about the audience’s needs or concerns. Make it personal and eat the elephant!

6. Nail Your Presentation Opening

It’s the first words your audience hears. Know your opening like the back of your hand. Know exactly what you are going to say. Once you get started and gain some momentum you will start to gain confidence for the rest of your speech.

It helps to pause for 3-5 seconds before you are about to start your presentation so that can focus on what you are about to say.

7. Nail Your Presentation Ending

It's the last words your audience hears and reminder about you. You can have a great opening and body and have a bad ending and your audience will always remember how you ended.

Ask your audience to take action, think about an idea, etc. so that they understand why they are there.

8. Backup if You Forget

If you forget what you are about to say or lose your place in the presentation do the following:

- Stop speaking. Take two steps backward. Then take a deep breath. Collect your thoughts. Smile. Take two steps forward and proceed with your presentation.
- Go back and repeat the last sentence. That will help trigger what comes next in your presentation.
- If you really go blank, ask an audience member what was the last sentence you said. Also, if they have handouts of your speech, you can ask the audience what is the next subject we will discuss. You will be surprised how many people will volunteer this information to help you. This will give you time to collect your thoughts, involve the audience, and go forward with your presentation.

Note: If you forget a piece of information, collect yourself, and then go forward. Never say, "I'm sorry." Unless the audience has a copy of every single word of your speech they will never know you forgot something.

9. Realize Presentation Nervousness is the Tool of Great Presenters

Believe it or not, all presenters, whether professional or occasional, are nervous when presenting. The difference is the best presenters use nervousness to their advantage by turning nervousness into positive energy. Here are some tips to control nervousness:

- Whenever possible walk from the back of the room to burn some of the nervous energy
- Slow your breathing
- Stretch

10. Get Excited About Your Presentation

Get excited so that the audience is excited about hearing your presentation.

Some of the ways you can become excited is:

- Remember what you say is important and can make a difference for your audience.
- Every opportunity to present is a chance for you to succeed.
- Every time you speak you become better than the last time.
- Presenting will expose me to countless opportunities I wouldn't have by not presenting.

So the next time you have the opportunity to present apply the above presentation skills techniques. You will have fun while presenting, overcome public speaking anxiety, and take your public speaking to a whole new level.