Delivering an Effective Presentation

Presentations are a source of anxiety for most people. Who doesn't know the experience of "butterflies" in the stomach prior to a big presentation. However, being prepared for and enthused about the material in the presentation goes a long way toward easing apprehension. Following are several tips to being an effective speaker, along with suggestions for visual supplements to make your next presentation a huge success!

Strategies for Relaxation

**Control nervousness** by breathing slowly and deeply from the diaphragm to help the body relax, reducing the body's tendency to speed up.

**Voice projection** by allowing the throat to open and relaxing the jaw improves articulation, diction, and pronunciation.

**Practice** several times, out loud with a group, if possible. Practicing ahead of time allows the brain to store key points for recall, helps keep pace, and makes smoother transitions between segments of the presentation as well as between presenters.

**Pause** intentionally and repeat key words to stress key points. Pausing is often used to emphasize meaning and slows down the pace to give the presenter ample time to re-group thoughts.

**Stress management** is important to relaxation. Through awareness of personal stress reactions (e.g., too many gestures, blushing, lack of eye contact, touching face, hair, awkward posture) chances of occurrence can be reduced.

The Use of Notes

**Do not read from them** because doing so gives the appearance of uncertainty and distracts the audience from listening to the message.

**Avoid sounding scripted** by using notes as a scanning tool for the purpose of jogging memory. It is important to remember to look up when speaking.

**Keep notes brief** as long notes create confusion. Write in large, printed text for easy reading (3 to 7 words per line). Keep the notes to the point and underline key words and phrases to emphasize points. Remember to number notes in case they get out of sequence. Using notes assists in speaking naturally and fluently.

Visual Aids

**Write in large print** using bulleted format or short phrases to make information easy for audiences to read and follow.

**Do not show too much information at once** as the audience should "anticipate" the speaker's next remarks, instead of jumping or reading ahead, and/or concentrating on points not yet introduced.

**Use to clarify, illustrate, or support** the presentation. Visual aids should enhance the effectiveness of the presentation by referencing key aspects of the presentation.
**Use effective visual aid strategies** by using 6 to 12 lines per visual, preferably 6, using only keywords. Using keywords makes text easy to read, prevents repeat speech text, and keeps the presenter in control of the content by allowing the speaker to add in detail, facts, etc.

**If more than one visual, number and label** each one to prevent visual aids from being shown out of order.

**Turn off and/or remove** each visual aid when finished to allow the audience to concentrate on the speaker, instead of the aid.

**Practice and rehearse** with visual aids to eliminate poor timing of presenting aids with the speech and to deemphasize the speaker’s lack of experience.

**Handouts**

**Give to the audience at the appropriate time** to provide additional information and to clarify, support or illustrate points.

**Give during the presentation** only if the audience needs to reference it to complete a task during the speech.

**Give at the end of the presentation** to provide the audience with extra information that they can take with them, while simultaneously preventing the audience from reading the handout during the speech.

**Miscellaneous Strategies**

**Sum up key points** at the end of the presentation to highlight important information one more time, bringing the audience back to the main purpose of the speech.

**Use positive body language, gestures and movements** to strengthen appeal and to show confidence as a speaker. A confident speaker will increase receptivity and engage the audience. If the presenter is comfortable, the audience will be too!