

Presenting With Magic

Over the next 3 editions of OnTarget, we will be exploring methods to sprinkle some magic dust on to your presentations helping you to become a more effective speaker who inspires and motivates your audience to take action.

The Number One Fear

How many people do you think in your life have 'presented' to you? Probably hundreds maybe even thousands - teachers, lecturers, trainers, sales managers, marketers, trainers, best men at weddings, after dinner speakers, the list goes on. From your experience of all these potential influencers, how many actually inspired you to take action or impressed you with their skill and ability to communicate?

Despite holding the privileged position of public speaker few people ever make a real effort to make it count. In fact it is probably easier for you to recall the bad or mundane speakers throughout your life, there's probably lots more of them.

So why is it that given the opportunity to make a difference through a presentation most people fail to make any impression at all?

Public speaking is the number one fear in the UK! You may disagree with this and the nature of your role probably dictates that you have to regularly stand up and present to groups but it stands true that only 5% of the UK population are comfortable to present and out of that only 1% can be considered effective speakers!

Top 5 UK Fears

- 1 Public Speaking
- 2 Heights
- 3 Insects
- 4 Debt
- 5 Death

Business Wizardry

I have a friend who is a skilled magician. He is unusual in that if you ask him how a trick is accomplished he will happily tell you. He will give away his secrets without a second thought. Perhaps the greatest secret of magic - a secret that takes magicians many years to discover and that many never discover at all - is that the least important part of any trick is

the secret element of it. In magic it matters little what you do. What matters most is how you do it. In business presentations the same is true. The content does matter but far more important is how it is presented. Where the majority of business presenters fall down is spending too much time focusing on getting the power point slides right and writing out the script they intend to read to the audience and not enough time looking at themselves and how the audience perceive them.

In this series of articles we will look at 3 main areas of presentations.

- You and Your State
- Inspiring Your Audience
- Communicating With Magic

Lets start with the most important part of any presentation, you.

Imagine the scene. The big day has arrived, you are fully prepared with your slides in the right order and your first few lines running through your head. You didn't sleep too much last night as you ran all the possibilities through your head over and over again. The last presenter is now taking final questions and you know any second they will introduce you. The audience starts to applaud and you're on.

Stop

How do you feel? What state are you in as you walk on stage?

State means your emotional and physical state. Maybe you are quietly confident, excited, worried or just plain scared. I read once that the singer Leo Sawyer used to get so wound up before a performance that minutes before he walked on to the stage he would be physically sick, every time! He even started to believe that unless he was sick he would not perform at his best. Not the best state for the sake of his health I'm sure you would agree!

So how do you control your state?

Firstly, it is vital to understand that our body

responds not only to outside stimuli but also to our thoughts.

“What you hold in your mind determines the way you feel”

What are you thinking before you start your presentation. My experience in coaching presenters has shown that in the majority of cases the thoughts running through the head are negative.

What if I dry up?

What if I forget my content?

The audience are going to be so bored by all this

I'm bound to look a fool out there

Is it any wonder that our bodies go into a fight or flight reaction? The body doesn't argue with the thought process it simply responds to the messages it is given.

Have you ever seen a film that really scared you? Why is it that despite knowing logically that we are sat in a safe environment and the chances of the storyline becoming reality are nil we still go through physiological fear reactions? Quite simply the body does not question the brain; it reacts to what you are thinking about!

Here is the deal on state:

“You can change the way you feel any time you choose to”

The way you feel is under your control, you can change your thoughts at any time and as such change your state.

Six Tips For State Control

- 1 Notice your thought process before the presentation. Change the negatives to positive empowering thoughts. What if I dry up = I am a confident communicator. What if I forget my content = I have lots to share, I can't wait to share all that knowledge.

The audience are going to so bored by this = My message is important and the audience are looking forward to hearing it. I'm bound to look a fool out there = People respect me and are here to listen to me, that gives me confidence in myself

- 2 Use your own feel good factors before a presentation. Play a piece of music you love just before you start. Many of the motivational speakers use this technique both to change the state of the audience and change their own state.

- 3 Create positive expectations from the audience. It really helps your state if the audience are looking forward to hearing you speak. Consider sending out a teaser which will create curiosity with your audience. Remember most people are expecting the usual mundane session. If you are presenting the same way all of your competitors are then is it any wonder the poor audience starts to get bored

- 4 Start with energy. A presenter walking slowly on to stage and apoloising for taking up the audiences time is unlikely to inspire. (We will look at openings in more depth in the next article)

- 5 Breathe! Learning to breathe correctly can be a real bonus when changing state. Practice deep breathing; in through the nose and a long forced out breathe through the mouth. 10 of these before a presentation will give you a sense of calm and control

- 6 Notice your posture. If you were to pretend now that you were worried or nervous about something, chances are your body would adopt a worried stance - in the same way your thoughts affect your body, your body language affects your thoughts. Stand up straight, shoulders back, head in the air. You are a performer - act confident!

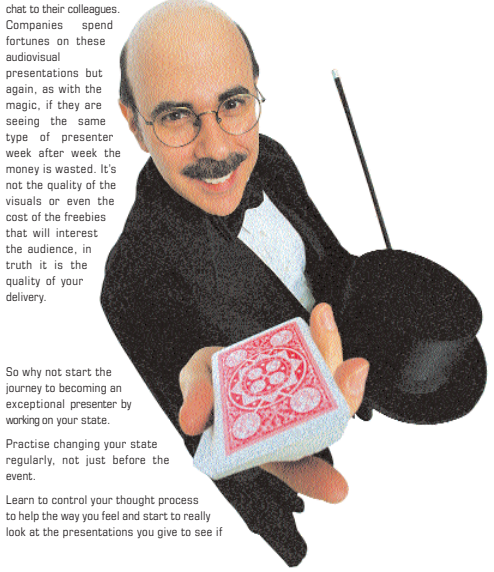
How Serious Are You?

“It takes me a 3 weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech” [Mark Twain]

I once asked my magician friend to teach me a trick I could use with my delegates. He showed me a card trick, which would certainly impress. Eager to use it I asked him the secret. He took me through the 17 sleights of hand that the trick required and the critical points to be distracting the observer from the

deck. Magic isn't a special skill or ability; it had taken him as an experienced dealer 8 hours to master the trick to perfection. That takes commitment. In order to become an inspirational speaker the same level of commitment is needed. Most people can stand up and deliver a pre-planned presentation. They may be nervous and it may be fairly mundane, but most could do it. Just like the magic trick if you want to be one of the 1% of the population who inspire and motivate to action then it will take work.

Suppose you are in sales and regularly have to deliver a presentation at lunchtime on your product to groups of doctors. Every week the doctors get together to listen to the company representative. They regularly see videos and power point presentations and are used to the friendly salesman providing a nice lunch and maybe some freebies. Why do you think they turn up every week? Maybe some of them are committed to their education and are keen to understand more about your product and maybe some of them are there for the nice lunch and to chat to their colleagues. Companies spend fortunes on these audiovisual presentations but again, as with the magic, if they are seeing the same type of presenter week after week the money is wasted. It's not the quality of the visuals or even the cost of the freebies that will interest the audience, in truth it is the quality of your delivery.



So why not start the journey to becoming an exceptional presenter by working on your state.

Practise changing your state regularly, not just before the event.

Learn to control your thought process to help the way you feel and start to really look at the presentations you give to see if

there is any room for a little bit of magic. Next time in OnTarget we will discover how to really inspire that audience to take action.

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