

Presenting With Magic

In part two of our series on Presentation Skills we will be looking at ways to inspire your audience into taking the action.

Why Inspire?

When you first start public speaking in whatever form, inspiring people is probably the last thing on your mind. Getting through the session without stumbling over your words or forgetting what it is you wanted to say next is probably far more important to you.

In the last *Ontarget*, we looked at some really effective ways of controlling your state during the presentation and actually starting to become a powerful presence in front of any audience, so now it's time to start thinking about the people sitting in front of you and what they would like to get out their time with you.

Every speaker has the power to inspire. When so many people speak you can feel the power of persuasion flowing through the room. The audience stirs. They buy in to what the speaker is saying. But it doesn't end there. Truly great speakers do more than inspire their audiences on the 'feel good' level: they manage to inspire their audiences to take action.

Start Before You Start

*// Would you tell me please,
which way I ought to go from
here? //*

*// That depends a good deal on
where you want to get to //*

(Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*)

How can you ever expect to inspire your audience into taking action when you haven't established in your own mind exactly what it is that you want them to do?

Sounds crazy but that is where many

presenters are before they speak.

Determine the Action

What do you want your audience to do? Change an attitude, learn something new, buy something from you?

Write your number one outcome down before you even start to prepare for your presentation. This will make sure you are focused on your outcome every step of the way

Define your Audience

To create audience buy in there has to be something in it for them, if not they will enjoy the lunch and walk away. Everybody's time is valuable and that means that from your audiences point of view your presentation has to give him or her a reason to want to do what you are asking them to do. Imagine how you would feel if you were invited to a presentation and when you got there you found that it had been pitched entirely to the more senior members of your team. Remember everyone has influence and deserves to be considered

Find out before hand who will be attending your presentation and make sure you have included something for everyone.

Keep it audience focused

A presentation should never become a way of just telling the audience what it is that you want them to know. Keep your skills as a salesperson uppermost in your mind, and step into their shoes, is it useful, is it interesting, would you want to sit through our presentation?

Creating The Right Environment

Some otherwse excellent speakers I know don't even ask about the room they will be performing in, in advance. They just turn up and accept what they are given even if it turns out to be untidy, stuffy even dirty. Take control

of your environment by making sure you are given some time before your session.

Make sure there are enough chairs and that they are spaced out to provide some leg room

Check that the local builders are not planning a drilling session next door at the time you are due to start

Adjust the temperature to comfortable. Too hot and you will have lots of sleepy people, too cold and they will want to get out quick

If possible remove any distractions at the front of the room. The audience should be focussing on you, not on the many posters pinned to the notice board

Make the room yours for that short time by tidying any clutter left from previous occupants

Put up some of your company posters or promotional material on the walls

Dare To Be Different

I occasionally felt a little sorry for my audiences in the days of audiovisual presentations in the pharmaceutical industry. Every week they would come along to the drug lunch with the only real objective being that of a Marks and Spencer sandwich for free and perhaps an exciting car cleaning kit for the effort! How many of your customers do you think are doing the same? Do they really become inspired when they watch your video or sit through your power point presentation? The same goes for those of you who make other types of presentations such as conference speaking and sales meetings - do you think your audience really want to be there to listen to you?

One answer to this challenge is to surprise your audiences by daring to be different. Take a good look at what you do and get creative.

Take some inspiration music to play during lunch and before you start

Meet and greet every delegate

Learn a simple memory technique for names and use them

Dress the room up a little with some fresh flowers or candles

Have a quiz during lunch with small prizes

Ditch the TV and video occasionally and talk to the group instead

Have a theme for the session and bring some props

Change the food from the norm, pizza or Chinese always goes down well

Make some soft drink cocktails as a change from orange juice

Ask the audience to give you some feedback on what they would really like to see at these sessions in the future

Inspirational Openings

*// You are an unknown quantity
for every 120 seconds. After that
everything you say will be heard in
the context of the impression
from your first two minutes //*

It's scary but true. If you don't capture your audience in the first couple of minutes you will be playing a tough game of catch up for the rest of the session. The reason for this is that in this crucial time chances are your audience's attention is naturally high. They are deciding at this point whether it is worth listening to the rest of your talk and what is in it for them. You can help yourself greatly by creating the right environment as they walk in, this should raise their interest levels and give you a head start, however no matter how nice the room if your first few words are dull the audience will turn off.

The Top Ten Commandments For Opening A Session

- 1 Always respect all of your audience
- 2 Always start on time
- 3 Use the language of your audience to build rapport
- 4 Never start with an apology
- 5 Be different, "good morning my name is..." Will hardly grab attention
- 6 Have a fun opening such as a quote or story

7 Use assertive body language to instil confidence

8 Smile genuinely

9 Be credible, the audience wants you to be in control

10 Make sure it is you that starts and not a video. People want to know you first and the information next.

Magical Results

Grabbing and keeping the attention of the audience is an essential element for inspirational speaking. Lets assume you have taken extra effort on the environment your audience are experiencing and have opened in a way that has spoiled it all now by boring them to death - lets not spoil it all now by boring them to death for the rest of the session!

The average adult has an attention span of five to seven minutes; in addition to this the average presenter speaks at about 120 - 200 words per minute whilst the average listener can comprehend between 600 and 800 words per minute. All this adds up to the fact that your audience are able to think four times faster than you can talk and if there isn't a good reason to keep listening will turn off after 7 minutes!

The good news is that you have bought some extra time with your opening so now it's all about keeping them with you. Here's some more statistics for you:

The average adult retains

- 10% of what he or she reads
- 20% of what he or she hears
- 30% of what he or she sees
- 50% of what he or she hears and sees
- 70% of what he or she says and....
- 90% of what he or she says and does

All this means that if your want your audience to become inspired by and act on your words they need to be involved not just told.

At the start ask them to write down 3 things they would like to get out of the session

During the session check understanding by asking them questions

Ask for commitments at the end, what are they going to do differently as a result of the presentation

Close it Right!

■ A great close will make your audience feel good about what they've learned, inspire them to act and leave them with something by which to remember you and your message

- Leave them to ponder a key question
- Finish a story or point you used to start (we will discuss this more next time)
- Thank them honestly
- Keep it short
- Be positive
- Ask for action
- Never apologise or fade out with 'I think that's everything...!'

So right now you are a confident fearless presenter with some great new ideas on inspiring your audience. In our final article in this series we will look at the best way to communicate your message through your verbal and non-verbal routes. Have fun in all your sessions in the meantime.

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