

Presenting With Magic

In part three of our series on Presentation Skills we will be looking at ways to communicate and influence your audience through both verbal and non-verbal routes.

One night a group of nomads were preparing to retire for the evening when suddenly they were surrounded by a great light. They knew they were in the presence of a celestial being. With great anticipation they waited a heavenly message of great importance that they knew must be especially for them.

Finally the voice spoke. "Gather as may pebbles as you can. Put them in your saddlebags. Travel a days journey and tomorrow night will find you glad and it will find you sad"

After having departed, the nomads shared their disappointment and anger with each other. They had expected the revelation of a great universal truth that would enable them to create wealth, health and purpose for the world. But instead they were given a menial task that made no sense to them at all. However, the memory of the brilliance of their visitor caused each one to pick up a few pebbles and deposit them in their saddlebags while voicing their displeasure...

Is it really possible to keep the attention of your audience from the start to the finish and at the same time keep them glued to their seats wanting to hear more?

The answer lies in how well you utilise both verbal and non-verbal communication.

Although there will be some of your audience who have turned up for your presentation simply because they feel they should, or even worse because they are hoping for some free lunch, the main reason people turn up is to hear the content of your message. They are looking out for something that is relevant for them and can help them in some way – they are looking to learn. For this reason the words you use are important and help you to get the message across

The Power of Suggestion

It may surprise you but when you stand up and

start to speak you are controlling the way the audience is thinking. The words you use will influence the way the person both acts and feels throughout.

I recently attended a presentation at a business exhibition. The purpose of the session was to inform the group of all the free services available to small and medium size businesses in my local area. Always open to free help, I was attentive and looking forward to the content. The presenter stood up and said "I will keep this as short as possible, I know you are all desperate for a coffee break and this will be information you already know."

As it happened, there was much of the content of the presentation that I didn't know, I learned quite a lot. The challenge for me throughout was to stay focused and judging by the amount of shuffling around the room I was not alone. When the presenter stood up and told me in effect that I would be bored for the next twenty minutes that is exactly how I felt.

Your words affect the way your audience feel. Supposing he had instead created some anticipation for the exciting opportunities that exist for me as a business owner simply by tapping in to some of the free resources, now he would have my interest for the whole session.

- Keep your language positive
- Tell them how beneficial it will be for them to listen
- Make sure your tone of voice is upbeat and enthusiastic right from the start

Positive languaging throughout your presentation is essential when you consider that the unconscious brain is unable to process negative statements.

DON'T THINK ABOUT PURPLE ELEPHANTS!

What did you do?

Think about purple elephants of course!

Once you start to recognise how powerful this concept is of course you may want to use it in a way to enhance the message. If the brain cannot process a negative, and you start by saying something like, " I don't want you to think that you will want to buy my product immediately once you have heard this presentation.." What do you think the audience is thinking about now? Buying your product!

One of my favourite comedians is Eddie Izzard. When I first watched him I wondered if he had planned the show at all as it all seemed to be just like normal conversation. He would start a story and then seemingly go off at a tangent leaving me wondering what the punch line to the story was. This happened throughout the performance until the end when he impressively went back and finished off all the stories ending with the one he had started with.

Most comedians use the technique known as embedding metaphors to keep the interest of the audience. We all love to hear a story, and one of the most powerful ways to make a point that the person remembers is to use a story or a metaphor to illustrate the point. Even more powerful is to keep some of your stories open at the start and then finish them when you close. This has a number of benefits

- The audience will have the sense of normal conversation
- We hate incomplete stories and will remain interested until we gain closure
- The audience will be impressed when the story is finished: they thought you had forgotten.

Next time you are planning a presentation, take some time out to think of a couple of appropriate stories you can include to add the spice and keep the interest.

Examples you may want to consider could be

- Personal experiences
- Current affairs
- Third party recommendations
- Humorous events
- Quotes

Non-Verbal Communication

Research has shown that when it comes to choosing people we would like to lead our country, we tend to choose those with the most powerful personal presence.

97% of the impact of our communication is non-verbal.

This has to be one of the most important learning points for presenters. No matter how great the verbal content of your presentation is, if you are not convincing in your body language, the message will be lost. Have you ever encountered presenters with distracting styles? They pace up and down, exhibit nervous tics, jiggle coins in the pocket or even stand right in the corner of the room and rely totally on computer slides to give the presentation.

If you are not confident enough with your presentation to be able to stand in front of the audience and talk to them as people, then go back to the planning stage or take some coaching in overcoming your fears. Improving your stage presence can be the most beneficial way to achieve real magic.

Here are some considerations for you when you are looking at the way your audience will perceive you.

- 1 Keep all back up equipment off to the side of the room. It is you the audience are here to see, not your computer
- 2 Stand in a balanced way, keeping your feet shoulder width apart.
- 3 Use meaningful gestures with your hands to emphasise points
- 4 Keep your pockets empty to avoid the temptation to jiggle with coins
- 5 For presentations less than an hour, always stay on your feet, this makes sure you remain in control
- 6 Feel free to move around the room but make sure it does not become a distraction
- 7 Smile
- 8 Keep your own thoughts about yourself

positive, remember if you start to doubt yourself in your head, your body language will give it away

9 Make yourself appear taller by keeping your head up high.

10 Wear clothes you are comfortable in, and of course make sure your zip is up before you start and not during the presentation!

When I walked out of the presentation at the business exhibition I had learned some interesting new facts that will help me grow my business in the future. The content of the presentation was good. You may ask therefore if there is any need to become an inspirational speaker if you can still learn something from a poor one.

The answer to that question lies with you. You see I believe there is something magical about a speaker who has taken the time and effort to make sure their own skills are above average. We all know there is no such thing as magic and that in fact creating the illusion of a trick merely takes practice and personal commitment.

... the nomads travelled a day's journey and that night while making camp, they reached into their saddlebags and discovered that every pebble they had gathered had become a diamond. They were glad they had diamonds. They were sad they had not collected more pebbles.

There is an important point about all the tips and tricks you have learned throughout the series – they work! They will work for you, but only if you use them. What appears

on first reading like a small and insignificant idea may well become a turning point in the way you inspire and influence your future audiences. I wish you all the best in your journey towards Presenting With Magic.

By the way, if you have missed any of the previous articles in this series, you can order back copies by emailing the ontaraget team at backcopies@ontaragetmag.com . Back copies are charged at £2.95 each with cheques made payable to i-KOS Ltd.



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