

Four Steps To A Great Presentation

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President Gerald Ford said, "If I went back to college again I'd concentrate on learning to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively"

If a former president of the United States believes that the ability to speak is the most important skill that a person can possess, shouldn't you be sure that your communication skills are honed to their sharpest.

Normal Conversation:

If you and I spent six hours together on an airplane flying from Coast to Coast and I asked you to tell me about yourself, your job, or your hobby, you would be able to converse the entire trip. You know about those subjects, and in an informal conversational setting you have no fear in expressing yourself. You are not concerned with grammar, pronunciation, or usage. Your conversation is a relaxed one, when you are talking about things which you know well.

A Formalized presentation:

What happens when you are asked to make a more formalized presentation? Is it still relaxed, easy going, and comfortable? Here are four steps to help you analyze, organize and add power to what you say in a formal speech.

Step #1: Determine the objective of the presentation.

We have all heard speakers with disconnected ideas in their presentations. It is clear that these speakers are not sure of their objectives. To be sure you are on track.....think before you speak. Why you are presenting these ideas? Why at this time, in this place, to these people?. What is your objective? Why should your audience give you their attention? When you can answer these, you are ready.

Step #2: Why are you the person making the presentations?

Do you have a background on the subject? Are you an authority or an expert? Do you have special information to present? Are you able to instruct, to motivate, or persuade? Winston Churchill said, "we should never try to climb a wall that is leaning toward us, never try to kiss a woman that is leaning away from us, and never speak to anyone who knows more about the subject than we do." If you are the one that is giving the information you must have information to give that is beyond the scope of the listener. Can you research? In any formal presentation you should follow William Jennings Bryant's advice," Be sure that you know more about your subject than 75% of your audience."

Step #3: Know Your Audience.

Who are they? What is their interest? What is their experience? What is their knowledge of this subject? What do you know from previous relationships with this particular audience? The more

you know about your audiences needs, wants, and even prejudices the more effective you will be in presenting your ideas. If this is a new audience learn as much as possible about them. What literature is available? Can you talk in advance to potential members of your audience?

Step #4: Know your subject.

Why this subject? Did you chose it or was it assigned? Think about your subject. What do you know? Ask yourself, and then ask others what they know. Someone once said that an expert is an ordinary guy from out of town, that's not true. Your expert is someone who knows more about the subject then you do. Get all of the advice, all of the help, all of the information that you possibly can from experts. When you have all the information, you become the expert to your audience.

Know exactly the purpose of your presentation. Establish a very specific goal for what you want the audience to know or understand. List the points that you want to cover in your presentation. If it requires research then collect the information that you need. Once the information is gathered, organize it with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Then outline that information so you will have a guide to follow. Most important, be sure that you have gathered the information, analyzed its meaning, and organized it into a great presentation.