

Guide to Effective Presentations

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Unfortunately, we can now add one more thing to the list of inevitable things you're going to face in your lifetime. Along with death and taxes, add speeches.

You will be asked to give a speech. If not today, then tomorrow. If not tomorrow, then next week or next month. Maybe even next year. But you will be asked.

Proper preparation requires a number of things, not the least of which is a professionally written speech and proper speech training. After all, this is your reputation we're talking about here – your reputation and that of your company. Your next speech should demonstrate leadership – of you, of your company, of your industry.

That's where presentation training comes in. Presentation training can help you achieve the level of comfort and communication expertise necessary to influence audiences in today's information economy.

“But my speech is tomorrow,” you complain, “I don't have time for presentation training.”

Ok, so here are some quick tips to help you get through the speech. And if you'd like to investigate full presentation training, contact us at MacInnes Communications Group Inc. (905) 479-6333 for more information on costs and timing.

First, recognize that an important part of your message in delivering a speech or presentation is how you look and act while you are delivering the speech or presentation.

Here, then, are some tips on how to make your next foray into public speaking more successful: (We have a full-day workshop on this, including taped sessions, if you're interested)

Wear "sincere", conservative clothes (dark suits, white shirts, brogue shoes, subdued ties, no gold jewelry).

Stand in one place with your legs apart for good balance. Don't walk nervously, let your eyes wander, jingle coins in your pocket, clear your throat incessantly or otherwise display nervousness.

On the contrary, demonstrate that this is easy for you because you believe in the company (or in what you're saying) and actually enjoy the opportunity to tell it to others.

Speak deliberately and from the diaphragm, controlling voice modulation. Avoid repetitive cadences (e.g. ending each sentence on an "up" inflection). Be careful about

what you drink and eat before the presentation. Coffee or pop constricts the vocal chords. Milk creates excess phlegm. Water is best.

Even after the fiftieth presentation, speak as though you are saying each phrase for the first time. Avoid sounding like a canned pitch.

Make eye contact with each person in the room. Attempt to sound like you are explaining the situation to each person individually.

When using a speech, triple space the lines, put all the letters in caps and photocopy to foolscap using only 3/4 of the page. This will help you keep eye contact.

Don't speak to the screen. Use visuals as speaker reinforcement ... not speaker replacement.

Responding to Questions:

When a question is being asked, look at the person asking it ... listen carefully to what they are asking ... and, if necessary, ask for qualification of what the question(s) mean.

Take as much time as you need to think before responding. Do not fill the air with empty words while you are thinking. Avoid phrases such as "That's a good question" or "I was afraid someone would ask that". Respond directly, simply and in the least number of words possible. When you have answered the question, stop talking. Let someone else - not you - pose the next question.

Give the answer you want to give ... not the one you think the person asking the question want to hear. Realize that it is better to disappoint by being honest than by not delivering.

If there is a question you cannot answer because you don't have the information, don't be afraid to say so. Promise to get back the next day with the information. The same technique can be used for questions that are potentially embarrassing.

If the question demands an impossible judgment or forecast or information you simply will not release, don't be afraid to say so. Don't attempt to finesse an answer.

Remember that in large part, you are the embodiment of the company.

And finally, the most important tip of all: Call us if you need help crafting your presentation or working on your delivery. 905-479-6333.