

CORPORATE
OVATIONS

Group-Study
Participant Workbook

Corporate Ovations®

iSpeak™ prepared this workbook for use in the area of Training and Development for continuing education. It is intended that these materials will be used to assist students in the learning process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Corporate Ovations Group-Study

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” - Mother Teresa, Humanitarian, Winner, Nobel Peace Prize, 1979

Welcome

Through observation, feedback, and reflection, we were able to extract the key ingredients for successful speaking. The *Corporate Ovations* group-study participant workbook contains the results of our research and experience on what it takes to be a successful speaker and presenter. Through this group-study you too can apply these techniques. We sincerely hope you can benefit from these methods in your career. While your next business presentation may not end with a standing ovation, we do hope it ends in what we call a *Corporate Ovation* as participants give you positive feedback or praise for a job well done!

Getting Started

Each lesson aligns with the corresponding chapter of the *Corporate Ovations* book. This group-study participant workbook is intended to be a flexible resource so you can work at your pace. Groups who have used this program have finished it as quickly as a few weeks or as long as several months. Here are some suggestions for effectively participating in this group-study program:

1. **Scan** the *Corporate Ovations* group-study content to get an overview of the entire program.
2. **Read** a chapter in *Corporate Ovations* or listen to the corresponding chapter in the audio book.
3. **Watch** the video of Russ and Kevin teaching the skills for that chapter.
4. **Participate** in the activities for that chapter (Getting Started, Review the Highlights, Discussion Questions, and Apply your Skills) to develop your presentation skills.

Connect with Russ and Kevin

We want you to be successful! Let us know how we can help. Follow *Corporate Ovations* on Facebook, and interact with us directly on Twitter.



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Chapter One: Overcoming Fear and Anxiety

“The human brain starts working the moment you are born and it never stops until you stand up to speak in public.” - George Jessel, Actor and Producer

Anyone who has ever had to give a presentation knows the feeling. It’s your turn to present. Suddenly, your heart rate increases. Your blood pressure rises. Your palms start to sweat. You feel something fluttering about in your stomach, and you may even feel light headed! Why is this feeling so paralyzing? What is it about speaking in public that can turn an otherwise normal person into an absolute wreck? It’s perfectly normal to be nervous before delivering a presentation. Anxiety is part of being a good speaker; the key is to not allow it to distract the audience from your message.

Getting Started

Do you feel a little anxious or nervous before speaking? Why?

As an audience member, how do you feel when the speaker is noticeably nervous?

Review the Highlights

“Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson, Poet

It’s Okay to Feel Anxious

If you feel something moving around in your gut . . . that’s good! It means you care. You care enough to want to do a good job for the audience. If you didn’t feel anything, we’d question your intentions and motivation to present to your audience.

The Audience Wants You to Win

The audience truly wants you to win! What does that mean? It means that nobody wants to see a poor presentation. Just think about how you feel when you’re about to watch a presentation? Are you hoping the speaker knocks it out of the park and delivers a riveting speech? Or are you hoping the speaker is so nervous he can’t deliver a coherent thought? Most likely it’s the former! Regardless of the topic or the situation, audiences want to see you succeed.

Know Your Subject

This may seem obvious, but you would be surprised how important it is when it comes to reducing your anxiety. As you become more comfortable with the subject matter, you become more relaxed during your presentation. When your mind is not concentrating on the content, it is freed to be creative and align your physical delivery with your message.

Prepare for Tough Questions

One of the greatest fears prior to speaking is the being afraid that someone will ask a question and you won’t have an answer. Prepare for the tough questions and write them down. Then, you’ve got to prepare for the tough questions by writing the answers to those questions.

Rehearse Your Delivery

This is one of the toughest things to do because it takes time. If you do not place a high priority on your presentation, you will make every excuse not to rehearse. If you are truly interested in a great delivery, you must find the time to rehearse.

Arrive Early

On the day of your presentation, plan on arriving early. Early arrival allows you to set up and test any audio/visual equipment, meet attendees, and walk the area where you will be speaking.

Walk Around

Energy can work to your detriment if you do not release it properly. For those speakers who have extra energy inside them, we always recommend movement prior to a presentation.

Take Deep Breaths

With an increased heart rate and higher blood pressure, calming yourself can be as simple as taking three deep cleansing breaths. The best way to take relaxing breaths is to inhale a deep breath through the nose, hold it for two seconds, and then release it through the mouth.

Have a Drink

Wait, wait, it’s not what you think! As much as some may want to interpret this method as taking a shot of so-called liquid courage, that is not what we mean. We do, however, recommend drinking some warm water or tea. Warm liquids will have a tremendous calming effect on your stomach and your nerves.

Discussion Questions

Why do Russ and Kevin say it is okay to feel a little anxious?

What do Russ and Kevin mean by “What you bring to the stage is contagious”?

How do you react when you perceive there are audience members who know more about your presentation topic than you may? Why?

The question and answer portion of a presentation can cause high anxiety. What do you do to help control this anxiety?

When you read that “the audience wants you to succeed” as a presenter, no matter what the speaking situation, how did you react to that? Why?

What is your number one reason for not rehearsing your presentation? What could be done to eliminate that roadblock?

Which of the recommendations on how to overcome anxiety would work best for you? Why?

Notes

Apply your Skills

Think about a presentation you gave where you felt anxious, nervous, or afraid. Knowing what you know now, how will you approach your presentations in the future?

Which method for controlling anxiety do you feel will be most helpful? Why?

What made you select that method as the most helpful? Why?

How will you use that method in the future?

Chapter Two: **Know Your Purpose**

“If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll probably end up someplace else.” - Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame Catcher New York Yankees

Be selfish for a moment. That’s right, think only about yourself and answer the following question: What do you want to accomplish through your presentations? Or try a simpler way of asking that question, “Why?” Why are you going to speak to the audience?

When you start to prepare for a presentation, “Why?” is the most important question. If you can’t answer why you will speak to a group then you can put this book down and save yourself some time. Before you begin the construction of any speech or presentation, you need a defined destination or goal. You need a purpose. Without a purpose, speeches will wander around the information until they eventually come to an end, leaving the audience to wonder, “What was the point of all that?”

Getting Started

Where do you start when you are preparing for a presentation? Why?

What types of presentations do you typically deliver (persuasive, informative, or entertaining)?

Review the Highlights

“We succeed only as we identify a single overriding objective, and make all other considerations bend to that one objective.”

- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States

Three Types of Presentations

To best understand how to define the purpose of your speech, you must first determine the type of presentation you are giving. Knowing the type of presentation will help you define the purpose.

Persuasive

If your goal is to convince the audience to take action, your presentation is persuasive. Persuasive presentations can make their request through logical appeals to the mind, emotional appeals to the heart, or both. Most business presentations rely more heavily on the logical appeal to the mind.

Informative

There may be times when there is no immediate requested action from the audience. They just need to learn and understand your topic. Your immediate goal is only to have the audience fully comprehend your presentation topic.

Entertaining

While it is desirable to have elements of entertainment in all presentations, those elements do not classify your presentation as strictly entertaining. Usually, your presentation will have some other greater purpose. Elements of entertainment are just used to get the attention of the audience so you can zero them in on your main purpose. “Entertaining” presentations have no grander purpose.

Know / Feel / Do

Once you have determined what type of presentation you are delivering, the Know/Feel/Do method can help you crystallize your purpose. This method is completed by asking yourself three questions about what you want the audience to know, feel and do.

For example, if you are presenting your annual budget to upper management to gain their approval, you might answer these questions with the following responses:

What Do You Want Them to Know?

I want management to understand we have cut our expenses in software and support by 20 percent. If we had not managed our changes properly this past year the increase in budget of 6 percent would have been 26 percent. I also want them to know the equipment will provide less downtime for our servers, which means productivity increases for the entire company.

What Do You Want Them to Feel?

I want them to trust our department and how we approach our budget with the overall company in mind.

What Do You Want Them to Do?

I want them to verbally approve my budget in the meeting so I can begin planning.

Discussion Questions

Why is it important to generate a *feeling* in your audience?

Provide an example of a TV commercial you have seen where the organization wanted you to know something, feel something and ultimately do something after viewing it.

Think of an upcoming presentation you will be giving and answer the following question: “*Why have I been asked to deliver this presentation?*” You were chosen for a reason.

Why do you think presenters do not define a clear purpose before they present? What benefits do you feel come from the presenter knowing the desired outcomes of the presentation?

Have you given a presentation without a clear purpose? Have you given a presentation with a clear purpose? Which did you think worked best for you and your audience? Why?

How will you change your preparation for a presentation now that you have read about defining a purpose as what the audience should Know, Feel, and Do after you speak?

Dr. Leon Festinger used the term *cognitive dissonance* to explain persuasion using logical arguments to show the only logical choice. Do you think logic alone should be used in business presentations? What role, if any, should emotions play in a business presentation? How could you apply emotion to a presentation?

How have you used logic and emotion in a presentation? How do you determine which one should be used more in a presentation?

If you are giving a persuasive presentation, what are some ways you can get to the *heart* of your intended audience?

Apply your Skills

Using an example presentation from someone in the group, define the purpose for speaking by completing the sections below.

What do you want your audience to **Know** about your subject?

What do you want your audience to **Feel** about your subject?

What do you want your audience to **Do** after your presentation?

Chapter Three: **Audiences Want You to Connect**

“Connecting with people begins with knowing people. If you don’t have clarity concerning your listeners, your message will be muddy.”
- John C. Maxwell, *Leadership Speaker and Author*

Without an audience you have no reason to speak. With that being stated, one of the most important aspects of speaking or presenting is connecting with the audience. An audience analysis helps determine how to relate your message to your audience. Asking questions like “What is their motivation to listen to you speak?”, “Are they required to be here?”, and “Are they interested in your topic?” will help prepare your message. Many speakers fail to include any kind of audience analysis as part of their presentation preparation. Proper preparation for speaking takes place in three key areas: your subject matter, your audience and your purpose.

Getting Started

How do you know when a speaker has made a connection with the audience?

How can you determine what your audience already knows or cares about your subject?

Review the Highlights

“I try to bring the audience’s own drama - tears and laughter they know about - to them.”
- Judy Garland, American actress and singer

Know Your Subject

Of course, it is important to understand your subject matter before speaking, but your knowledge is not the only focus for preparation. You can be the smartest person in the room on a topic and not deliver an effective presentation. You have to know your subject well enough to convey your message to the audience and then have the ability to deliver that message with confidence. When delivering a presentation, your goal is not to be perfect; it’s to be effective.

Know Your Audience

Audience analysis is the process of examining information about the listeners who will hear your message. An awareness of your audience will guide you through the composition of your presentation. This analysis will ensure that you give the right speech to the right audience and will help you adapt your message so that your listeners will respond in a manner of your choosing. No matter what the audiences feels about your subject, always try to do these three things:

1. Acknowledge their opinion about the topic
2. Adapt your message to the audience
3. Explain how your message relates to them

If the message is not prepared specifically for the audience, it will not hit the target. When an audience attends a given presentation, they obviously want something. They are constantly asking themselves, “What’s in it for me?”

In the audience analysis, it is important to identify what the audience is going to expect—information, persuasion or entertainment. Only by identifying their expectations will you be able to identify what you should offer to them. Effective speakers also understand audience characteristics - like how many will be attending, why they are attending, their knowledge of your subject, potential questions they may ask, concerns about you or your subject, and their interest in attending. Most importantly, you need to know what they expect to gain by listening to your presentation.

Align Your Purpose and Audience

Speakers connect with audiences by serving them. And you serve your audience best by preparing a great presentation and by ensuring that your presentation will provide value to them.

Make certain you properly define your purpose and your audience before constructing your presentations. It is the only way to know if you have achieved success. The time and effort spent analyzing your audience and documenting your purpose will help you better prepare your presentation and make the audience more receptive to your message. The information gathered will form the foundation and the building blocks for a successful presentation.

Discussion Questions

What can you do in the future to make sure you always put the audience first?

What are some methods you have used to learn about your audience when you did not interact with them on a regular basis?

What do you think would be important to know about your audience to help you connect with them?

How have you reacted when the presenter failed to make a connection with you?

The audience is constantly asking “What’s in it for me?” What are some possible ideas on how to connect the dots from what you want to what they need?

Notes

Apply your Skills

As a group, complete an audience analysis for a future presentation.

Status Who are they? What is their status compared to yours? Are you equals? Are you a level below the audience on the organization chart? Higher? Is the audience composed of customers and prospects (higher status)?

Common Characteristics Generally speaking, what commonalities can you identify among audience members? Demographics? Conservative? Accountants?

Expertise Are the audience members experts in your field? Or, are they novices?

Interest Why are they here? Are they decision-makers? Influencers?

Concerns What do they want from you, your presentation, or your organization? What biases do they have? What doubts and questions are they likely to have? Why?

Chapter Four: Open with Power

“Politics is just like show business - you have a great opening, you coast for a while, you have a great close.” - Ronald Reagan, Former President of the United States

The first few seconds of your presentation should be considered prime real estate. In those first few seconds your audience is sizing up you, your presentation and the organization you represent. Don't waste that prime opportunity by delivering an opening that sounds like every other corporate presentation they have heard. “Hi, my name is _____ and today I'm going to talk about _____.” When audiences hear that standard opening, they close their ears and turn off their brains. From the very start, audiences need to know they will get something out of a presentation. As a speaker, your challenge is to capture their attention and let them know your delivery has been customized with their needs in mind.

Getting Started

What has been the best opening you have heard from a presenter? What made it work for you?

How much preparation time do you typically spend on the opening of your presentation? Why?

Review the Highlights

“We don’t know where our first impressions come from, or precisely what they mean, so we don’t always appreciate their fragility.” - Malcolm Gladwell, Author of Blink

First Impressions Set the Tone

Understand that you will be evaluated from the very start of your presentation. Practically before you even open your mouth, a lot of audiences can evaluate your level of confidence and how receptive or tuned-in you are to the audience. Knowing that the entire audience will evaluate you from the very start, you need to put special focus on how you open your presentation.

The CABA Formula

The formula we use for opening a presentation includes four key elements: Credibility, Attention, Body, and Audience (CABA). When all four pieces are delivered to the audience, you capture the listeners from the very beginning. These four pieces can be delivered to the audience in any order. The sequence used depends on the speaker’s preference, the purpose, and the audience. You cannot make a strong case with the content in the body of your presentation if the audience is checked out and not listening. Give your audiences the corporate version of a James Bond movie opening.

Credibility

The audience wants to know why you are speaking on this topic. Why are you the trusted source for this information? What knowledge or experience do you have that uniquely qualifies you as the speaker on this topic? If you are speaking to an audience unfamiliar with you or your background, it is helpful to provide this kind of abbreviated resume information to establish your credibility. In situations where the audience knows you, credibility must still be established for the topic you are sharing.

Attention

This is the topic our workshop attendees tell us is the most challenging for them. How will you grab the audience’s attention from the very start? Assuming the use of pyrotechnics would be frowned upon, what techniques could you implement in a corporate setting to captivate the audience from the start? The answer will depend mostly on the speaker’s style and the audience. There are several methods you can use to get the audience’s attention: Fact, Statistic, Statement, Quotation, Story, Illustration, Metaphor, or Question.

Body

The third piece of the CABA opening is the Body. This is not the actual body of the presentation; it is just a preview of the body. You don’t have to provide a tremendous amount of detail, but they need to know the destination. Mysterious content destinations might work in some movie thrillers, but in a business presentation, the audience wants to be assured from the start they are in the right place and not wasting their time.

Audience

Ultimately, the audience wants to know from the very start of the presentation if it will be beneficial to them. They want you, the speaker, to relate to them and connect with them. When we customize our workshops for companies in different industries we get asked questions during the breaks like, “How long did you have to research our company to understand all of our lingo?” We take that as a compliment because what this audience member is really saying is, “I appreciate you taking the time to get to know our company. You are speaking our language and the information is pertinent to us.”

Discussion Questions

What perception or impression do you want your audience to have as you begin to speak?

What can you emphasize in the CABA model to cast that impression?

Why are the first few moments of a presentation, at times, the most difficult? What are some things you have done to open a presentation that made it easier for you?

As an audience member, what do you like to see or hear in the first few moments of a presentation? Why?

What advantages, do you see that CABA can give you as a presenter? How do you think your intended audiences will respond to CABA?

What are some challenges you might have in establishing your credibility? How could these be overcome?

Have you ever heard an opening line that didn't work with the audience? How did the presentation go after that? What actions could you implement so this does not happen to you?

In this chapter we read "Everyone loves a good story." Why do you think people like stories so much? What type of stories work for you in a business presentation? What has kept you from using a story in the past?

Chapter 4 gives you a lot of options for your attention getter (e.g. startling fact, story, quote, metaphor or even a question.) Which one of these have you seen used well and how was it done?

How can you bring power and excitement to a quarterly report on finance or a presentation on how to implement a new policy?

Apply your Skills

As a group, think of an upcoming presentation. Write an opening using the four elements of the CABA model.

Credibility: Inform the audience why you are uniquely qualified to speak to them.

Attention: What will you say to grab their attention in your opening?

Body: What are the key point(s) you will provide in the body of the presentation?

Audience: What can you provide to connect to your audience? Show empathy for them.

Chapter Five:

Close with Confidence

“Make sure you have finished speaking before your audience has finished listening.” - Dorothy Sarnoff, Actress and Speech Coach

When developing a presentation, always begin with your end in mind. Whether you are speaking to your team at the office, representing your company on the stage at a trade show, or delivering a message to the local Rotary Club, your audience deserves a prepared conclusion to help them make the most of the information shared with them. If you want to receive a corporate ovation, you need to carefully construct and deliver an effective and impactful presentation close. Professional speakers will provide a summary of the key elements given to the audience, along with instructions on what to do next. Finally, the speaker will leave the audience with something memorable to reinforce the key message in the audience’s long-term memory.

Getting Started

Why might the presentation close be the most important segment of your presentation?

How do you feel when the presenter rushes through the conclusion of the presentation? Why?

Review the Highlights

“All that matters is the ending; it’s the most important part.” - Johnny Depp, Actor

The MAS Formula

The speaker too often overlooks the close to a presentation. At best, some speakers realize they should include a call to action for the audience. While a call to action is great, it is just one of the three elements to include in your close if you want to create the greatest impact with your audience. These three key elements are called Memorable, Action and Summary. When you combine all three of these ingredients into your close, your audience will appreciate the information you provided and be motivated toward the implementation of new information for improvement. These three components can be delivered in any sequence. We just want to make sure all three of them are included.

Memorable

In the news media industry it is called a sound bite. When a reporter wants to pull a piece of a speech, they are always looking for the one line that sums up the entire message. It is the one part of the message that aligns with the theme and is also memorable in its delivery. One memorable example would be Ronald Reagan’s speech at the Berlin Wall in June of 1987. Can you recall the most memorable sound bite from that speech? “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” This one line pretty much sums up the entire theme and the action to be taken. While you may not be the President of the United States speaking to the world, making your presentation memorable will help your audience remember what you said and what they should do with what you gave them.

Action

The Action component of your close will align with the purpose for your presentation and provide a foundation to persuade your audience. If your purpose is to gain approval on your budget from the senior leadership team, then in the action segment of your close, you will ask the senior leaders to approve the budget. If your purpose is to educate the sales team on the new interface for placing orders, then in the action segment you will confirm the audience’s understanding of what to do with the new skills and techniques learned. If your purpose is to inform the senior leadership on the status of a project, then the action segment of your close will confirm their understanding of the current status. If there is an action to be taken as a result of your presentation, this is where you tell the audience what they need to do with their new knowledge.

The action can be presented in various forms like a question, a challenge, an invitation, or a statement. The method you choose for framing your action in the close will depend on your style, your audience, and your purpose.

Summary

Before wrapping up your presentation, you need to tell the audience where they have been. In the opening of the presentation we told them where the bus was going. Now that the tour is over, give them a quick recap on where the bus went. When you recap the presentation, it should not include a lot of detail. It should be kept short or else the audience will become annoyed, as it seems like you are telling them all the same information a second time. Providing too lengthy of a summary in your close can go bad for you in two ways. First, they may think you have forgotten what you already told them. Second, they may think you don’t think very highly of them because you are repeating yourself, as if they need another lesson before they could possibly understand. That will be seen as condescending. So keep it short and simple. Even as short as one sentence.

Discussion Questions

What is the most memorable closing you have heard from a speaker?

What can you emphasize in the MAS model to cast a similar impression?

“All that matters is the ending, it’s the most important part.” When you read that quote, did you agree or disagree? Why?

What type of endings have you seen most often used in business presentations? Which would you prefer to see?

Why do you think many presenters put little thought into how they will end their presentations?

What are some less-than-memorable closes you have heard? Using the MAS formula, how could it be improved?

What insights has this chapter given you on how you currently close your presentations? What will you do differently in the future as a result?

What are some ways you can add power and confidence to the close of your presentations?

We've all seen a movie or read a book that had a very disappointing ending. The bad ending ruins the whole story. Yet a good ending will do the opposite. What types of good endings have you seen in a presentation?

Apply your Skills

As a group, think of an upcoming presentation someone will be developing and delivering soon. Write a close using the three elements of the MAS model.

Memorable: Leave them with something memorable from your message.

Action: What do you want your audience to do? Give them the next step.

Summary: What are the key points you provided in the body of the presentation?

Chapter Six: Structure the Presentation Body

“A theme is a memory aid; it helps you through the presentation just as it also provides the thread of continuity for your audience.”

- Dave Carey, Speaker, Consultant and Author

Without structure to the body of a presentation, your audience is going to be lost. In most cases, when an audience member is lost, they will immediately look for something to reconnect them to the message. If they do not find something in your message to reconnect quickly, they will check out of the presentation and proceed to connect elsewhere, usually with their smart phone. Presentations that are not structured and concise can make audience members feel lost or trapped.

Getting Started

How do you currently structure a presentation to keep the information concise and clear?

What do you do when you sense the audience has disengaged? Why does this happen?

Review the Highlights

“If you are to provide any theory in this forum for our consideration, you must provide three forms of proof to substantiate your theory and observations.” - Aristotle, Greek philosopher

The biggest mistake we see from presenters is the speaker’s perceived need to overpopulate the body of the presentation. The assumption seems to be that if you provide a little bit of everything, there will be something for everyone. We call this the “show up and throw up” method of presenting. A well-structured presentation will be much more effective, making it memorable and thought-provoking. Even with structure to the body in place, if the speaker does a poor job of transitioning from one body point to the next, the audience may realize at some point that they have already missed something.

The 9-Minute Presentation™

From our experience with thousands of attendees at our workshops, we have found that nine minutes is an ideal length for delivering a presentation targeting a basic understanding for the audience. While it may take you longer to prepare a concise message, your audience will appreciate it more because you get to the point and save them time. There is another reason why we recommend only nine minutes. While audience lapse of attention can be as frequent as every two minutes in lengthy presentations, research shows that you will only need to deal with one serious lapse of audience attention about halfway through a 9-minute presentation. You can address that lapse with a well-constructed presentation body that incorporates engaging interactions at the mid-point.

The “Rule of Three” Structure

Aristotle taught us about three forms of proof in his Rhetoric. Delivery of thoughts in “threes” is common and is substantial for a persuasive argument. Sometimes it just sounds better to present things in threes. One may not be enough. Four is too many to remember. Two always seems to beg the third. Three just seems to work! If you have no other logical method of structuring the content of your presentation, try to fit it into three buckets. The audience will appreciate the logical presentation and they will find it easier to follow and recall your content. In reality, it’s perfectly fine to have more than three key points, or even less than three points. Just remember that a logical flow or structure is still desired by the audience. If the multiple points are random and disjointed, the audience will find it difficult to follow your message and even more difficult to remember much of the presentation.

The Problem-Solution Structure

Audiences love to hear about an adventure with struggles (the problem) where the resolution (or solution) is found in the end. This structure is also great for corporate presentations. For example, the problem-solution structure is ideal for presenting a budgetary issue of projected cost overruns, where we would all like to know the potential solutions to the budgetary issues lurking in our fiscal numbers. Using this method, you can establish the problem and the importance of addressing the problem. Then, the rest of your presentation will be the journey to the solution.

The Common-Theme Structure

If the audience is not going to remember every single point you make, they will definitely remember the theme. For example, politicians deliver campaign trail speeches with a common theme. Whether audience members remember every point made by a politician, they can easily recall the theme from their message. Great speakers know a theme makes the message much more memorable.

Discussion Questions

How have you perceived your role as the presenter in a business presentation? How does being called the “tour guide” of your presentation change your perception?

Which structure best fits the purpose of your type of presentations?

Which type of transitions will you use to guide your audience through your presentation?

From Aristotle to Bill Cosby, they believe in the “rule of three.” What are some ways you can use this rule effectively when giving a technical presentation?

Your purpose is to make your audience see what you saw, hear what you heard, feel what you felt. How can we do this in a team meeting? A sales presentation?

So many of our business meetings are filled with many random items. How could you invent a solution to this problem? What are some ways you could help the audience stay focused and increase their retention?

In an informative presentation, with the necessity to convey detail, what have you seen or what could be done to keep the audience engaged in the minutia of information?

What do you think are the dangers of too much information in a single presentation? What have you done to avoid the TMI (too much information) trap?

As the tour guide of your presentations, what do you do to make sure the audience is aware of what's next?

What do you look for to know if the audience is engaged or disinterested in the topic? What have you done when the audience is disengaged?

Apply your Skills

As a group, think of an upcoming presentation you will be developing and delivering soon. Consider the key points you could make in that presentation and document them below.

Key Point Number 1: What is the first topic to cover? What information will support it?

Key Point Number 2: What is the next topic to cover? What information will support it?

Key Point Number 3: What is the last topic to cover? What information will support it?



Chapter Seven: Corporate Storytelling

“Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today.”
- Robert McAfee Brown, Theologian, Activist, and Author

Our life is our story. People relate to stories. People connect with stories. If you want to connect to your audience, don't just give them a bunch of statistics, give them the story. The hardest part about using stories effectively is making sure they are simple - and they reflect your core message. In a corporate environment, the higher you rise in an organization, the more you need to be skilled at storytelling. When a senior leader speaks to her team, a financial executive speaks to Wall Street, a business development manager speaks to a prospect, or a CEO speaks to his company, they need to have the skills to share a vision through a story.

Getting Started

In your opinion, what makes a good story? Why?

When are some opportunities for you to use stories to help convey your message? Why?

Review the Highlights

“Those who tell the stories rule the world.” - Plato, Greek Philosopher

Where Do You Start?

The first question you need to ask yourself is, “What’s the point?” Why do you want to tell a story? What is the point you want to make with your audience? Once you understand the point you want to make, you can look further into what type of story you will deliver. Why are you telling it? What do you want your audience to take away from it? The first step in developing your story is to identify the key point. Once you have documented the point you want to make, you can now look for the story.

Where Can You Find Your Stories?

You can get your stories from television, theater, books, the web (always check the source!), media, other people, and of course, your own life. While there are many sources for you to observe and research for stories, none will be more popular with your audience than your own stories. Everyone has stories to tell because everyone lives a story every day.

How Do You Select the Right Story?

The decision on which story to select can be made by reviewing three critical factors:

How much time do you have?

The time is usually an easy factor to weigh. If you have a story that requires more of a setup and a conclusion to be told properly, you can quickly eliminate it if you have a short time to present.

What is the purpose of your presentation?

Look at the moral of your story. Is the moral or meaning strong and evident? When the moral of a story clearly supports the point you want to make and it further supports the overall purpose of your presentation, it is a strong candidate.

Who is your audience?

Put yourself in the shoes of the audience and look at your stories. As a member of the audience, do you think one story would connect with you more than the other? Why? Don’t just look at the story from your standpoint; look at it from the audience’s viewpoint.

What Are the Elements of a Good Story?

All stories contain characters. Sometimes they’re human. Sometimes they’re animals or insects (horse, dog, butterfly). Sometimes they’re even inanimate objects (a tree, a rock, a fencepost). There is usually one main character in the center of the action. The main character can be you (the speaker), a friend, a rock, a dog, or even a group or team.

Every story has some form of action taking place. If there is no action, then there is no story. And in that action, the main character faces a dilemma. It can be a struggle they need to overcome or a choice that needs to be made. Whatever it is, the dilemma will create tension in the story. This tension can range from deep and philosophical to shallow and humorous. Either way, the situation must be resolved for the story to end satisfactorily for the audience. This is no different than watching a murder mystery movie and feeling cheated when the movie ends and they never told you what happened to the bloody knife in the kitchen! Bring resolution to your story to generate a healthy response from your audience. The resolution provides the audience with the tension relief and a moral that can be applied to their learning.

How Do You Deliver the Story?

Knowing a good story and telling a good story are two different things. Effective storytelling takes practice and rehearsal. What are some of the areas you can focus on when rehearsing and refining your stories? There are several:

Use Characters to Bring the Story to Life

The characters in your stories are the main focus. If your main characters are people, give them names. Names for characters make the story come to life. If you are speaking about a company as the main character, use the company name, if you have permission. Use character names to bring your story to life, but also use common sense to avoid slander.

Give the Story a Voice

Audiences like to hear the dialogue as if it is real dialogue. Now this doesn't mean you need to take an acting class so you can deliver your dialogue with drama and feeling, it just means that the audience wants to hear the dialogue as if it is unfolding in front of them in real time. This can differentiate between telling a good story and telling a great one.

Get Your Timing Right

Besides the obvious use in comedy, timing can play a powerful role in your delivery to help the audience paint a picture in their mind. Variety is welcomed and can help the audience pick up on the true meaning of the story. Rehearse the timing of your delivery with special focus on the areas where you should pause.

Use Your Body Language to Paint the Picture

Consider what your hands, posture, feet and face are saying to the audience when you deliver a story. When the story comes from a talking mouth with no gestures whatsoever, the audience must work harder to build the picture in their mind. Simple hand gestures can help pull the audience into the story.

What Are Two Corporate Stories All Leaders Should Be Prepared to Share?

In the corporate world, we share stories all the time. Leaders must see the vision and then cast that vision. Casting the vision means they must tell a story.

The Company Story

The first story all corporate leaders must be prepared to tell is the Company story. How did the company start? What does its future hold? What is the company mission? Leaders will be asked to share different versions of this story to different audiences. For each audience, there will need to be minor modifications to create a connection.

The “Who Am I?” Story

The second story for corporate leaders to master is the “Who am I?” story. At every level in the organization, people will ask you about you. If you are interviewing for a new role within the company or if you are taking over the management of a merged department, you will need to share your story.

Discussion Questions

How will you choose the right story to connect with your next audience?

What techniques will you implement to bring your story to life?

How do you come up with a good story? What do you do to remember them for future use?

We all like a good story. We also do not like a story that goes on and on while we get lost in the detail. How could you apply proper storytelling to your next presentation?

What does Robert McKee mean when he says “Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today?”

What is the best story you have heard in a presentation? Why was it the best? What was it about the story that made it so memorable for you?

Everyone has a story to tell. What is a story you could use in your next presentation?

A lot of what is discussed in this chapter relates with connecting to our audience. How do you connect with your audience to be seen by them as one of their own? How can your story help you accomplish that connection?

A good story can connect with the audience and make the message more impactful. Based on these facts, what predictions would you make if you used a story in your next meeting?

Knowing a good story and telling a good story are two different things. What can you do to help tell a good story?

Apply your Skills

Based on what you learned in this chapter, document a story that could be used to make one of these key points.

Scenario One: As the leader, you are speaking to your team about new changes being implemented. While the benefits can be seen, they will need to adapt to new processes, which can always be difficult.

Scenario Two: You have been asked to speak at a managerial training session to kick off the event. You want to make the point that each attendee will get more out of the training session if they participate and stay fully engaged for the day.

Scenario Three: You are presenting a proposed increase in your budget for new marketing tools. You have a suspicion the audience will be hesitant to approve since it is something new for your company. You want to share a story to let them know that risk can be scary, but risk is always required to achieve anything great.

Chapter Eight: **Say It Like You Mean It**

“When you are communicating about important emotional topics, or while you attempt to persuade your audience of something, your voice, gestures, postures and movements take on extreme importance.”

- Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA Professor Emeritus of Psychology

A mixed message is when one of the three channels of communication (visual, vocal, or verbal) is sending a different signal out of alignment with the other two channels. If you send a mixed message when you are speaking, the three channels of communication are not all sending the same message. Dr. Albert Mehrabian specifically studied mixed messages when communicating feelings and attitudes at UCLA in 1967.

Getting Started

When have you misinterpreted a message and come to an incorrect conclusion? Why?

Which channel of communication is most likely to be misunderstood? Why do you say that?

Review the Highlights

“I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.” - Robert McCloskey, Illustrator and Author

If you send a mixed message when you are speaking, the three channels of communication (visual, verbal, and vocal) are not all sending the same message. When these mixed messages were sent to the subjects, Dr. Mehrabian found that 7 percent of the time the words that were spoken (verbal) were viewed as the true meaning. Thirty-eight percent of the time, interpretations were attributed to how (vocal) the message was spoken. The majority of the interpretations, 55 percent derived the true meaning of the communication by what the recipient saw (visual) as they received the communication.

What you say

The words you speak when delivering a speech or presentation are important! We all know that if you say the wrong word at the wrong time it can completely change the meaning of a sentence. Using more exact, descriptive words can create a much stronger impact on our audience. Presenters who understand this take the time to meticulously craft important areas of a speech, like the opening and closing, word for word.

Using people’s names

In his book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* Dale Carnegie writes that a person’s name is the sweetest sound to their ears. What this should tell us is that a person’s name is precious to that person. In other words, we need to use names and use them properly. When someone overuses your name, it can seem rude or at the very least, make you uncomfortable.

When you are presenting to an audience of one or one thousand, if you can mention someone in the audience by name, it is not only appreciated by the recipient, it is also appreciated by the entire audience. We call this the halo effect. When you connect with one person in the audience, three parties will appreciate you reaching out.

The Dangers of Weak Words

While some words can increase the credibility of a speaker, other words can definitely take it away. Weak words and phrases convey a sense of the speaker being unsure of himself. This is referred to as hedging in communication. Hedging your comments is when you refuse to take a strong stance on anything for fear of being incorrect. Some weak words and phrases to avoid are: possibly, basically, maybe, kind of, sort of, and I think so. These words give the audience a sense of insecurity will take away from the credibility of the speaker. Strengthen your vocabulary with stronger, more confident words and phrases like: absolutely, of course, I am..., it is..., we are, definitely, it will..., and certainly.

How Can I Eliminate Filler Words?

Filler words most often show up as “um” or “uh” but anything can become a filler word depending on how it is used. With filler words the first question to ask is, “What should I replace my filler words with?” and the answer is nothing. Filler words add nothing to your presentation; they only take away! If they only reduce your credibility and add nothing, then we definitely want to eliminate them. They should be replaced with silence. “How do I do that?” Eliminating filler words can be done in two simple steps. First, be aware whenever you use a filler word so you can catch yourself. Second, practice speaking out loud with no filler words.

How you say it

In theater arts, there is a difference between *reading* a line out loud and *delivering* a line. Picture that you are the word processor for a presentation or speech you deliver. How you speak the words to your audience will determine whether or not they sound any different. How you say them determines whether or not they notice those words at all! Just like the word processor can format text many different ways to draw your attention, different speakers will choose to highlight their words differently depending on their style.

Pacing

The pace at which you speak will vary depending on your audience and the message you want your audience to receive. There is a time to speed up the pace and there is also a time to slow down the pace. But one thing is certain, the audience always wants to know the speaker is in total control. If the pacing adjustments look out of control, the speaker will look unprepared. If you are in control when speaking, then you need to use faster or slower pacing effectively. An increased pace will often accompany an increase in volume. Both together tell the audience that this is an important topic or an exciting topic. Slowing your pace allows the audience time to digest the message as it is delivered, giving them an opportunity to feel the weight of the message.

Volume

It is true you want to speak loud enough to be heard from the back of the room, but accomplished speakers use volume for much more. You want to use your volume as a tool for creating an audience effect can be used for both energy and gravity. Just as the pace will oftentimes speed up for a release of more energy, higher volume will usually accompany the quickened pace. The faster pace and louder volume delivers a shot of adrenalin and an exclamation point to make a topic more memorable to the audience.

Inflections

The inflections in your voice involve an adjustment to the pitch or the tone you use. Inflections applied to a simple statement can actually change the meaning of a sentence without changing the words. A change in inflection can appear as an emphasis on a word or syllable. Understand that the inflections in your voice play a huge part in the interpretation by your audience. Most speakers tend to spend more time thinking about what they are going to say and not enough time thinking about how they are going to say it.

Silence

Captivating to all audiences . . . is the power of the pause. Effective pauses can be one of the most difficult skills for a speaker to master. Why is that? It is because a lack of confidence in a speaker's own ability will cause an abnormal fear of being silent when on the stage. Pauses in speech are as important as the rests in music. What would music sound like if there were no rests between notes or between measures? The music would sound like noise! Pauses in speaking are very similar. Pauses create more of a tapestry of sound rather than non-stop noise coming from the speaker.

Discussion Questions

How will you synchronize your verbal, vocal, and visual delivery?

Which strong words will you add and which weak words will you eliminate?

Think of the last time you were misunderstood. What caused the misunderstanding? How could you apply the principles taught in this chapter to improve your communication?

Misunderstandings occur when the three channels of communication are not in harmony. What is an example you have seen?

Michael Argyle found that the non-verbal channels were 12.5 times more powerful in communicating interpersonal attitudes and feelings than the verbal channel. How can you verify that conclusion?

Think of someone who was not sincere with you. What communication clues did you interpret that caused you to come to that conclusion?

If visual, verbal, and vocal are the three channels of communication necessary for understanding, what potential problems could arise in conference calls and email communication?

According to Dale Carnegie, saying someone's name may be the most powerful word you use with him or her. How could you demonstrate the use of this principle tomorrow? What methods do you employ to help learn and remember a person's name?

Hedging your comments is when you refuse to take a strong stance on anything, thus staying in the middle of everything. What would you hypothesize about a presenter who used hedging?

What do you see as the biggest blocks to improving your communication? How could you apply the principles from this chapter to create a stronger message and a clearer meaning?

Apply your Skills

Based on what you learned in this chapter, read each of the following phrases with a delivery style from the style list.

Delivery Styles

- General of an army
- A marriage proposal
- Football coach
- Elementary school teacher
- Hollywood actor receiving an Oscar
- Supreme Emperor
- Father/Mother
- Speaking to a friend
- President of USA

Phrases

“The right word may be effective, but no word was ever as effective as a rightly timed pause.”
– Mark Twain, Author and Humorist

“Even though you may be saying the right words, if you don’t say it like you mean it, no one is going to believe you. In boardroom conversations or when presenting to a large audience, what you say must be believed to have impact.”

“Stories are not just for entertainment. Stories are the fabric of our lives. How we stitch the fabric together becomes the tapestry that is our life. Everyone loves stories when they are told well. Everyone has the ability to tell stories; it is a skill and can always be improved. Capture your stories, practice your stories and share your stories. We will all be enriched by the experience.”

Chapter Nine: Engaging Body Language

“The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn’t being said.”
- Peter Drucker, Austrian Writer, Management Consultant and Author

Your body language is the most important communication factor when speaking to an audience. As the speaker, your body language will tell a tale of its own. You need to make certain it is reinforcing your presentation and not contradicting it. You can use your stance, posture, facial expressions, hand gestures and other movements to your advantage. The use of your body language can strengthen your message or weaken it. A speaker must be seen as confident and in control, approachable and friendly; your body language must align with the rest of your message. Remember, what you bring to the stage is contagious - whether it’s boredom or energy.

Getting Started

How do you know when a presenter is confident or trustworthy?

What are examples of inappropriate or distracting gestures you have seen in presentations?

Review the Highlights

“The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”
- George Bernard Shaw, Irish Playwright

Stance and Stage Movement

Confidence can be delivered before you speak your first words. You’ve heard many times before, but first impressions matter most. Taking the stage is the first non-verbal message you send to your audience. What do you want that message to be? If it is a message of confidence, then the movement needs to be deliberate and purposeful. If your message is one of high energy, then the movement should be quick and energetic. Whether you are speaking in a conference room or on a stage at the national sales convention, your entrance should be considered because it will send an immediate message. What you bring to the stage is contagious to the audience, be it boredom or energy.

Grounding Your Stance

Once in front of the room, your stance needs to become what we call *grounded*. Picture yourself on the stage in front of the room with a personal space circle around your feet. We want you to stay in that circle until you are ready to move to a different grounded spot on the stage. One of the biggest issues we see with our students with foot movement is a rocking, or a step up and back, or a box step (almost like they were dancing). When feet are moving without any real reason for movement, the audience will interpret this as nervous energy. You will appear less confident, unprepared or just plain nervous. If you struggle with foot movement and stepping uncontrollably, try placing a masking tape “X” on the floor and hold your feet in that location for your entire rehearsal.

Movement With Purpose

It is true that audiences do not want a statue for a speaker. However, uncontrolled movement without purpose will confuse the audience or convey a message of nervousness. When the movements of your body language are in alignment with the message you are delivering, it will reinforce the message to the audience. Every movement should have a purpose. The purpose should assist in the reception and interpretation of the message. We agree that all audiences want to see movement from their speaker; just make sure the movement is purposeful and conveying the right message.

Posture and Stance

Your posture and your stance will speak to your audience by sending a message about your confidence and your comfort level on the stage. Practicing your stance in front of a mirror or in front of a trial audience can give you the feedback you need before you speak. There are various types of stances used by speakers. Which stance you choose will depend on your purpose (what are you trying to achieve?) and your audience (who are you speaking to and what do they expect?).

- The Formal Stance
- The Casual or Informal Stance
- The Receiving Stance
- The Superman® Stance
- The Resting or Waiting Stance

Hand Gestures

The number one question we get on body language from our students is, “What do I do with my hands!?” The short answer is movement with purpose. The benefit of using hand gestures is that the very fact of moving your hands around helps you recall your talking points - the gestures help you access memory and language. There are various types of gestures used by speakers.

- Emphatic Gestures
- Illustrative Gestures
- Anchoring Gestures
- Symbolic Gestures

Facial Expressions

When speaking, your facial expressions will tell a story to the audience. If the facial expression is not congruent with the message you are speaking, the audience will interpret the delivery as insincere, not confident or just plain false. Two areas we focus on for body language are your confidence level and your receptiveness. Both of these can be accentuated with facial expressions.

Smile

The facial expression that conveys to your audience that you are approachable is a simple, sincere, genuine smile. If you know that you have only a few seconds to make a first impression, your smile should be on your face as you take the stage. When you stand to speak, your smile needs to be genuine, not forced, and not nervous.

Eye Contact

Audiences desire eye contact and the speaker should give it to them. By making eye contact you are letting the audience know that you are confident in your skills and knowledge. Since your eyes are the only part of your central nervous system that is in direct contact with another human being, eye contact literally connects mind-to-mind. When your eyes meet the eyes of your audience, you make a First Brain-to-First Brain connection. In a small audience, eye contact can be shared with each individual in the room. For much larger audiences, the speaker should cast a gaze and make eye contact in each direction of the room. This way everyone will feel like the speaker has looked directly at him or her.

It Takes Practice

Whether you're an actor, a singer, a dancer or a speaker, delivering a message to an audience isn't easy. It takes practice. For speakers, one of the most profound areas of influence they can practice is their use of body language. In fact, mastering their body language is essential because so much of communication is delivered through the visual channel. It is unfortunate when speakers rely heavily on software tools as their primary visuals because their message can be conveyed much more powerfully and personally through the effective use of body language.

Discussion Questions

How will you determine the stance for your presentation?

What *movement with purpose* will you incorporate in your presentation?

We love it when a speaker has command of the stage, moves with purpose, meaning, and grace. The speaker holds our attention and builds credibility. How would you illustrate this for a presenter sitting at a conference table?

What does your body language say about you? How do you think others may have perceived you in your last presentation? Why?

Adults rely more heavily on nonverbal cues and paralinguage (69 percent) than they do on what is actually spoken (31percent). What can we generalize from these facts? How might this change your preparation for your next presentation?

We have all witnessed a nervous presenter. What cues did you pick up on that verified that conclusion? What can we surmise about these behaviors?

We need to make certain our body language is reinforcing our presentation and not contradicting it. What are some methods we could use to overcome conflicting messages?

What was the main point for you from this chapter? How can you implement and demonstrate that point into your next presentation?

Notes

Apply your Skills

Read the following phrases and practice at least three different hand gestures or body movements to represent the phrase. Don't just play charades. Practice delivering the line and gesturing with your body as if you are presenting to an audience.

- “This will benefit the whole world.”
- “Not only for our past projects, but for the future projects as well.”
- “With the increases in revenues we will surpass our targets.”
- “We achieved success beyond our initial forecasts.”
- “We will review the project development, implementation and our results.”
- “Think about the words you are speaking.”
- “Open the borders to increase our customer base.”
- “We can place you in our Los Angeles or our New York data center.”

Chapter Ten: Using Visual Aids

“Visuals should be used to enhance an audience’s understanding of a concept, not used as cue cards.” - William Kreiger, Professional Speaker and Author

When properly prepared, visual aids can be a valuable asset to your presentation. They can liven up and enhance your presentation by making your ideas more understandable and more interesting, while adding to your overall credibility. Unfortunately, *death by PowerPoint®* is a common occurrence in the corporate world. According to a survey of iSpeak students, two of the most annoying characteristics of poor presentations are slides with too much text and speakers who read every single word on the slide to their audience.

Getting Started

What is meant by “death by PowerPoint”?

When are visuals a “must” for a presentation? When should they not be used?

Review the Highlights

“Slides are slides. Documents are documents. They aren’t the same. Attempts to merge them result in a Slideument.” - Garr Reynolds, Author and Speaker

Why is it when someone says “corporate presentation” it means “endless, wordy, and boring slides?” We have nothing against using slides as visual aids. We love visual aids. In fact, research supports the use of visual aids to enhance the learning experience for the audience. If you want to effectively inform and ultimately persuade your audience, simply telling the audience may be the least effective and least memorable method. Audience retention increases with visual aids.

What Can You Use for a Visual Aid?

While computer generated slides can be an effective form of visual aid (when used properly), it is important to understand and appreciate the other forms of visual aids as well. By blending different types of visual aids into your presentation, you can create a more favorable environment for audience engagement, retention and persuasion. Sure, you can use a Microsoft PowerPoint® or Apple Keynote® slide as a visual aid, but what else could be effective? Rather than reading the following list and ranking them, think about how you could incorporate multiple types of visual aids into your presentation. Keep in mind that the right type will be based on your purpose, the audience and the situation. There are various types of visual aids used by speakers.

- Video Projected Slides
- Whiteboard or Flip Chart
- Videos
- Old School Overhead Projector with Transparencies
- Handouts

Designing Your Slides

Since video projected slides are so prevalent in today’s corporate environment, we cannot discuss visual aids without giving them special attention. Never forget that the slides are meant to support you, not the other way around! If you need a slide to support your subject, create one. If you don’t need a visual slide to support a point you want to make, don’t use one. Often in these “presentations gone wrong,” each slide contains nothing but bullet point after bullet point with an overabundance of text. Slides are visual aids, yet in presentations, we rarely see graphics or images used on any of them. Often, they just show text. There is nothing wrong with using bulleted text on a slide, but remember your audience has a very powerful visual learning modality.

Interacting with Your Slides

When you deliver a presentation using slides, it is important to choreograph how you will interact with the projected image. If you plan on having slides with bulleted text, it is recommended that you position yourself to the left of your screen. As you gesture with a hand to the slide, the audience’s eyes will follow down your arm and straight across the bulleted text. Because we read left to right, standing to the left will be comfortable for the audience as you gesture to the slides.

When you want your audience to focus on you, black out the screen. This allows the audience to feel as if they are interacting solely with you, which can build credibility and trust. Blacking out the screen can be done in both PowerPoint® and Keynote® using the B-key on the keyboard. Simply pressing B will black out the projected slideshow, while any key on the keyboard will toggle the slide back on to the screen.

Discussion Questions

What visual aid mistakes have you seen or used in the past?

We have all felt the effects of “death by PowerPoint.” What benefits come from using slides?

Why do you use visual aids? How do you decide when to use visual aids? How do you decide what visual aids to use?

“Visuals should be used to enhance an audience’s understanding of a concept, not used as cue cards.” How did you react when you first read this statement? How would you defend it?

We are reminded in this chapter that there are several mediums for using visuals, not just slides (e.g. easel, whiteboard, chalkboard, handouts). Which do you like best? Why?

“Less is more when designing slides.” What criteria do you use in building your slide deck? How have you created more by using less?

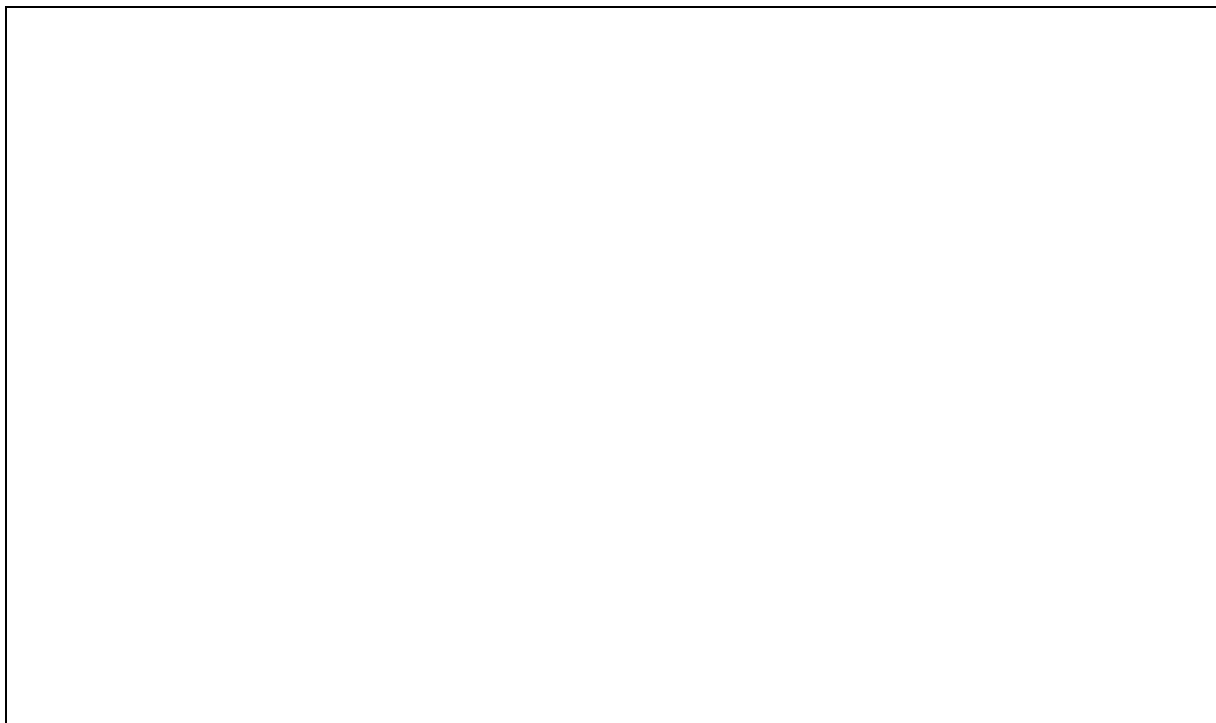
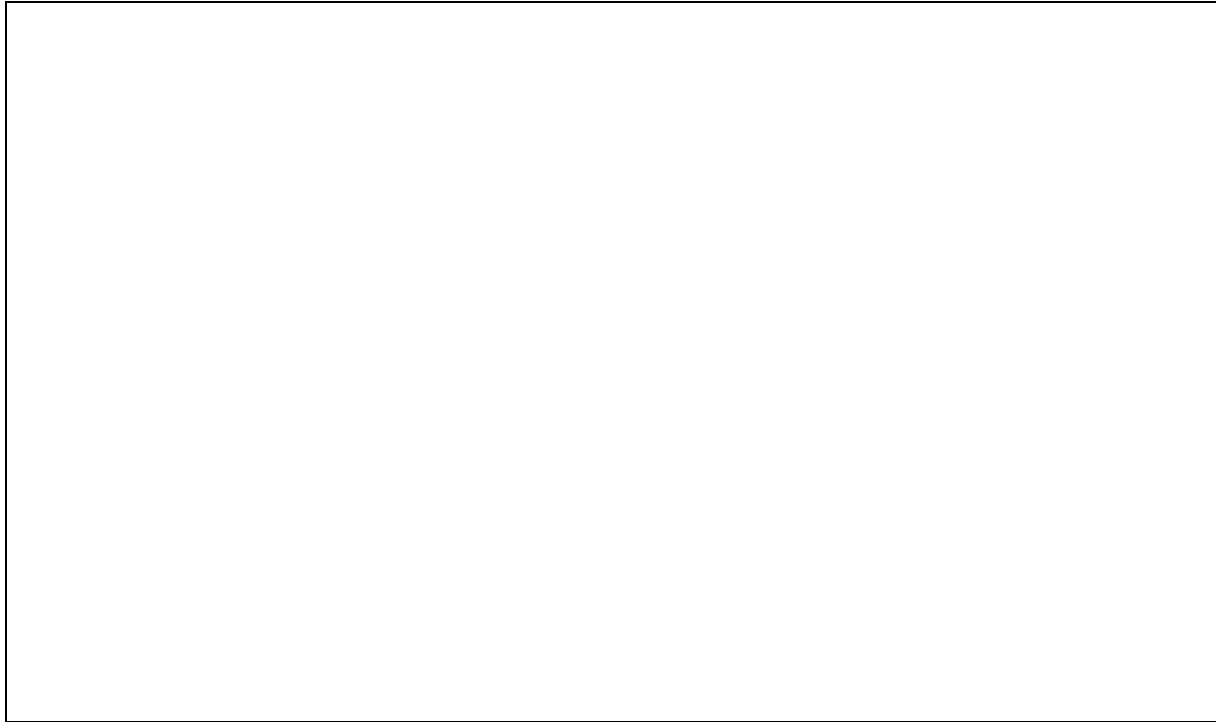
Which types of visual aids could you use to effectively convey your message?

How could you use visuals to capture your audience’s attention and not distract from your core message?

Notes

Apply your Skills

In groups, use the spaces provided below to sketch out possible slides you could use in your next presentation.



Chapter Eleven: Handling Questions

“I wish I had an answer to that because I’m tired of answering that question.” - Yogi Berra, Hall of Fame Catcher, New York Yankees

How you handle questions from the audience will do one of two things for the presenter. It will either help or hurt their credibility. Rarely does a question and answer session leave the perception of the speaker the same. The ability to facilitate a Questions & Answer segment in your presentation is the opportunity to enhance your audience’s understanding of your topic and make the information relevant to them individually. You will also find that the participant’s involvement with asking questions will increase their level of attention and retention.

Getting Started

What are the dangers of the question and answer segment of a presentation? Why?

How do you currently prepare for the question and answer time of your presentation?

Review the Highlights

“I don’t pretend to have all the answers. I don’t pretend to even know what the questions are. Hey, where am I?” - Jack Handey, Humorist and Author

Prepare for Tough Questions

When it comes to questions in a presentation, prepare for the worst, but expect the best! If you’ve analyzed your audience and how they feel about your topic, it shouldn’t be too difficult to think up the tough questions they might ask you. Write those questions down and then brainstorm how you would respond to them if asked by an audience member. For the extremely tough questions and high stakes speaking engagements you should role-play your responses with someone else to simulate the actual setting.

When Should I Answer Questions?

When it comes to taking questions from the audience the speaker has several options. You can take questions throughout the presentation, hold all questions until the designated time, or not allow questions at all. The method you choose will depend on your purpose, the situation, and your audience. Think about what you are trying to achieve and think about whom you are addressing in the presentation. If you decide to designate a certain time for answering questions, we recommend that you not plan that time for the very end of your delivery. Instead of just taking questions at the end of your time slot, reserve the final couple of minutes for you to give the audience your closing remarks. This puts an exclamation point on your delivery because you can control the last word on your subject. With our suggestion to take questions just before your final remarks, you will take questions after the body of your presentation, but before you close.

How Should You Respond to Questions?

When it comes to taking questions from the audience the speaker has several options. The following process can be used when facilitating a Q&A session.

- **Listen:** focus on the audience member when they ask their question.
- **Acknowledge:** thank them for their question and their participation.
- **Repeat:** paraphrase the question back to the audience.
- **Respond:** it is always best to keep your answers short.

What If You Don’t Know the Answer?

It is okay to tell a participant, “That is a great question and I do not know the answer.” Always tell the truth. You never want to attempt to answer a question that you don’t know, as many audience members will be able to tell you are uncomfortable. In addition, a few audience members might even know the correct answer. This will negate your credibility.

What If There Are No Questions?

If there are no questions during a designated question and answer time, you have a couple of options. You could simply move on to your close and wrap up the presentation or you could ask yourself a question. You could begin by saying, “One question I get asked quite often is...” Just remember, it is important to pause an appropriate amount of time before moving on to the close. A quick side note, you should be curious about why there were no questions.

Discussion Questions

Why does the Q&A time of a presentation bring so much anxiety? What can be done to control this anxiety?

What are the tough questions your audience members might ask?

When do you plan to address questions in your next presentation?

How will you handle the situation when participants have no questions?

From this chapter, what did you glean as the number one rule of handling questions? How do you visualize using this rule in the future?

What mistakes have you seen presenters make when handling questions? How has this affected you as a member of the audience?

How does it make you feel as the presenter when you have to say “I don’t know?” How do you interpret that response when you hear it from the presenter?

This chapter suggests not ending your presentation with the question and answer time, but instead using your MAS from chapter 5. How did you respond to that? Why?

What have you learned from this chapter that can increase your credibility during the question and answer portion of your presentation?

How would you handle a situation where the audience is constantly interjecting more questions than you can handle in your available time?

Apply your Skills

As a group, think of an upcoming presentation. What tough questions do you anticipate being asked in that presentation?

Why do you consider those to be tough? (e.g. don't know the answer, they won't like the answer, answer is loaded with politics, etc.)

Construct the response you will give to one of the tough questions. Include your acknowledgement before your response.

Chapter Twelve: Rehearsal and Evaluation

“There are always three speeches for every one you actually gave: The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave.”
- Dale Carnegie, *Speaker and Author*

Just because you know the content of a presentation does not guarantee that you’ll nail the delivery in front of your audience. Just because you have no fear of speaking in front of others does not mean you are a great presenter. “Wing it.” Those two words get used often as if they are courageous and daring, when in fact they are nothing more than rude and arrogant. When “winging it” becomes the preparation process of choice (or lack thereof!), the people using it make the excuse that they are just too busy to rehearse and besides, they reason, they know this material better than anyone else! That’s why they’ve been asked to speak!

Getting Started

How can you tell when someone is “winging it” during a presentation?

Why is rehearsal difficult to implement?

Review the Highlights

“Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.” - Vince Lombardi

Rehearsal is not always about studying to understand the content better or to get over your stage fright. Rehearsal is the planning and preparation to successfully deliver the content to the audience. The benefits of good rehearsal include a reduction of fear, increased self-confidence, richer topic development, accurate timings, better organization, and the ability to be more spontaneous.

The Rehearsal Process

Often we get resistance from our workshop attendees about rehearsing because they worry it will take up too much of their time. Understanding that we have more requests to present in business than we do hours for rehearsal, we can still rehearse the most important elements of our delivery. Because the open and the close are so important to your success, it's essential that you always rehearse them both. The rehearsal process we teach includes three key steps after you have constructed your presentation and your visual aids:

1. Read the presentation out loud (open, close, key body elements)
2. Stand and deliver the presentation with your notes
3. Stand and deliver with no notes

The rehearsal process should be repeated several times with adjustments or corrections made each time. How much of the presentation you read and deliver and how many times you repeat it will be dependent on the length of the presentation and how much time you have to rehearse.

Rehearsal Requires a Critic

In a corporate environment, we need to seek feedback on our delivery so we can consistently improve. Malcolm Gladwell claims the key to success in any field is practice and feedback. He says that to a large extent, practicing a specific task for a total of 10,000 hours and receiving feedback on our performance helps us continually improve. Feedback from your presentation will come from three sources:

You: No one will be tougher on your performance than you. With today's technology, you probably have both an audio and a video recorder in your pocket courtesy of your smartphone.

Your peers: Ask your peers what they thought of your presentation: “What did you like/dislike about it?” and “What could I change for next time?” One of the best people to recruit will be someone who also has an interest in improving their own presentation skills.

Your mentor or coach: A mentor is someone who possesses the skills you want to emulate. It could be a colleague, a friend, or someone outside your profession. A speaking coach, often a paid position, will have a wealth of knowledge to share and tools to help teach and train you.

Always Seek to Improve

Whether you evaluate your own performance or seek feedback from others, no one will improve their performance without consistent evaluation, reflection and implementation of new skills. A great presenter understands that there is no such thing as a best speaker, because there's always room to get better. Make rehearsal and evaluations a standard part of your speaking process.

Discussion Questions

“Just because you have no fear of speaking in front of others does not mean you are a great presenter.” How do you interpret this statement?

Have you ever “just winged it” for a presentation? Why? Have you rehearsed for a presentation? Why? How did it go?

What is your motivation to practice and rehearse?

Which of the evaluation methods will you use for critique and feedback?

Can you tell if a presenter has practiced and rehearsed for the presentation? How?

Feedback requires a critic. What concerns might there be about practicing and rehearsing in front of a peer?

What do you see as the biggest roadblock to rehearsing? How can that roadblock be reduced or eliminated?

What are some methods we could use as a team to improve our feedback styles with each other? How do you feel when someone gives you unsolicited feedback?

“I never have time to practice or rehearse. My day is too full to do any of that.” How would you respond to this statement now after reading this chapter?

Who will be your coach or mentor?

Apply your Skills

Take a recent presentation or upcoming presentation and deliver just the opening of the presentation (CABA from Chapter 4). Use a video recording device to capture your delivery of the opening. Then answer the feedback questions below.

Overall, did you hear the CABA pieces of content clearly? _____

Overall, how would you rate your power and credibility on a scale of 1-10? _____

Overall, how would you rate your approachability on a scale of 1-10? _____

As you watched your body language, listened to your voice and the vocals used, what improvements would you suggest?

What are three specific changes you can make for the next time you deliver this message?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Appendix

“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”
- Johann Goethe, German Writer and Statesman

To be successful, you must have a plan. This iSpeak group-study program has provided you with the *information* and the *inspiration* to improve yourself towards personal success. The final step is up to you - you must *implement* what you have learned and that will lead to *improvement*. While the implementation phase can be the most trying, it is also the most significant. Without implementing the new knowledge and skills that you have gained, improvement will be impossible.



Connect with iSpeak

“We shall neither fail nor falter; we shall not weaken or tire... give us the tools and we will finish the job.” - Winston Churchill, British politician



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At iSpeak we are always adding videos, downloads, and tools for you! iSpeak developers continually enhance our curriculum with modern tools and job aids. As the tools and videos are created, they are added to the iSpeak University site. If you want a refresher on any of the iSpeak content, you will find it available at iSpeak University!

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Informative videos (and some just for fun!) of our instructors are placed on our YouTube channel. You can view a sample of some of our instructors to get a feel for the energy they bring to the classroom. Each of our instructors has a unique style they love to share with the students.

<http://www.youtube.com/iSpeakDotCom>

Recommended Reading List

“What we become depends on what we read after all of the professors have finished with us. The greatest university of all is a collection of books.” - Thomas Carlyle, Scottish philosopher

Presentation Skills

You’ve got to be Believed to be Heard, Bert Decker, St. Martin’s Press, 1992

Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery, Garr Reynolds, New-Riders, 2008

Secrets of Successful Speakers: How you can Motivate, Captivate & Persuade, Lilly Walters, McGraw-Hill, 1993

Corporate Ovations: Your Roadmap To More Effective Presentations, Russ Peterson Jr. and Kevin Karschnik, Discovery Tree Press, 2013

Speaking Secrets of the Masters, Speakers Roundtable, Executive Books/Life Management, 1995

The Articulate Executive, Granville Toogood, McGraw-Hill, 1996

Success Secrets of the Motivational Superstars, Michael Jeffreys, Prima, 1996

Communication

Everyone Communicates, Few Connect, John C. Maxwell, Thomas Nelson, 2010

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, and Al Switzler, McGraw-Hill, 2002

Conversational Magic, Les Donaldson, Prentice Hall, 1981

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die, Chip Heath and Dan Heath, Random House, 2007

Messages: The Communication Skills Book, Matthew McKay & Martha Davis & Patrick Fanning, New Harbinger Publications, 1995

Sales

Cut the C.R.A.P. and Make the Sale, Russ Peterson, DC Press, 2003

SPIN Selling, Neil Rackham, McGraw-Hill, 1998

To Sell Is Human: The Surprising Truth About Moving Others, Daniel Pink, Riverhead, 2012

iSpeak Workshops

“Many people give presentations, but rarely do people have this kind of thorough training for doing so. Corporate Ovations is a great way to get intensive training in public speaking and improve your skills to succeed.” – Jan Gunter, Communications and Community Relations Director, The Ronald McDonald House

Presentation skills for today’s business professionals need to be customized to the individuals and their role. Our workshops are designed and delivered for maximum impact and behavioral change. iSpeak provides presentation skills training and tools for Sales professionals, Leaders and Individual Contributors. Whether you are an executive casting a vision for your company or a sales professional communicating to potential customers, we can help you prepare, develop and deliver that message.

Business Professionals

As a business professional you are asked to create and deliver messages to your peers and managers. These messages may be informative, such as a financial review, or they could be persuasive as in a request for a budget approval. The response from your audience will be dependent on both you and your message. In these programs you will learn how to succeed at both. These classes cover writing and delivering a presentation from beginning to end, with a focus on powerful openings, confident closings, and engaging supporting data. Students leave class with an SD card containing their classroom presentations.

**CORPORATE
OVATIONS
MESSAGE
BUILDER**

Sales Professionals

As a sales professional you will be presenting your ideas to customers in a persuasive manner. In this program you will learn how to uncover the data you need to effectively design and deliver a persuasive message that inspires action from your prospect. This class provides an opportunity for you to practice communication and questioning techniques by understanding a customer’s decision criteria, develop a presentation to meet their needs, and practice methods of persuasion. Students leave class with an SD card containing their sales presentations in various customer settings.

**SALES
DISCOVERY**

Leaders

If you are a manager or leader in your organization, this program is specifically designed for you. In this program you will not only learn professional methods to deliver your message, you will practice your delivery with eight video-recorded presentations. After each speaking opportunity you will receive one-on-one coaching to enhance your skills. Whether you are speaking at a team meeting or to the entire corporation, this workshop is designed to develop your effectiveness as a leader.

**LEADER
PRESENCE**