



How Effective Are Your Presentations?

Business Development Best Practices Series

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Have you ever had to sit through a presentation where you spend the entire time checking your phone for emails and messages even though you know you haven't received any new ones? At some point in your career, whether you are in business development, sales, marketing, management, or otherwise, most of us will have to get up in front of a group of people and make a presentation. Here are FIVE tips that may help you give a meaningful presentation.

Tip 1 - Be Prepared

This is the most important thing you can do. People who 'wing it' WILL FAIL at some point - don't play the odds.

Content – Write it down, edit it, get it exactly the way you want it, and practice.

Notes – I typically will prepare some type of outline. One word or a short sentence formatted in bullet points, with indented subtopics to stay on track. Don't rely on the entire written presentation; first, you WILL end up just reading it at some point; second, it makes it difficult to find your place if you were to lose your thoughts. Be sure your notes are LEGIBLE; double spaced, large font. You want be able to look at them BRIEFLY and immediately get back to the audience.

Practice – No one likes to do this, but it is the most important thing you can do. If you are presenting as a group, practice as a group. If you are presenting by yourself, record yourself on video. You will be shocked at what you could learn about your habits watching yourself on video. Practice will also help you manage your presentation into the time slot you need.

Tip 2 - Be Prepared

(Yes, this is that important)

Tip 3 - BE PREPARED

(In case you hadn't realized it the first two times, Yes, this is BY FAR the most important thing you can do.)

Tip 4 - Visual Aids

99% of presenters will have some type of visual aid. Visual aids are good when they are done correctly. Bad visual aids will RUIN an otherwise good presentation.

First, make sure that the information is LEGIBLE. Putting up 10 pt font on a large screen is useless. Also, photos/graphs/etc. need to be clear - make sure they are formatted to be used on whatever size screen you are using.

PowerPoint – Oh man, this would be a long one to discuss if I were writing a dissertation. I will just say that the MOST effective presentations (for those of us that don't present for a living) use one word or one sentence per slide and the presenters use no more than a few slides. If you give the audience something to read, it takes their focus COMPLETELY away from YOU. People can read about things from a book or the internet. In a presentation, make sure you are the one communicating the information.

Handouts – If you are going to give someone a handout, go through it TOGETHER. Don't let them drift through it on their own - again, this will take their focus off of your message.

Tip 5 - Speaking and Presenting 'Style'

Good presenters know how important voice and body are to the presentation.

Voice – ARTICULATE. Speaking clearly is more imperative than volume. DON'T BE MONOTONE, a great analogy that I have heard is to speak like you're reading a book to a child and use different tones, speeds, volumes, etc. This will keep your audience engaged.

Body – This goes back to videotaping yourself (or your group, for that matter). You need to be aware of your habits; do you slouch? do you stick your neck out? do you flick your hair or grab your... shirt? You also need to show your hands, a lot. When people see your hands it is a sign of trust. NEVER put them in your pockets - always have them out, in front of you.

Thanks for reading, I hope you were able to take something away and Good Luck!

Key Takeaways:

- Be prepared
- Be prepared
- BE PREPARED
- Visual aids should support your message, not interfere with it
- Use a confident voice and posture

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