

12 Tips for a More Dynamic Presentation

What you convey matters more than what you say.

By Virginia Avery

1. Know Your Audience—

It is vital to know who are your talking to. Why are they meeting? What is their interest in your subject? Do you know their general age and education? What are they expecting?

How do you find this information? By asking questions of the person who invited you to speak. Also see if you might interview one or two others who are part of the group. This will give you insight into their concerns, preferences and needs.

Look for some “insider” information about the group likes and dislikes or special events. This will all contribute to helping you connect with the audience.

2. Know Your Objective.

The first thing you need to decide is what you wish to accomplish. What is your objective? This is an extremely important step. Take all the time you need to get clarity.

When you are clear about your objective, you will find it easier to stay focused. Knowing your objective will also enable you to determine what action step you will ask the audience to take.

3. Present Big Ideas.

Give your audience **A Big Idea** that is easily grasped. Tell them why is important—especially to them.

4. Only three main points.

Keep your main points to three. That's all your audience can remember, and all you can discuss in the usual presentation time.

Too often we try to cover too much ground when presenting. It is far, far better to make fewer points, and make them well. Your presentation will flow more smoothly and be better remembered.

5. Tell stories your audience can relate to.

This is where knowing the audience really pays off. The stories you tell, the examples you use, can be customized to fit this particular group.

For instance, if you are speaking to a group of financial planners you would have the “heroes” of your stories be financial planners; if you are speaking to a group of architects, then you would have architects be the main characters.

6. Captivating speakers speak with **energy, and enthusiasm**.

If you aren't excited about your topic, how can you expect your audience to be? You must be excited about your ideas, and show that enthusiasm with your voice.

A big part of persuasiveness is the passion with which the words are delivered.

7. Dress Professionally

Unless you are wearing a costume for your presentation, remember to present yourself well. Most of the time that means dressing slightly better than the audience you are addressing.

Like it or not, we make our first impressions with the way we look.

Women need to be especially careful to not dress in a way that will keep the audience focused on their clothes rather than on their subject. Too short skirts, tight skirts, stiletto heels, and bare midriffs are all taboo if you want to be taken seriously.

8. Overcoming Nervousness

There is no better way to overcome nervousness than through thorough preparation and practice. By knowing your material so well you could practically recite it backwards, your nervousness will be short-lived. (I am **not** recommending you memorize your presentation—that is as bad as reading it.)

In addition to being well-prepared, a good night's sleep will also help. But even if you lay awake all night, you still can deflect the butterflies by: a. knowing you are well-prepared; b. knowing you look your best; c. doing some simple stretches before you go on; and d. meeting and greeting some of the audience before you speak.

Also breathe deeply. We tend to hold our breath when we are nervous, which makes us more nervous. So a few good deep breaths will keep you more relaxed.

9. Begin With a Smile

A smile relaxes both you and the audience. It helps dispel nervousness. When you smile, you look more relaxed and confident, and when you are confident, people are more inclined to believe what you say

10. Open Strong!

It is vital to get off to a good start, which means begin with an attention getting opening. Too many speakers “slide” into their opening, warming up with “good morning” or “good evening” and we know already boredom is on its way!

A surprising statement, a thought-provoking question, unusual statistics, these are the techniques to a strong beginning.

11. Close Strong

The opening and closing parts of presentations are the most remembered. Strong closes come from quickly restating your main point, and encouraging the audience to take the action you recommend.

A restatement of your main point, the reasons why the action step needs to be implemented and or an appropriate quote all contribute to a memorable close.

No need to say “thank you”. That lessens the forceful close.

12. Preparation plus Practice = Confidence.

If you want to give outstanding presentations and speeches, prepare and practice. Even though we have been using words our whole lives, it does not mean we can get up in front of an audience and deliver a great presentation.

As you can see from these 10 tips (which merely scratch the surface of what comprises an outstanding presentation), presenting is a skill—and skills take practice, proper practice.

With Best Wishes for Your Future Speaking Success,

Virginia Avery

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