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20 Steps to Becoming a Better Public Speaker

1. **There is NO substitute for effective preparation – it takes hard work.**
 - Good presentations don't just happen;
 - Rehearse what you want to say by section – e.g. opening, close etc.
2. **Utilize an effective Introduction.**
 - Your presentation starts before you reach the podium;
 - YOU should always write the introduction that is tailored for your presentation and what you want to accomplish.
3. **Take steps to deal with any nervousness:**
 - Arrive early and go to where you will be speaking;
 - Memorize the first 6 lines of your presentation;
 - What makes you relax? Ask a question – get audience participation (**use a plant if needed**).
4. **Respect the time of others.**
 - Never go overtime;
 - If you can – end 3 minutes early.
5. **Always provide a handout:** Something simple is fine.
 - Always include your contact information;
 - Provide a reason to go to your website.
6. **Dress the part.** Error on the side of overdressing.
7. **Organize your thoughts – what is the main purpose of your talk?**
 - Even though your goal is usually to advance your business – your purpose should be to provide value to those in attendance;
 - What can you provide that will assist your audience?
8. **Be mindful of fillers.** “ahs, ums, so, you know”
 - Fillers are incredibly distracting;
 - Silence is ok!
 - Rehearse in front of someone and ask them to listen for the fillers you may use.
9. **Pacing and vocal variety are important.**
 - Too fast or too slow can be very distracting;
 - Change your speed and tone to bring emphasis to certain points;
 - Repeat key phrases.

10. Body Language - watch your non-verbal communication.

- Are you stiff?
- Do you look uncomfortable?
- Are you moving in a distracting way?

11. Humor can be very effective but use it with caution:

- All jokes must be “G” rated and be extremely careful not to offend;
- Try and relate the joke to your topic.

12. Avoid any negative self-remarks:

- “I am sure you would rather be doing something else than listening to me talk about “
- I am sorry I did not have more time to adequately prepare;
- This is not very well organized.

13. Be familiar with the venue – and utilize others for assistance:

- Can everyone see you; where should you be positioned?
- Ask other for assistance – scribe, handouts, etc.

14. Make sure you can be seen and heard.

- Take command of the podium;
- Become the center of attention.

15. Always have a back up plan for AV failures:

- Allow time to test the AV equipment if at all possible;
- What will you do if the AV fails? Be prepared because it will fail.

16. Never read your presentation.

- Ok to read limited sections.

17. Never memorize your entire presentation.

- Speak from a skeleton “keyword” outline;
- Speaking from an outline gives you flexibility.

18. Establish eye contact with your audience.

- Look to several different spots;
- Find your friends.

19. Be prepared if your mind goes Blank.

- It will happen sooner or later to everyone;
- The trick is knowing how to deal with it. “Let’s stop and reflect what I just said.”

20. Practice, practice, practice -- seek out speaking opportunities.

- Join Toastmasters;
- Volunteer to take speaking roles at work or with other activities whenever available.

Organization is Critical

Opening - Key to a great beginning!

The first and last minute of your presentation will be the most memorable – what do you want them to remember?

Opening: suggestions for a good opening:

- Ask a question;
- Make a startling statement;
- Relate a story or anecdote;
- Use a quotation;
- Arouse curiosity (e.g. good news & bad news) or suspense;
- State the importance or timeliness of a topic;
- Involve the audience;
- Reference the occasion.

Body: You usually want to limit your main discussion to three main points.

- Rule of three is always good to follow;
- Don't try to communicate too many points during any presentation;
- It's Difficult for people to retain more than 3 ideas;
- Limiting your discussion to 3 points helps focus your presentation.

Conclusion:

- Tie the conclusion back to the beginning – have your presentation go full circle.
- What one idea do you want the audience to leave with?