

What Marv White Says about Making an Executive Level Presentation

By Judith Filek—President
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An executive's time is valuable. These individuals go from meeting to meeting. It is not unusual for them to have as many as 10–15 meetings a day. For Marv White, Chief Technologist for Innovation at ESPN, an entertainment sports programming network and formerly CTO of Sportvision, a sport and data content company that created the “yellow first and ten line,” it's all about the ideas and figuring out how to execute on them. In interviewing Marv, he offered these suggestions on what a successful executive level meeting should be.

1. **Come in with your ideas well thought out.** I don't want to try to figure out what the person is proposing. I want to get the point and get it quickly. I have a million things on my plate. Keep your ideas tight, concise.
2. **Have the data that supports why your idea is a worth listening to.** As the CTO, I am responsible for making correct decisions, investing wisely. If you are going to pitch to me, I need your points well supported. Don't show up without the data. On the other hand, people may give me too many details. It makes it difficult to keep everything straight. Speakers who offer too much information usually do a bad job and go down a rat hole. Again, come in with your ideas well thought out. Think about what information I need to make a decision. Then, stop.
3. **Show you understand who will be receiving this message.** In the entertainment business, empathy for the viewers is critical. You absolutely have to get into the shoes of the sport fans. You must consider how this would relate or be perceived by a variety of audiences.
4. **Don't recite a script.** I need to be engaged. Ask for my input, my concerns. I am probably going to interrupt you anyway. It makes

a better impression on me if we are having a dialogue. I am not a big fan of monologues.

5. **Winging it doesn't usually work, unless you're really, really smart.** Be ready for some tough questions. Think about what I might ask ahead of time in order to decide.
6. **Consider a “Show and Tell.”** It's ok to show me PowerPoint®, but I am more excited by video clips or examples of devices, such as a hockey puck with electronics. I don't hate slides, but often, it is just not the best way to present the information. Live demonstrations or animated computer clips really help to focus the discussion.
7. **Be truthful.** In this business, it is easy to indulge in wishful thinking. Be upfront, clear and honest, and you won't go wrong with me. It is important that I stay on top of people's projects. Tell me the milestones. What's difficult or risky? What are the ramifications of not doing something? Be candid. Show me how your idea fits into the business.

Regardless of your industry, Marv White offers solid advice for making executive level meetings successful. Pay attention to his suggestions and you will undoubtedly have the advantage.

***Question:** We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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