

De-mystifying Your Experience Speaking through an Interpreter

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Picture this! Your company has decided to expand their global business into China. They have tapped you to introduce your product at a large technology show. They have told you to expect about fifty people and not to worry because there will be an interpreter. Although working with an interpreter isn't easy, by remembering some simple principles, you can insure that your experience will be successful.

- 1. Carefully plan out your presentation, making sure your presentation is devoid of jargon, acronyms and clichés.** The simpler you can make your presentation, the easier it will be for the interpreter to translate and for your audience to understand. It is a good idea to rehearse your presentation in front of your peers and manager to make sure that you haven't inadvertently included a few clichés or some references that only Americans would understand. If any acronyms need to be used, they should be defined.
- 2. Practice out loud five or six times.** The first few times a speaker says something out loud, the speaker is determining how best to say something. After that, the speaker gets comfortable with the content and rarely needs his/her notes, especially if they have used our **Presentation Planner** as the method for crafting the content.
- 3. Avoid humor.** Most foreign audiences do not feel that humor is appropriate in a business presentation. It trivializes the subject and diminishes the credibility of the speaker.
- 4. Send your interpreter your slide show ahead of time.** This will allow the interpreter time to familiarize him/herself with the information. It will allow the interpreter time to think about the way to explain the concepts.
- 5. Meet with your interpreter ahead of time.** To see if the interpreter understands the overall meaning of your presentation, ask some simple questions. Insist that the interpreter interrupt you anytime there is a question about what you are explaining so that you can then clarify the point. Agree on a simple hand signal for any questions. If the interpreter isn't absolutely clear on your meaning, the rest of your presentation may be in jeopardy.
- 6. Talk to your audience, not your interpreter.** Your job is to convince the audience to consider your product. If you are constantly looking at your interpreter and not the audience, they will not feel involved. It is easy to want to read to your listeners, but your listeners will be bored and you will not be able to determine what they understand. Make sure you use your body and voice to back up your message. They will create word pictures for your listeners, and the audience will want to listen further. A speaker with a monotoned voice and little eye contact rarely has impact.
- 7. Pause often and speak slowly.** By pausing every few sentences, your interpreter will be able to keep up, and the audience will be able to adjust to your cadence. If there is a simultaneous translation, short pauses after each statement or sentence are a must.
- 8. Make sure to pass out a written version of your presentation, as well as your slides.** Some audiences will want them ahead of time in order to follow your presentation. It makes them feel secure. On the other hand, the opportune time for your listeners to have hard copies of your presentation is after you are done so that they focus entirely on you versus the text.

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- 9. Arrive early and greet your audience with a few simple phases of welcome in their native language, if possible.** Know the custom of your country for giving and receiving business cards, as well as shaking hands, etc. The book, **Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands**, by Morrison, Conaway and Borden, is a great resource for helping you to understand how to do business in sixty countries. Make sure your interpreter is on hand to help translate. What you may find out in the “meet and greet” time is that many listeners will have some English.
- 10. Watch your timing.** Do not expect to be able to cover the same amount of information that you would with an English speaking audience. It is very time consuming to speak through an interpreter. It is also very draining so expect that your own energy level will be zapped afterwards.

Working with an interpreter does present some challenges, but it can be very effective. With care, you can achieve the business results you desire.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.