

Practice Makes Perfect So Try These Suggestions!

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All of us want to be perceived as confident and engaging when we speak in front of an audience. However, no one is born a great communicator. The pros will tell you that they got better at communicating by practicing. Knowing what and how to practice is important. To be perceived as a passionate speaker, gestures, vocal variety and movement are essential.

Gestures

Gestures that are real or natural emanate from the shoulder. They do not come from a locked elbow or the wrist. They come from all three zones of the body: the upper chest, the middle and below the waist. Gestures that look overdone come after the word and not before. They also come primarily from one zone, typically the middle where the elbows seem tethered to the waist.

Often, when we do a business presentation, we hold in energy because we are nervous. Thus, we lock our elbows. We also hold our hands behind our back or fold them in front of us. We may fidget with our rings or the coins in our pocket in an attempt to look relaxed.

It is important to let energy out. If we hold in energy, our body will let it out, but in an ineffective manner. For example, our head may start bobbing to make a point. If you let your hands work for you, not only will your points stand out, but you will feel much more relaxed.

To tap into what your real gestures are, stand in front of a mirror and then describe a favorite vacation spot. Notice what your hands do when nobody but you are observing. How big are your gestures? Do they come from the shoulder? How many zones of the body do you utilize? After you make your point, do you drop your hands at your sides?

Once you have an idea of the types of gestures you do, practice a business presentation in front of the mirror or a video camera. Keep in mind that the people who listen to this presentation may find the subject difficult. Your gestures will help them, particularly if your topic is technical or if English is not your primary language or theirs. When you have a big point, make sure you do a big gesture. There should not be any difference between the gestures you do when you are with friends and family and when you are in front of internal or external clients.

When you actually do your presentation, get feedback about your gestures from someone who will give you honest feedback, rather than someone who will just say you did everything perfectly. If there is ever an opportunity to video the actual presentation, make sure to do so and review it from the listener's perspective.

Vocal Variety

A speaker who "sounds" passionate has vocal variety. He or she plays his voice like a musical instrument, sometimes bringing it up and sometimes bringing it down. Key points in each sentence are emphasized by vocal variety.

To assess whether your voice has vocal variety, tape it. You can either tape yourself while practicing or doing an actual business presentation. You can also use your voice mail system to check how your voice sounds. Before you press the "send" key, review the message and listen to whether you sound energetic or bored.

After you have assessed your voice, you may notice that you hardly pause. On-air radio and television personalities pause every third or fourth word for a breath and to highlight the next word. By doing so, they bring in a lot of vocal variety. Thus, in any sentence, you should pick out two or three key words to emphasize. Again tape yourself doing this to reassess how your voice now sounds. If you also use gestures while practicing, you will energize your voice even more.

Movement

People who are passionate want their audience to understand. By moving towards your listeners, you will demonstrate your confidence and belief in

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what you are saying. In addition your listeners will become more engaged and focused on what you are saying.

The trick about movement is to make it purposeful. Obviously, you don't want to move constantly, or it will become a distraction. By moving every third or fourth sentence, listeners will feel your energy.

Before you move, your eyes should connect with someone in your audience. This is the hook that draws you towards them. Movement that is purposeful is always towards someone, not away. Once you move towards someone, plant yourself and visit with the people in the area by giving them solid eye contact. You can move again after three or four sentences.

Practice makes perfect. The people like Bill Clinton, Steven Covey and Anthony Robbins will tell you that they still continue to practice and hone their skills. By implementing the suggestions regarding gestures, vocal variety and movement you will be on your way to having the impact you desire. People will see you as a strong business communicator who motivates others to take action.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.