

# Quick Tip for Handling Tough Questions

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Selling your ideas is critical to any business professional. In order to make a determination on whether to move forward or not, listeners need their questions answered. However, tough questions can derail a speaker. Speakers who prepare ahead avoid being ambushed. In fact, experts say that if a presenter does a good job in the prep step, he or she should be able to answer 95% of the questions asked.

It is easy to think that questions will be broad-based. That may be true in some cases, but it is more likely that the questions will be related to one key issue. Being able to identify the single issue around which a decision turns is critical. For example, is the real issue gaining market share or is it the expense related to purchasing the equipment for new certifications? Is the issue policy coverage or is it ease in processing claims? Inevitably, the majority of the questions will be related to exploring the specifics of that one all-important issue. Thus, the speaker should be prepared for the questioner to “drill down” with seven more questions related to the first.

How a speaker answers the first question determines a lot. Often, if the first question is answered confidently and with the appropriate support, subsequent questions may be unnecessary. Thus, it is important for a speaker to think before responding. Wise presenters pause for three to five seconds so that their brain can access the correct information.

If the first question is answered in a vague manner, decision makers will take control. They will interrupt, rather than abide wasted conversation. The rules of polite conversation will fall to the wayside, especially if time is running out. Thus, it is really critical for a speaker to have laser beam focus on what the questioner is asking and to respond in a clear, concise manner.

Being prepared for tough questions is hard work. With proper forethought, they can be an opportunity for a speaker to make a very positive impression and to sway a decision in their favor.

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