

Learn the Secrets of the Pros

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When that great opportunity finally comes along to make a presentation to a potential dream client, you want to be successful. The question many of us have is “What is the trick?” As simplistic as it sounds, the key is in adding value. The more clearly you can demonstrate that your solution does, in fact, solve the identified problems, the more likely you are to be successful.

However, often, when we are in front of a client, we assume that the customer can clearly see how our proposal is the best solution. The reality is that sometimes they just don’t see the link. Moreover, because there is often an “audience within and audience,” we may not focus on the issues that are of interest to each listener. It is a mistake to think that everyone is concerned with the same things.

Tip #1 Know Your Audience

In preparing for the meeting, it is important to know ahead who will be attending and to think about the likely issues of **each person**. Then, weave these issues into the body of your proposal. If you are not sure who the players will be, inquire ahead of time. Your client contact most assuredly will know.

For the sake of example, let’s assume that you will be speaking to the Chief Financial Officer, the IT Director, an IT Manager and two engineers. As you can imagine, they will have very different concerns.

The Chief Financial Officer typically will be interested in the effect on the bottom line, while the IT Director will be interested in strategic issues, such as market shares or better positioning against the competitors. At the managerial level, people pay attention to things like disruption of work flow or down time, while engineers are concerned with how a product makes their lives easier and how this solves an existing problem.

Tip # 2 Open by Focusing Listeners on Issues

One of the biggest mistakes people trying to present a solution make is to focus on themselves and their solution. It is too soon and it makes your listeners feel you are just selling product. They won’t see the value.

In order to be receptive, listeners have to be assured up front that you clearly understand their business and issues. In the first two minutes of your presentation, be sure to summarize what you have gleaned about their business and the primary issues and verify that you haven’t overlooked anything or that nothing has changed. Once you have done this, you have earned the right to introduce what you and your company can do to help.

Tip # 3 Make the Link

As you present your solution, clearly make the link. Consider each person in the audience and one-by-one capture their hearts and minds by providing information that will be relevant to them. Do not speak in broad generalities. Use specific examples or stories.

For example, you might say this to the CFO. *“I know cost is a big concern to you as the CFO. It is a concern of all of our customers. Converting your existing phone system to voice over internet will initially cost more money, but within a two year time span, you will recoup your investment and save a minimum of 12% in phone charges. We recently worked with another retail organization with the same demographics. What we saved them was...”*

To the IT Director, you might say, *“Obviously, with this new phone system, you will be able to accomplish your goal of responding to your customers in real time and thus continue your competitive edge. Let me give you an example. Suppose a customer in the U.S. is at her computer at 11 p.m., and she wants to place an order. She has some questions about sizing. All she has to do is ...”*

To the IT Manager, you might say, *“Because there is a compatibility issue, we will need to install new equipment, but if you select our service agreement, we can offer you 24/7 assistance, and we can also*

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assign a full time engineer to your site. So, for example, if you had a problem with ..., you could call ... and he would.... That way, you wouldn't be delayed in moving forward."

Finally, to the engineers, you might say, *"What this new system is going to mean to you, is less down time in the long run. You will not have to worry about providing coverage after hours, and you won't have to be here on weekends to fix problems because our tests indicate a 97% reliability.*

Summary

In conclusion, the key thing to adding value is know your audience and to show the link between your solution and the needs of the individuals. Listeners don't like to work at understanding, and they don't like to feel their issues were unnoticed. The more clearly you show value right from the get-go by reiterating known and unknown issues and by providing examples and stories to prove that your product or service solves these problems, the more likely you are to being successful.

Question: *While these tips seem elementary, they are difficult to apply. Why is that? 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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