

Tips for Creating Powerful Messages

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Regardless of our job, most of us have updates or presentations to give. This can take a big chunk out of our work week. Obviously, we want these presentations to “knock the socks” off our listeners. While that’s the goal, most business professionals spend 22 hours a week building presentations that are not effective and do not connect with their listeners. Shocking isn’t it! Experts say we insure our success if we follow these suggestions.

1. **Prepare.** I know you’re thinking, “Who has time!” If you don’t do an adequate job of preparing, it may not be possible to erase that bad impression. Solid preparation means you know your audience, how they think, the language they typically use, the problems needing solved. Also, you must understand your listeners’ knowledge level and attitude toward what you are saying. It’s a mistake to think that something that makes perfect sense to you will have the same effect on others. Opinions differ and you need to know what they are!

Don’t forget people are also skeptical. They want to be sure so you need to bring the proof, whatever that proof is, whether it’s metrics, a spread sheet or a chart. It’s also a good idea to have examples, stories or analogies at the ready. People make decisions based on their heads and their hearts. Finally, anticipate questions and make sure you know the answers.

2. **Provide an overview.** Create an opening statement that positions your topic and provides context for your listeners. Don’t leave them on their own to figure where you are going. Begin by giving your listeners a few sentences on what the problem is you are trying to solve. People, particularly executives, are all about solving problems. Even if you are giving an update, position your update as solving a problem that has been annoying and needing attention. The bigger the problem, the more it becomes a priority. Next, give your recommendation. What solution do you have? Be sure

to tell you listeners the benefits of the recommendation, and be clear on the actions you will be requesting. People like to be aware of your “ask” upfront so they can evaluate your ideas as you present them. Your opening statement should be no more than two minutes long. Save the details for later.

3. **Cut the fat.** Avoid burying your ideas in too much verbiage. Being too wordy can and will work against you. Keep your explanations simple. As Steve Jobs once said, “Decisions are easy when ideas are simply explained. But you have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple.” Remember, when we really want somebody to get something, we say it in the fewest words possible. Also, nobody pays you by the word.
4. **Watch word choice.** Command attention and use strong descriptive words - adjectives or adverbs that pack a wallop. Minimize your use of acronyms and jargon and definitely don’t use nouns and verbs incorrectly. Describe your ideas in language everyone understands.

Creating great content takes work. It doesn’t mean opening your laptop, accessing PowerPoint and creating a slideshow. Do what the pros do and ahead analyze your audience and their needs. Carefully position your topic with a strong opening statement. Speak in simple terms and use language well. Follow these tips and your messages will be effective and you will connect with your listeners.

Continued on page 2

***Question:** Think about your typical way of creating content. What is something you need to change in order to achieve better results. 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.*

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone 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.