

Improve Your Core Game by Improving Seven Delivery Skills

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Powerful business communicators pay attention to how they deliver their message. Intuitively, they know that it is not sufficient to be concerned only with content. They understand that the way a message is delivered affects whether people respond or dismiss the ideas being presented.

Michael Jordon, the now retired, great basketball player, was asked what the key to his success was. Without hesitating, Jordon replied that one had to be consistent in his core game. A ball player can't do any of the "fancy stuff" unless the person has a firm grounding in the rudimentary elements. To insure this, Jordon practiced the basics every other day and the "fancy stuff" on the other days. World-class communicators do the same thing. They constantly work on internalizing the basics so that are a routine part of every presentation. The seven core delivery skills that business professionals need to incorporate into their daily routine are:

- **Posture**
- **Movement**
- **Gestures**
- **Facial Expression**
- **Vocal Variety**
- **Eye Contact**
- **Pausing**

1. Posture is important because it tells the listener how confident the speaker is. To improve posture, first stand in front of a full length mirror. Notice if the shoulders are in alignment. If one shoulder is lower than the other, it is likely the person isn't standing straight. To improve posture, a speaker should balance her weight equally on both feet without locking her knees. Unless the speaker is using her arms, the speaker's hands should rest at her sides in a neutral position. In this posture, the speaker not only looks confident, but open and in control.

2. Movement is a powerful way to engage the audience. It demonstrates that the message is important, and the speaker is behind it. Movement needs to be purposeful so it is always towards someone, not away. To move with purpose, the speaker needs to lock on a pair of eyes in the audience and move towards that person to finish a thought or a sentence. Too much movement is annoying. The speaker should move only about every three or four sentences. If there is an opportunity to move, a speaker should move and utilize the space that is available.

3. Gestures, like movement, make people pay attention. In addition, they create word pictures for listeners and aid comprehension, particularly in technical presentations. As long as the gestures come from the shoulders and not the elbows, gestures are seen as natural. Big points require big gestures. Very few people truly over-gesture, but many people give that impression because they do not relax their hands at their sides every so often. Any gesture that is overdone should be avoided. Speakers wishing to improve their gestures should practice their presentations in front of a mirror and pay attention to the variety of gestures they are doing. They should also notice if they play with their rings, rub their hands or place their hands on their hips or in their pockets. These are distracting gestures and focus the listener's attention on what the speaker is doing instead of what the speaker is saying

4. Facial expression warms an audience. Who says a speaker should be dower? If a speaker smiles at his audience, typically the audience will smile back. They will be relieved that the speaker is not so intense. They will be more likely to ask questions and will conclude that the speaker is confident. A good way for a speaker to insure that her own face will come to life is to begin any important

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presentation by looking first at people in the audience who seem interested and happy to be there.

5. Vocal variety helps a speaker to sustain interest. A speaker with a monotone sabotages himself right from the start. No one is born with a monotone. A monotone voice is a voice that is starving for air. By pausing and breathing at the end of a sentence or a thought, any speaker can maximize his or her voice. With breath, a speaker has the power to emphasize particular points and to finish statements without fading. To improve vocal variety, a speaker should practice reading business materials out loud. She might also tape record herself rehearsing her presentation.

6. Eye contact insures credibility. People feel they can trust a speaker who looks them in the eye. They get a sense that the speaker is knowledgeable and interested in “just talking to them.” The right amount of time for a speaker to look at people in an audience is a full sentence or thought or about three to five seconds. Sustained eye contact with each individual can and should be practiced in any social or business situation.

7. Pausing is a speaker’s lifeline. The more a speaker pauses, the more he can think and respond coherently. A pause for a second, two seconds, even five seconds is not too much. Listeners appreciate when the speaker pauses. It helps them to digest the information and to pose questions. By replaying voice mail messages before they are sent, a speaker can get valuable feedback on how well this skill is working.

Improving one’s core game is critical. The competition is steep. People also have short attention spans and are used to multi-tasking. With strong delivery skills, an audience will stay involved and will remember the ideas being presented.

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.