

Ten Commandments for a “Knock Your Socks Off” Presentation

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Everyone wants to give a “Knock Your Socks Off” Presentation. The question is how do you do it? Is there a formula that insures success? There are no magic formulas, but speakers can greatly enhance their chances of being successful by adhering to the Speaker’s Ten Commandments.

- I. Know Your Audience.** It is a mistake to wing it. Successful speakers thoroughly analyze their audience. They know who they are demographically. They use every resource — the client’s web site, their annual reports, news articles, and personal contacts to learn about the audience’s needs, knowledge level and attitude. The time a speaker spends on the front end pays off in the long haul.
- II. Know Your Goal.** Be clear about what you want to accomplish; otherwise, you will be unfocused in your presentation. The likelihood of moving your listeners to take action will be greatly diminished. A good way to start is to write a one sentence objective.
- III. Create content that addresses listener needs.** Listeners only care about their issues and whether or not you can provide a solution to the things they find vexing. The content you create should provide the answer to “what’s in it for me.” If the content seems generic and more of a “product dump,” listeners will be turned off.
- IV. Provide structure to your content.** Make it easy for your listeners to follow your way of thinking by providing a very simple, structured approach to the topic. Once you determine your plan of attack, stick to your outline. Do not digress. Open with a strong introduction, follow with a limited number of well-supported main ideas and wrap up with a detailed call to action.
- V. Make your ideas stand out.** People are moved by their heads and their hearts. As you create content for your listeners, be sure to balance the emotional with the factual. For sure, people need facts and data to make decisions, but they are also swayed by stories, examples, analogies and humorous anecdotes. People quickly forget your words, but they do remember the mental pictures you have created for them. They buy on emotion and justify with facts.
- VI. Punctuate your points with pauses.** Too often, speakers throw away their ideas because they speak too quickly or because they over-connect their ideas with an “and,” a “but” or a “so.” A lengthy pause allows listeners to keep up and to digest what you have said in “bite-sized chunks.” A long pause also adds drama and keeps people alert for your next point.
- VII. Eliminate non-words or filler words.** They chip away at credibility. They affect whether people trust and believe you, whether they see you as confident and knowledgeable. Don’t sabotage your hard work with “ums” and “ahs.” Instead, learn to pause where you might have a comma or period.
- VIII. Create visuals that clarify difficult concepts.** Your visuals should be visual aids for your listeners, not you. If you can say it better, you do not need a visual. People get bored easily so mix up your media. Create slides that are a mixture of charts, graphs, bullet points and pictures. Add focus to your slides by creating a headline for each one. Never begin with a slide deck and try to create content around it.
- IX. Leave ample time for questions.** People like to feel that all of their issues are answered. They also feel they can assess your confidence level by how you answer their

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questions. Be sure you do your homework upfront and brainstorm all the possible questions you might be asked.

- X. Practice your presentation.** It is always a good idea to do some “dry runs” of your presentation. No one wants you to be memorized, but they also don’t want you to be “note-dependant.” When you practice your presentation, you should always do it with the technology that you will be using. If you practice out loud and on your feet 3-6 times, you will know your presentation and the key points you want to make.

Being a powerful persuasive communicator should not be left to chance. Whether you are speaking to a large or small group, you will propel your communication ability to the next level by faithfully adhering to the Speaker’s Ten Commandments.

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.