

Selling Your Ideas to Others— Communication Tips for Scoring with Your Audience in the First Two Minutes.

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Part of the job description of any business professional should be “Must Have Ability to Sell Ideas.” Whether you are speaking to a client, updating your boss on a product, addressing a conference or hosting a meeting with your direct reports, persuading others is what you have to do on a daily basis. In addition, people make instantaneous decisions. Literally, you have two minutes to score with an audience. Within the first two minutes, people decide whether they like it, want it, or need it. It is essential, then, for you to have immediate impact. In those first two minutes, you must captivate, motivate and educate.

Captivate

Captivating an audience means that, from the start, you grab their attention with your confidence and your passion. Your posture says you are interested and open. You look people squarely in the eye and begin to communicate your ideas with one person at a time. You also back up your points with strong gestures and the appropriate facial expression. Your body language demonstrates that you are happy to be there and to have the opportunity to share something important. Through your voice, people can tell that you really believe in what you say. There is enthusiasm and energy.

While most people want to be captivating, the reality is that a lot of people are nervous and their body language highlights it. Instead of looking people in the eye, they look at the floor, their notes or their power point slides. They fidget; their posture is weak, and their voice is flat or muddled with “ums and ahs.” If you want to be captivating, you must be perceived as a strong, confident communicator from the first words out of your mouth.

Motivate

To motivate people, you have to say something that makes sense and speaks to people's issues. It can't be boring. It can't be about you. People only care about themselves. In those first two minutes, wise speakers address their audience's needs and issues. They also talk about the impact of those issues on the business or the listeners. When listeners get a sense that you understand them, they tend to pay close attention to what you, as the subject matter expert, have to say.

You motivate people to listen further by telling them why your idea would be of benefit to them. With specific benefits, a speaker hooks the audience. Finally, listeners want to know what you are expecting of them. It is also prudent in those first two minutes to tell your listeners what you want from them. They like knowing this as you begin. Furthermore, it holds them accountable and makes them pay more attention to your argument. Whether it is to ask questions, compare your proposal to those of the competitors or to consider funding a pilot program, be sure to state the action you want from your audience.

Educate

To educate an audience, you must tell them something new. If all you are doing is rehashing old information, there really is no reason to listen to you. Educating your listeners requires that you do your homework first. It may mean that you talk to other people in the organization, listen to analyst reports or read industry trends. It means that you share stories to prove your points or provide customer examples that they would find insightful.

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Final thoughts

People often are pre-occupied with things in their personal and business lives. They also live in an environment that demands multi-tasking. If you don't immediately captivate, motivate or educate, listeners will continue to do what interests them at the moment. They will miss your introduction or the "set up" to your value proposition. You have two minutes to score!

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.