

Selling Yourself in a Down Economy

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

As the economy continues to plummet, businesses weigh every internal and external decision very carefully. To save money internally, decision makers are looking closely at their own head count. Non-essential jobs and marginal performers are being eliminated quickly. External buying decisions are also being put on a hold. Unless a company sees that a vendor's product or solution will absolutely drive business or cut costs, purchases are delayed. **More than ever before, business professionals need to communicate effectively. They need to worry about not only what they say, but how they say it.**

With regards to the message, listeners should feel that ideas are clear and easy to follow. If an action is required, they should know what it is and feel it is appropriate, based on the argument presented. If listeners don't see much difference in what the speaker said over other competitors, they will base their decision strictly on cost. If they haven't had a chance to ask questions or to think of unanswered issues, decision makers will hedge. Now is not the time for mistakes.

While most of us know the importance of a well supported value proposition, we often present too much information or bury our ideas in long, complex sentence structures. We show innumerable visuals that are confusing and unfocused. Whether speaking internally or externally, a simple message, supported by solid metrics and customer examples is always best.

In addition to the words, people who are powerful communicators pay attention to how the message is delivered. They practice. They know their material and are not note or slide dependent. Their attention is always on their listeners, not on themselves.

Because strong communicators know the importance of connecting with their audience, they make sure to look people in the eye, rather than scan the room. They also insure comprehension by speaking at a slower pace and with inflection in their voice. They pause and breathe often. Additionally, they

use gestures and facial animation to reflect the importance of their words. Finally, they pay attention to their posture so they demonstrate openness and confidence.

Selling your ideas or yourself in a down economy requires outstanding communication skills. If you are unsure how you come across assess yourself by taping a presentation or practice attempt. Ask for feedback from colleagues or a communication coach. Do not assume that you are good enough.

Once you know what things to do more of or less of, it is important to set goals and practice the skills until they become second nature. It takes 21 days to change a habit. Change of any magnitude takes commitment. Little things do and will make a difference. There is no time like the present to begin. It is your insurance policy to surviving and thriving in this down economy.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone 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 website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.