
Notes About Presentation Skills

by Barry Koren, AIA, PhD



Notes I took while listening to Bill Dinchak talk about making public presentations:

- Don't sway. Keep your feet firmly planted.
- Use gestures. Start with your hands loosely at your sides and available to gesture. Don't put your hands in your pockets or clasp in front of you.
- Use facial expressions. Express your personality. Don't be robotic.
- Dress for your audience.
- Make eye contact. Practice by looking at a spot or into a friend's eyes for 3 to 4 seconds.
- Relax. Before a presentation, yawn deeply. Tense and then relax your fists and shoulders three times. Tense your face with your eyes open. Take a deep breath and then exhale, like a basketball player before a free throw.

- Check your voice volume. Ask "Can you hear me?"
- Check your voice inflection. Start high and come down low. Avoid the opposite.
- Establish rapport. Use people's names and ask questions.
- Inject humor. Tell anecdotes about a personal situation you've had.
- Use the comic book technique: lots of illustrations and charts.

Excellent questions were asked. Here are some, with my own or others' responses.

- What if committee members don't want to make eye contact and want you to get through the presentation as quickly as possible?
Switch from substance to process, asking, for instance, whether they would like to take a 60-second stretch or maybe even to re-schedule.
- How do you keep your technical staff from going too fast?
Recognize that rushing is probably a sign of fear and will hurt the presentation. Practicing makes a huge difference. Also try videotaping and then letting each staff member involved in the presentation privately view the tape.
- How do you turn nervous energy into positive effort?
During the preparations, model

the examples of basketball and football teams--huddle to talk over the situation and, just before breaking out of the huddle, use positive team affirmations to focus the energy.

And now I have a question for you. Is there room for improvement in your firm's services? Are there any actions you can take now? By commenting, please let all of us know your reactions, or if you have any stories, news, or marketing tips that you want to share.

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References:

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