Nice Presentation Tips

A presentation can be one of the fastest and most effective methods of getting your message out to the right people. How successful we are often depends on our ability to communicate effectively and convincingly, yet public speaking is still something many people try to avoid.

Like it or not, when you run a business, you will be called on to present. Whether you're presenting your ideas or your company's products and services, going through the motions is simply not enough. You must present with confidence and professionalism — the better your presentation, the more successful you are likely to be. Similarly, if your presentation and your delivery skills fall short of your audience's expectations, you could face unwanted consequences including loss of credibility, and most often your audience is too polite to tell you so.

Everyone can improve their presentation skills with practice and a few simple presentation techniques. Keep these tips in mind when you're planning your next presentation.

Before you present…

• "People don't care what you know until they know that you care." To make a connection with your audience and make them like you, you must know your audience—who they are, what might be of interest to them, what you should and shouldn't say, and how to say it. Organize your information, and if possible, structure your presentation in such a way as to tell a story.

• Prepare your slides well. Use either a dark background and light text, or dark text and light background. Do not use more than one or two fonts, try to avoid font sizes smaller than 20 points, and do not put volumes of information on a single slide. Use phrases and keywords to help you and your audience stay on track. Avoid frivolous animation; only use animation if it helps emphasize the message.

• If you are one of many presenters the audience will see, never go first, and avoid presenting toward the end of the presentation schedule. Never go first because the audience is likely not fully settled, and to avoid technical problems that invariably happen with the first few presenters. Never present near the end because audience attention is greatly diminished, and many people may have already left. Early middle is usually best.

• Visit the presentation room to familiarize yourself with the layout and to try to visualize yourself in front of the crowd. Try out all equipment to iron out potential technical problems.

While you're presenting…

• Properly align the projector so that the light does not leak off the screen. If using a transparency projector, use a frame around the slides to prevent light from escaping around the edges. You only need a single frame and can even cut one out of a piece of cardboard. When you are finished showing your slides, turn off the projector lamp so you are not competing with an old slide or a blank screen.

• Start your presentation with an amusing anecdote related to your audience, if you can.

• Your body language is a crucial part of how well you will connect with your audience, so don't stand behind a lectern. Request a wireless lapel microphone if possible to give you the flexibility to move around, and use note cards or your slides to stay on track.

• Stand to the left of your slides (from the audience's perspective). When pointing to your slides, use your left hand. This position naturally draws your audience's attention to the right, to the information you are presenting; it also helps you avoid turning your back to the audience.

• When delivering your key message, make it memorable by following the three step process: tell them what you are about to tell them; tell them; then tell them what you just told them.

Connect with your audience…

• Try to connect with the audience throughout the presentation. Be sincere, polite, and warm — try to inform, not lecture. Get them to like and trust you.
If the audience is scattered, ask people to move closer to the front and assemble in a common area, so that you can communicate with them more easily.

• Make eye contact with members of your audience throughout the room as you speak. If this makes you uncomfortable, look between people or through them to the back wall.

• Try to appear spontaneous and natural. A secret often used by experienced presenters is memorizing the entire presentation to give the perception that they are spontaneous and natural.

• Finally, it's okay to use your slides for reference, but avoid reading to the audience directly from them. And, never ever play a pre-recorded presentation while you stand and watch. You will instantly lose credibility if the audience feels you don't know your own material.

Always remember, your audience wants you to succeed. Prepare, practice, and deliver your presentation with confidence!