SellingPower

Presentations Newsletter

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

Five Persuasive Presentation Techniques

"Every speech or presentation is persuasive to some degree," says Dr. Gary Genard, president of Public Speaking International, who offers training on presentation and speaking skills worldwide. As a trained actor, Genard blends his acting skills with his teaching skills to help his clients master public speaking. Here, Genard identifies five key skills that presenters need in order to persuade their audiences.

1. **Understand purpose versus topic so that you can engage and move your listeners.** What is the one thing that the speaker focuses on when they prepare a presentation? It's content, says Genard. "Content is our expertise and our comfort zone," he says. "However, unless we know what turns on our listeners, we can't speak to them where they live. What are their needs and expectations? What are their preferences and is the action that we are asking of them easy or difficult? Look at the audience's personalities and learning styles. Examine the purpose of the presentation and not just the content. The topic is not what you are there to do; the *purpose* is why you are there, so understand it clearly. Think, 'what's in it for them?'"

2. **Develop confidence, focus, and credibility.** "You need to be focused on your execution, your audience, and their purpose. If you are, your credibility will follow," says Genard.

3. **Exhibit honesty, trust, and a conversational style.** "When we prepare for a presentation, we typically take notes, writing down everything and then polishing it," explains Genard. "Only after that do we try to move to the world of speaking."

   If you polish the written word and it sounds bad or too stilted or formal, it won't do you any good. That's why Genard says you need to listen to tone and sound while beginning your presentation. "Isn't it much better to think in oral terms right away?" he asks. "Instead of just writing everything down, say your words out loud to hear if they sound good to you. By the time you finish the process, you'll be 50 percent finished with your presentation.

   "You also need to talk with them, not at them," adds Genard. "Be conversational. The best sales presenters don't sound any different when they are doing a sales presentation or

sitting across from us at Starbucks. Conversation is part of what builds trust and lets us feel that this salesperson is being open and honest."

4. **Use principles of persuasion.** Genard teaches the C.U.R.E. Method of Persuasion, which stands for credibility, using evidence, reasoning, and emotional appeals. In establishing credibility, Genard says to use evidence by providing examples, stories, statistics, testimonials, case studies, visuals, and expert opinions. "The audience must be able to follow your reasoning," he says. "It needs to be a reasonable proposition; be organized."

   To make an emotional appeal, Genard says that presenters must bring emotional language into their presentations.

5. **Maximize your non-verbal communications.** "Critical research done at UCLA by Albert Mehrabian and his colleagues on the impact of non-verbal communication shows us just how much we are affected by it," says Genard. "Mehrabian's study showed that an audience's perception of a message was 55 percent visual, 38 percent vocal, and only 7 percent verbal or content related. This means audiences respond consciously or subconsciously to facial expressions, movements, gestures, and visual aids, more than your words."

   "Know your audience, say something important that will matter to them, and just be yourself," summarizes Genard. "If you do these things, you will succeed."

GARY GENARD, Ph.D., is founder and president of Public Speaking International, a training firm specializing in public speaking and presentation skills. You can reach PSI at (866) 643-2095, www.publicspeakinginternational.com, or at gary@pubspeak.com