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Making an Effective Presentation

Most people hate making presentations. Public speaking is one of the most feared activities people engage in. However, everyone in the business world eventually finds it necessary to make a presentation. Next to good solid content preparation is perhaps the most important aspect of a successful presentation. Answering the following questions as you prepare for your presentation may not make the task of speaking to a group any less daunting but will almost certainly make your presentation more effective.



- What do you want to get across (no more than 3-4 points)? This exercise will force you to be brief and very clear.
- What are you trying to accomplish during your presentation (inform, persuade, entertain, mitigate damage, etc.)? Be very clear on what you want to achieve and then focus almost entirely on that goal. For example if your objective is to get senior management's support for changes you're proposing you don't need to go into too much detail on how you're going to proceed. Keep your focus on projected results, how you're going to measure progress and timing (prioritization).
- Who is your audience? Depending on whom you're talking to you may present the same idea to different audiences focusing on different features and benefits. Auto manufacturers often create multiple ads for the same car with different messages to appeal to different audiences; safety and comfort for families, fun and glamour for single buyers, economy and reliability for older couples, etc.
- Are your examples, text, level of detail and graphics appropriate for that audience? Don't underestimate the power of graphics and examples to appeal to people's emotions. Remember, logic is a good tool to get people to understand a concept but not an effective motivator. If you're trying to persuade or get people to change their behavior find ways to appeal to emotions to get people to act. Graphics can help elicit emotional responses.
- What are the obstacles you are likely to encounter from that audience? What will you do to overcome those obstacles? Here you have to be extra careful not to count on logic to motivate people to change.

Case Studies

Business Turnaround

Our client's issue: Financial instability, high turnover rate and low morale. They wanted to focus their business turnaround on developing their leaders and future leaders; creating a culture of empowerment and coaching.

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Leadership Transformation

Our client's issue: Founder/CEO having difficulty handing over daily operations to professional management team, resulting in micro-management from the very top, not growing capability and capacity among senior leaders, difficulty hiring and retaining top talent.

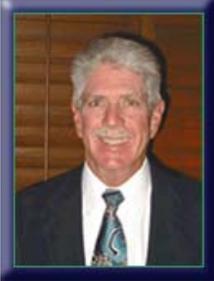
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- What is the economic impact of what you are proposing (either the positive impact of adopting your suggestion or the negative impact of not adopting it)? Economic impact is a great way to establish risk but again, not a great motivator. Try to translate the economic impact into emotional impact where possible.
- What is in it for the audience (not what's in it for the company) – how will your plan make them more successful, their lives easier, their carriers brighter, etc.? This is the most important part of any presentation if you're trying to persuade. But don't assume that people will intuitively figure out what's in it for them. You may need to help them connect the dots. Of course this is difficult because you can't come across as patronizing or talking down to anyone. Asking questions is a good way to approach this. Questions like "how do you see this change impacting your area"? and "how do you see your team reacting to this idea"? will allow you to see if people realize what's in it for them. If they can't answer the question then you can ask questions like "would this change allow you to free up some of your people's time"? That's more subtitle that saying "this change will free up your people's time".
- What are the next steps (what do you want the audience to do or do differently) after the presentation? This is a real opportunity area. If you can get people to commit to next steps right then and there as you "make the sale" things are more likely to move ahead.
- How will you know if your presentation was successful? It's always important to establish measurement criteria up front, then, when your presentation is over you've got some "non-emotional" criteria to evaluate your performance against.



Exhaustive preparation won't make up for poor or inappropriate content but lack of preparation can render even the most compelling content ineffective. Combine great content with diligent preparation and even the most nervous presenter can have a huge impact!

Questions for the Author?



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About CornerStone Services

CornerStone Services is the implementation arm of the CornerStone family of companies. We enable innovative and distinctive performance by helping our clients implement and execute the concepts, processes and tools introduced in the books and workshops available through our associates at CornerStone Leadership Institute and CornerStone Leadership Academy. Our approach is simple; our books *Inspire* individuals, our workshops *Enable* learning, our assessment tools *Support* development and our services *Accelerate* the application and implementation of concepts, processes and tools leading to a higher level of development, results and *Excellence*.

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