

# **EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS**

**A PRESENTATION FOR THE  
2015 CALAFCO ANNUAL STAFF WORKSHOP  
APRIL 15-17, 2015 GRASS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA**

**Presenter: Charlie Wilson, Director of Human Resources, County of Nevada**

## EYE CONTACT

It is not only normal, but beneficial, to be nervous when speaking before a group.

However, when nervousness impedes a presenter's thought process and creates anxiety, it is a problem! A typical contributor to nervousness is a phenomenon called "scanning", when a speaker's eyes are continuously moving, perhaps darting from place to place or slowly surveying the room without stopping anywhere. Speakers are likely unaware of this scanning phenomenon!

The negative effects of scanning include visual overstimulation, an accelerated pace in your delivery, increased use of "non-words" and distracting your audience.

The solution to the problem of scanning is Eye Contact!

- Do not speak unless you are speaking to a pair of eyes
- Hold your eyes on one person long enough to complete a thought (5 to 15 seconds)
- Pause and take a breath until you have engaged another set of eyes
- If you have to pause or collect your thoughts, focus on a pair of eyes. You will appear to be thoughtful, not lost!
- It is not necessary to look at every member of a large audience. Use a random pattern and try to look in each section of the room
- Try to never speak to a room so dark you can't see the participants
- You may return your eyes to strategic audience members, but don't ignore anyone in the room

The benefits to good Eye Contact include: controlling your level of nervousness; you will be able to think more clearly; you will experience one-to-one communication with audience members; your rate of speech will stay under control; and you will use fewer "non-words".

## VOLUME AND GESTURE

The SOUND of a speaker's voice helps convey the message you want the audience to understand. Similarly, the POSTURE and GESTURES of the speaker can impact the manner in which the audience responds to the message. Ironically, the natural nervous energy that a speaker has when making a presentation, if not "released" appropriately, will constrict the speaker's voice and various body muscles, essentially jamming the intended communication!

Soft volume makes you appear uncertain and hesitant; a low-key voice can produce a monotone delivery and make the message seem half-hearted or unimportant. Standing still, making awkward hand movements, and bouncing or pacing while speaking all can be distracting to the audience and remove their focus from your message.

The solution to constricted vocal energy includes:

- Speak louder than you need to merely be heard---you want to be understood!
- Accentuate key words and phrases by varying the tone or pitch of your voice
- Pause frequently (consistent with Eye Contact) to take in air so you can project and inflect the sound of your voice
- Avoid microphones when possible; if you are using a microphone, turn the volume down and stand back so you must still project to be heard

The solution to constricted body energy includes:

- Balance your stance and gesture frequently
- Avoid distracting movements such as fidgeting with your hair, clothing or papers, hands in and out of pockets, locking your hands together
- Gesture broadly, above the waist; let your natural energy direct your movement
- Let your hands fall to your side when you are not gesturing

The benefits to appropriate speaking volume and gestures include stimulating the audience to pay attention; you will convey more enthusiasm for your ideas; your hands will support the meaning of key words and phrases; you will appear natural and conversational; you will convey conviction and commitment; and excess nervous energy will burn off, reducing the inner pressure you may feel.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Eight Steps to guarantee maximum control in a Q and A Session**

1. Raise your hand and ask for questions
2. Select a questioner with an open palm gesture
3. Listen for the nature of the question, the main idea; maintain eye contact
4. "Break Visually" by looking at another person in the room---this invites the entire audience into the discussion
5. Restate/Paraphrase the question; shorten or neutralize as appropriate
6. Return eyes to the questioner; answer briefly
7. Finish your response by looking at another person in the audience
8. Repeat step 1: raise your hand for the next question

*You may wish to modify this technique in an informal setting.*

*Practice paraphrasing before you use it in a critical situation.*

## EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS, April 16, 2015

### CHARLIE'S TIDBITS

- Attribution is provided to the Communispond "Executive Presentation Skills" course.
- Don't use a lectern unless you have to! Compensate in your delivery by increasing your volume, enhancing your inflection and making broader gestures.
- Use of PowerPoint and other audio-visual communication approaches, even handouts, will impact the audience's ability to be focused upon you, the speaker.
- Information on PowerPoint slides should be simple, large enough for the audience to see clearly and not replace the message you are delivering.
- Dress appropriately for the group to whom you are delivering and make sure your attire does not detract from your presentation.
- Contact me: [charlie.wilson@co.nevada.ca.us](mailto:charlie.wilson@co.nevada.ca.us)

### AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

1. How many people will you be presenting to? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where do they come from? (Your organization only? Other organizations? Community members? Other?)

---

---

3. How many of your listeners are familiar with the subject you are presenting? Most \_\_\_\_\_ About Half \_\_\_\_\_ Few \_\_\_\_\_

4. How many equal or surpass your expertise on this subject?

Many \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_\_

5. How does the audience feel about the nature of the material you are presenting? How interested are they?

---

---

6. How much of the information will be new to the audience?

Most \_\_\_\_\_ Half \_\_\_\_\_ Some \_\_\_\_\_

7. How well does the audience know you? How will they respond to you?

---

8. Why is the audience in the room?

---

9. What does the audience want from your presentation?

---

### SITUATION ANALYSIS

1. What is the purpose of this gathering? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Was attendance at this gathering mandatory? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where are you on the agenda? First \_\_\_ Middle \_\_\_ End \_\_\_
4. What or who will precede and/or follow you at this gathering?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How will preceding or anticipated agenda items impact audience response to your presentation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How did the audience's need for your presentation come to your attention?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who will introduce you? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How big is the room? \_\_\_\_\_
9. What may distract your audience? (Refreshments, time of day, length of program, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
10. How much time have you been allotted? Does this include time for questions and answers? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What arrangements have been made for AV equipment?  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Are handouts an expectation of this group? \_\_\_\_\_

## BASIC OUTLINE FORMAT

Subject or Title: \_\_\_\_\_

General Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_

### Introduction

Attention: What do I have to include to “grab” the audience?

Orientation: Do I have to “orient” the audience to this subject?

### Body

- I. Main Point
  - a. Support
  - b. Support
  - c. Support
- II. Main Point
  - a. Support
    - i. Detail
    - ii. Detail
  - b. Support
    - i. Detail
    - ii. Detail

### Conclusion

## SPEECH INTRODUCTION

### To Gain the Attention of the Audience

*Begin with a:*

- Reference to an occasion or the audience
- Personal greeting
- Question, real or rhetorical
- Startling statement
- Quotation
- Story or anecdote, real or hypothetical
- Joke or humorous quote
- Visual aid

### To Orient an Audience to Your Speech

- Explain why this subject may be important to them
- Clarify terms if you are going to use abbreviations or jargon
- Provide a short history
- Preview by stating the purpose or main points

## BODY OF SPEECH

**Each of the Main Points of your Speech should have “Support”**

The Different Types of Support Include:

Illustration/Story: Narration of situation relevant to topic and impressive to listeners; contains some details

Specific Instance: Undeveloped example; merely mentions person, place or event; no details

List of Undeveloped Examples: Three or more instances easily understood or recognized by listeners; no details

Analogy: Description of a comparison between two things that are similar; can be figurative or literal

Statistical or Numerical Data: Figures; percentages of cases; sources usually cited

Testimony/Quotation: Eyewitness, expert; source that lends credibility

Research: Controlled empirical study; a source that may be cited

Repetition/Paraphrase: Idea restated in different words

Definition: Explaining unfamiliar terms/acronyms

Audiovisual Aids: Use of props, PowerPoint, projector, charts to reinforce points.

## SPEECH CONCLUSION

**What is an Effective Speech if you don't have a Great Conclusion?**

*Common Methods to end a Speech include:*

- Issue a challenge or make an appeal (perhaps by restating recommendations)
- Recap or summarize
- Quotation
- Illustration or story
- Reemphasize benefits
- Personal intentions
- "Call for Action" from the audience