

## PRESENTING WITH PANACHE – MAKING A START



Manager to humble servant: “Ah “X”! Glad I bumped into you. Can you say a few short words on ..... (subject) for the board of directors tomorrow please?”

Have you ever been unexpectedly ambushed by that request – or something similar? More than one of us has been padding lightly through our daily hunting ground and been stopped in our tracks by that innocent-sounding plea. Don't be caught in the trap! It's a jungle out there folks and we need to be aware of the pitfalls.

Most people (for “most people”, read managers) think that if someone has an expert knowledge of a given subject then it's a cinch to string a few words together to present a core idea to the uninitiated.

WRONG!! Often, the very worst person to enlighten the great unwashed is the one with the most knowledge of the subject. Firstly, our expert will tend to assume that others will grasp the essentials as swiftly as they have done. Well 20 years of hard graft later – same as the expert – they may do.

Secondly, our expert has a tendency to pepper their talk with jargon, acronyms and short-hand which is second nature to them – but a foreign language to their listeners.

Thirdly, putting information across in an easy to understand, common ground, approachable manner is a separate skill. Colleagues who back the phrase “those who can, do – those who can't, inform” haven't suffered being “informed” by those who can't (pass information to others, that is!)

How do we make the most then, of answering the cry for help from above? The key is to start with questions - three simple questions on the **PREPARATION** of an excellent presentation and three more on the **DELIVERY** of an excellent presentation.

If you can answer these questions to your satisfaction, you can give your best presentation yet!

### 3 QUESTIONS ABOUT PREPARATION

#### WHY AM I SPEAKING?

You need to know what your objective is. In an average presentation length of 20-50 minutes you should be able to condense this information down to one sentence. If your overall objective is too complex, you may be asking too much of yourself and your audience in the time available.

#### WHO AM I SPEAKING TO?

Ideally you should research your audience as much as possible. The more you know about them, their business, prior knowledge and attitude, the more accurately tailored your presentation will be. Don't teach your audience to “suck eggs” – or talk above them. Time spent on researching your audience can save time, effort and embarrassment during your presentation.

#### WHAT AM I SPEAKING ABOUT?

Think carefully about your content. Dale Carnegie, known for his best-seller “How to Win Friends and Influence People” says he structures each presentation around only 10% of his research or knowledge of the chosen subject. Any given audience will only be interested in their own key 10% - the bit that “hooks” them. The other 90% is comfort factor; it enables the presenter to answer questions with confidence and allows him/her to feel comfortable with his/her depth of knowledge.

All three of the above link together. The WHY affects the WHO, which in turn affects the WHAT. Preparation is the key. The more you do before your performance, the less you will worry on the day and the more accurate your target information will be. Never listen to anyone who says "I just jot a few notes on the back of a fag packet – and then wing it!" Every professional speaker spends much time and energy in getting the preparation just so – that way they have the chance to get it right - before the audience has the chance to see them get it wrong!

## PROPER PREPARATION PRODUCES PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

### 3 QUESTIONS ABOUT PRESENTATION

Now you have got the preparation right, it just remains for you to deliver it with confidence on the day. Contrary to popular belief, confidence isn't something you *have* – it's something you *do*! So getting the timing and the venue right can add a great deal to the overall impression. Speaking at the best time for your audience in terms of interest and attention helps everyone feel more at ease. Knowing that they are comfortable in terms of lighting, heating and equipment also helps.

#### WHERE AM I SPEAKING?

The environment can often make or break your presentation. Where possible you need to familiarize yourself with the constraints of the room. Make sure that you arrive in plenty of time to survey the layout and rearrange seating, equipment and acoustics to your satisfaction.

#### WHEN AM I SPEAKING?

If you have control over the meeting time, for normal 9-5ers choose a mid-week day Tuesday to Thursday, preferably in the morning. Times to avoid are last thing on Friday, first thing Monday morning, just after lunch or at a commercially busy time for the organization.

Also, consider how much time you may need for your preparation? Delivery first thing tomorrow – unless you have every second free until then - might not be possible. Delivery in half an hour, or later this afternoon - let's be realistic! Bear in mind that most people need between 6 and 10 times the length of the actual presentation time to prepare properly.

#### HOW AM I SPEAKING?

Remember that you are your own best visual aid. How you project yourself to your audience using your voice, enthusiasm, body language and sheer passion for the subject can add a great deal of personal impact to your performance.

Delivering your presentation with confidence is about the speaker feeling confident. And until you genuinely feel confident – act it. As a trainer colleague of mine often says – FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT! Your mind likes to follow your body language signals, so *give out* confident – *feel* confident. Try it!

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