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25 Tips For Making Successful Presentations

- 1.** Find out as much as you can about your audience before you prepare your presentation. Customize your presentation to make it relevant to the audience. Remember—one size does not fit all.
- 2.** Focus on what your audience wants and needs to hear—not what you want to tell them.
- 3.** As you prepare, be very conscious of the length of time you are expected to speak. If you're using PowerPoint slides, think in terms of spending an average of two minutes per slide.
- 4.** Develop an overall theme for the presentation, and make sure you stay with that theme throughout the presentation.
- 5.** Get the audience's attention with a strong opening. The more you can customize your opening for that particular audience, the better.
- 6.** Don't overload a short presentation—make just a few points, and make them well.
- 7.** Use conversational language. Remember that the spoken word is different from the written word.
- 8.** Avoid jargon or acronyms. If you must use them, define them clearly.
- 9.** Mention something unique about your knowledge or approach to the issue to establish credibility.
- 10.** Good transitions between points keep your audience focused on your theme. For example, tell a personal story, use a visual aid to make a point, or change your location in the room.
- 11.** A dramatic quotation from a well-known source can add punch to a speech but only if it reinforces the points you want to make.
- 12.** Humor is also a welcome addition to a presentation. Keep a file of humorous stories or jokes that you like. Just make sure that the story or joke clearly relates to your message.
- 13.** Feel free to use a few note cards. Write down a few key words or phrases that keep you on track. Don't write out your entire speech unless you need it for a formal record.

25 Tips For Making Successful Presentations, *continued*

- 14.** Overhead transparencies or a few simple PowerPoint slides are a good way to emphasize key points or illustrate themes. But don't let the technology take over!
- 15.** Make sure the information on each transparency or slide is short and is easily read in the back of the room.
- 16.** As you give your speech, make eye contact with audience members as much as possible. Speak to each person "individually."
- 17.** Find one or more friendly, receptive faces before you begin, and focus on their support during the first part of your talk.
- 18.** Speak to one person at a time. Make eye contact with one person at a time for a few seconds instead of "scanning" the audience.
- 19.** Instead of feeling you have to give the audience something, focus more on receiving their support.
- 20.** Imagine that you are having a conversation with people in the audience. Talking to them as though you are having a conversation changes the tone and makes it more personal.
- 21.** Everyone loves stories. Using examples or real-life stories can illustrate your point far more effectively than just facts and figures. Develop a number of stories and use them for impact. A key to using stories is making sure they have a point! They should illustrate, explain, or reinforce what you are saying.
- 22.** Use a variety of visual aids. Even a first-rate presentation can become boring if the same format is used over and over again. Consider using a prop, a video clip, or passing something around that further illustrates the point you are making.
- 23.** Don't read or memorize your presentation! Don't worry if you say it slightly differently every time you practice; the important thing is to get your message across in clear, direct language.
- 24.** Remember the three P's of great presentations—Practice, Practice, Practice.
- 25.** And finally, have fun! We all take ourselves far too seriously. If you are having fun, so will your audience—and they will remember you.