

Making Marketing Presentations

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Our question this week is on making presentations. We actually had 2 different owners talking about the issue of making an effective presentation – one focused on new business opportunities, the other on following up with existing clients. Here's what our 2 owners were asking.

1 - Help me out on presentations! I'm starting my spring marketing campaign, which will include several presentations to groups – trade organizations and the like – where potential buyers will get to hear what I have to say. I haven't done a lot of presenting in the past, and I don't want to waste this opportunity. Can you give me some tips, to help me make a great impact?

2 - My role is shifting, from getting new clients to managing existing ones – which includes making presentations on what we have done, where we are going, and how the client has benefited from working with my company. Often I am required to convey information to a room of 10 – 20 people, and I think my company could be a lot more effective at getting our point across. We provide a great service, the client gets a good pay-back for the dollars they spend, but I feel like we lose the audience's interest when we're presenting.

Getting your point across is essential, especially when you

have a good story to tell. You want to help clients understand and appreciate the value your company provides, which can lead to repeat business, referrals, and increased support for the margins you charge. Speaking in front of prospective accounts can open the door to one-on-one meetings, and new business opportunities. Unfortunately many presentations miss the mark, leaving the audience asleep, unengaged, or wondering what the point of the presentation really was all about. You want to be sure you demonstrate your expertise and professionalism, which will, in turn, help you solidify existing relationships and get new business.

If you want to have a great presentation, you have to take into consideration several factors. What kind of presentation are you making? Who is your audience, and what do they already know / need to know? What kind of visuals will do the best job of reinforcing what you have to say? What level of detail does your audience require – usually a lot less than you think. What kind of handouts will you give the audience, to reinforce what you've talked about once they leave for home. What is the right amount of time to present, and how do you handle questions without losing control, and without getting tripped up with something you can't answer on the spot.

There are lots of kinds of presentations – from information to persuasion, from education to entertainment, from building up good will to persuading. I have found that the best presentations are ones that challenge me to think more, or think differently, about a subject. Great presentations challenge me to take action, and give me some take-away that I can use right away.

When preparing your presentation, think about what you want to accomplish – get a picture in your head of how you want your audience behaving when you're finished. Think about what you can do to jog the status quo – perhaps a few shocking statistics in the beginning, will get their attention. A couple of specific examples of what they can do next, will get them focused and ready to take action at the end. End your presentation with an offer to re-connect, to get more information, or to otherwise expand the relationship.

Knowing if your audience is older or younger can make a big difference in how you present. The younger the group is, the more you want a presentation that is fast paced and hits the highlights. For an older audience, increase the size of the visuals in order to accommodate the less-perfect vision that goes with maturity. Usually, as the age of the audience goes up, you also want to increase your level of

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formality, and slow down your pace.

If your audience is used to working in an office all day, they are likely to be comfortable sitting for a longer period of time. On the other hand, if your audience is usually out in the field all day, you probably need to present in shorter segments. Providing opportunity to get up and move around can break up a long presentation and keep people from drifting off.

When thinking about length of presentation, consider that in general, you can keep an audience interested and entertained for ½ hour. That's it. After that, you will start to lose their interest, and may jeopardize your opportunity to pursue a connection after the seminar is over. If you have an hour long presentation slot, put in lots of time for questions and answers.

There are some real tricks to handing questions. First, never assume you have to answer every question exactly as posed. You can re-direct questions, to focus on what you want to talk about. Second, buy yourself time to think by restating the question, or asking the person speaking to tell you a little more about themselves. Third, use questions to keep yourself in touch with the group, see where they are getting, or missing, your point, and to find out what else they are interested in hearing about.

Finally, if you get someone in the audience who is trying to take over, assert yourself, and suggest that they wait until the end of the presentation to talk with you one on one. Remember, the audience is there because they are interested in what you have to say. Own the space.

In terms of content, you may be able to get away with a few industry acronyms, but don't become too informal. You can risk losing your audience by throwing around jargon, or talking above their heads. An audience that is experienced with the subject you're talking about will probably want more detail, and be more likely to ask questions. Novices on the subject are likely to be quieter, as they work harder to absorb new information, and they may get lost if you get too technical. Do your best in any presentation to keep things appropriate to the group, relatively simple and easy to understand.

Remember that pictures do speak a thousand words. 80% of what people learn is through sight. Pie charts, bar graphs, diagrams, and mathematical equations can speak volumes. So use them. Power point is a great Microsoft program you can use to prepare a visually engaging presentation. If you can afford help preparing your presentation, ask a graphic designer to work with you. Here are some basic rules: maximum six lines of text per page;

maximum of 8 words / line. Write in bullets, not full sentences. Periodically present a page with an appropriate visual and no text, as an indicator of a transition, or opening for discussion. Keep your visuals simple and use them to reinforce what you are saying. Use no more than 3 font sizes throughout the presentation. Make sure you look is consistent from beginning to end.

How much technical information do you have to get across? The biggest mistake I see most presenters make is trying to get across too much information. It is okay, actually good, to leave your audience with questions. You want them coming back to you for more information. Think about how you can simplify what you are trying to say, so that people are motivated to contact you afterwards for more details.

One of the easiest solutions to having handouts is to offer a copy of the slides you used for your presentation. I suggest that if you plan to give handouts, you do so after the seminar, not during. During the seminar you want people watching your presentation, not flipping ahead. Also, by offering to mail people a handout of the slides, you can add to your mailing list, and keep track of who requested information.

Power point has a nifty option. It lets you print handouts which display from 2 – 6 slides / page.



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This way you can produce a small, professional looking handout. If you don't have a color printer, email the presentation to a copy shop and ask them to make color prints. Once you mail the handout, you have a reason to follow up.

At end of the presentation, close strongly, with a call to action. Wrap up your conclusions in a few brief statements. Challenge your audience to take a concrete next step as a result of what you have told them. Give them 3 specific actions they can take, and don't forget to offer to send them a handout, if they will give you a business card.

Looking for a good book? Try Knockout Presentations: How to Deliver Your Message with Power, Punch and Pizzazz, by Diane Direstra.

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If you are a business owner and you have a question or would like to discuss some aspect of your business, call [1.877.238.3535](tel:18772383535) or send an email to AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com.

O: 914-238-3500. • F: 914-238-2529
AskAndi@StrategyLeaders.com • www.StrategyLeaders.com
Strategy Leaders, Inc. • 5 Crossways, Chappaqua, NY 10514

