

10½ ways to make sure you always present with impact & influence

Tenandahalf top tips: December 2015

Allow me to let you into a secret, when it comes to presenting, it's not what you say, it's the way that you say it.

Here are 10½ questions to ask yourself ahead of any presentation.

If you can answer all of them positively, the next presentation you give will be delivered with more impact and, as a result, will exert more influence on your audience.

1. Do you have a strong start?

First impressions count for everything. People will form a view in the first 30 seconds and rarely budge from that position.

2. Do you sound enthusiastic?

People are more likely to believe what you say if you look like you believe what you are saying.

3. Does the way you present yourself fit with your message and what you're selling?

If you are selling high value services do you dress well? If you're selling to a public sector audience, do you dress too well?

4. Does your style of dress, grooming and appearance match your audience?

If in doubt look smarter and more conservative than you think you need to.

5. Do you sound interesting?

Work on varying your pitch and intonation and try to use a few pauses for dramatic effect too.

6. Do you have good posture?

Stand tall with shoulders back.

7. Do you use your whole body to communicate?

Use your hands for amplification.

Express yourself fully.

8. Are you adding value to your slides or just reading them?

Your slides should support your message, they should not be a substitute for you.

If all you are doing is reading material you don't need to be there!

9. What are the 3 key messages that you want people to take away from your talk?

Peoples' ability to retain information from talks is very poor. Keep it simple and make sure that people remember three important points. You can provide more detail or technical information separately via a follow up email or a hard-copy hand-out after the event.

10. How engaging are your slides?

Bin the bullet points and use words in windows instead. Use images, schematics, charts and diagrams in preference to words. Keep sentences short.

And always, always ... make your font

big

10½. How will you keep people attentive for the duration of your talk?

People have poor concentration spans. After 18 minutes there is a dramatic drop in your audience's attention. There are however some things that you can do to help them maintain their attention:

- Use a variety of media, e.g. props and video
- Use different ways to communicate, e.g. visual, aural, kinaesthetic and numerate
- Have breaks
- Involve the audience via questions and exercises
- Tell stories

This list was originally published in our special report - How you get better results from presentations to any audience - if you'd like a copy, please download it from www.tenandahalf.co.uk

Why do you tell stories? Stories are an opportunity for the presenter to show the personality behind the suit.

This is important as you want your audience to feel a personal connection with you and see reason to continue the conversation after your talk.

On a more physical note, when you tell stories you are effectively rewinding a tape in your brain - you can recall the detail without having to look at the screen behind you. This makes it much easier for you to strengthen your connection with your audience.

Also, people can relate to stories because people like stories and they are significantly more interesting than bullet points!

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