

# EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS

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## ABSTRACT

When you are communicating  
you are dealing with people  
to know how to handle them  
you must understand them.

Effective communication is an essential requirement leadership. Scientists and engineers, especially those holding key positions or possessing critical technical knowledge, are often required to communicate their views. The main concern of the speaker is to influence the thinking and subsequently the actions of those who listen to her/his speech. This ability to effectively communicate and persuade is of great importance to a scientist or an engineer. Success depends on this ability to penetrate the mind of the audience with the speaker's power of persuasion. Communication through speech requires a psychological insight into the human mind. The art of communication depends on the skillful application of this insight. While communicating, one is dealing with human beings. It is essential to have a clear idea of how normal people behave and act under diverse conditions. The objective of the listeners to enable them to grasp the presenter's point of view. Hence, the first task of the speaker is to be aware of this thinking process of the audience.

Delivering a good speech requires taking the audience into confidence. The audience comes with the expectation of learning something of value. If they trust the speaker and have confidence in her/him, they will automatically imbibe the ideas put forward by the speaker. Reciprocally, the speaker must play her/his part by being honest, sincere, and articulate. The speaker has to imagine that she/he is taking the audience through a journey. It is a journey from an unknown to a known world where the aspirations of those listening to the speech could be fulfilled. When the speech begins, the audience has an open mind, with no idea about what the speaker is going to say. A forceful and resourceful speaker helps the audience understand the purpose of the speech gradually. The viewpoint of the speaker must be absolutely clear. There should be no lack of transparency. Only then will the audience unhesitatingly follow the lead provided by the speaker. A well-prepared speech can leave its mark on the audience. Such a speech, in addition to good preparation, requires excellent delivery. This implies successful communication of the essential idea of the speaker to the audience.

The speaker must bear in mind that the purpose of communication is to convey a message and not just to talk. Communication, in fact, is a two-way process. During this process, the speaker must seek feedback from the audience. The gestures and postures of the audience automatically reveal their reaction. Bright, attentive eyes focused on the speaker reflect the response of the audience. It automatically establishes a rapport between the audience and the speaker.

The most crucial task of the scientist or engineer is to carefully organize her/his own thoughts, and subsequently, the point that need to be presented. These must be arranged in a simple and logical manner. It is best to begin with a storyline. The storyline clearly and succinctly task the

audience through the message that speaker intends to communicate. It gives a clear idea of the overall theme. This theme then needs to be placed in different compartments. The storyline, thus, act as a roadmap that guides the audience from one compartment-a significant point of the presentation-to the other. This mechanism engages the audience, as it takes them through this virtual journey. Listening to the presentation, the audience first becomes curious, then interested, and finally glued. The people in the audience then begin reacting mentally to the points made by the speaker. At the end of a good speech they are convinced, though gradually, about the argument presented by the speaker. They align with the speaker's point of view. This is how the speaker's objective is fulfilled. As is evident from this sequence, structured organization of a speech is essential to ensure effective communication. Random thoughts interpolated anywhere take away from the objective of the presentation. Speech organization has another positive advantage-it is great help to the speaker. This is because the logically arranged train of thought keeps the different ideas tightly linked-with one idea following the other in a systematic pattern. This helps the speaker to remember and recapitulate her/his thoughts easily.

Gauging the mood of the listeners is essential for effective communication through speech. The speaker can either continue with the structure according to her/him planned storyline, or modulate it while speaking. This is a decision that the speaker has to take, depending on the prevailing mood, feeling, unmindful of the mood of the audience, make the speech logical, methodical, and systematic and states one key point after the order. This is possible with scientists and engineers as they are used to structured thinking. They are not used to dynamically modulating their thoughts. However, any speech will inevitably fall flat if the speaker does not feel the pulse of the audience at the very

beginning and at every stage of the presentation. It is necessary, therefore, is to observe the reaction of the audience and act accordingly. Audience reaction can be gauged by looking closely at the audience to discover the focus of their attention. If their attention is fixed on the speaker interesting. If not, the speaker immediately needs to do something that will be of interest to the audience. She/he must change the style of delivery or mode of presentation in such a way that it will absorb the interest of the audience.

It is important to understand the role of the right and left hemispheres of the brain in communication. It has to be noted that effective presentation is a creative process that goes on in the human brain. There are different modalities and skills that back up this creative process. The right and left hemisphere of the human brain have independent functions and have unique and special attributes. Each of these, therefore, has an important role to play in the process of spoken communication. The left side of the brain is the seat of reason-concerning logical and analytical thinking. The right side of the brain is seat of emotions and feelings. It controls artistic and creative functions, and is more concerned with the heart. There is a link between the two halves of the brain. Message are transmitted across a thick band of nerve fibers called the corpus callosum. A close look at spoken and written communication will help illustrate the difference in the functioning of the right and left brain. For example, in any presentation there is flow or spontaneity. However, in reality, occasional rambling and lack of logical reasoning are often part of spoken language. This happens because in speech communication, the right brain has a fair play. On the other hand, written communication is governed primarily by the left brain and a methodical analysis of the situation, a logical approach, and syntactical accuracy are the foundational elements. During speech communication, it is not the right

brain that rules in all cases. Many speakers, especially scientists and engineers, rely significantly on their left brain for their presentations.

