

DAILY NEWS

Making a good presentation

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Whether you're pitching your boss, telling customers about products or services, or describing yourself to a potential employer, presentation skills count for a lot.

Not everyone is required to speak to groups of people, but being prepared and organized can make anyone better at what they do.

[Peter Handel](#), CEO of [Dale Carnegie & Associates](#), a human resources and management consulting organization, knows more than most about mastering presentation skills.

"Whether you are persuading colleagues, selling a client or energizing a team, the power of your presentation makes the difference between success and failure," Handel said.

He has smart advice for making a presentation:

Know your audience

Think about who is on the receiving end of your talk and how the topic relates to them. Ask yourself what the purpose is and what the outcome should be.

Use words and phrases familiar to the group that you are addressing, whether it's a crowd or a couple of co-workers. By understanding your audience, you can tailor your message for maximum effectiveness.

Beginning, middle, end

Every presentation needs structure. Handel recommended breaking it up into three parts: an opening, followed by your key ideas and a killer closing.

For the opening, use a question, make a startling statement or relate a relevant incident to spark the audience's interest.

The meat of your presentation should include four to six points that you can back up with stats, stories and analogies.

Close by underscoring your message. Consider throwing out a challenge or reconnecting with your opening.

Be sure your audience gets the point and listeners know exactly what you want them to take away.

Practice, practice

Review, rehearse and get some feedback.

Feeling comfortable with your message will help you build enthusiasm and confidence.

This will also help you with your pacing. If you have the time and equipment, you might consider videotaping yourself and reviewing the footage. It's a good way to eliminate mannerisms and expressions that can get in the way of the content of your message.

Remember that the best cure for nervousness is confidence, and that confidence comes with practice and complete comfort with the subject matter.

Get up there

Be sure to make a positive first impression by relaxing, making eye contact and owning your subject. When speaking, be natural. Very important: Speak more slowly when emphasizing key points; those listening will appreciate it.

Handel also advised:

Using stories to engage the audience. It's more interesting and can help you connect with people staring back at you.

Arriving early to get to know a few people in the audience.

Keeping your presentation to less than 20 to 25 minutes, if possible. If your talk needs to be longer, consider taking a break after 18 minutes.