

# Tips for Making a Successful Presentation

Several things determine the success of a presentation, no matter what the topic. To most, they are extremely obvious, but often completely overlooked. What makes a presentation great, instead of average (or sometimes even painful), are the little details that we often take for granted.

**Sometimes what we think will guarantee our success will eventually lead to failure.** For example, many people think that the best way to prepare a speech or presentation is to memorize it word for word. What most people don't realize is that this method is extremely unreliable.

Surprisingly, when someone memorizes a speech or presentation, they often forget the entire speech when they face the audience. This has happened to countless distinguished public figures, even Winston Churchill!

**Another reason memorization isn't a recommended method is that the presentation will have a stiff, lifeless tone.** Dale Carnegie points out that all of our lives, we have been speaking spontaneously. Carnegie says, "We haven't been thinking of words, we have been thinking of ideas. If our ideas are clear, the words come as naturally and unconsciously as the air we breathe."

**Keeping your ideas clear and concise is another key.** This is particularly important when developing your visual aides and presentation materials. When creating a PowerPoint presentation, it is important to keep things crisp and uncluttered. Often, too many graphics, long phrases and other distracting items on the slides make it very difficult to obtain and keep the audience's attention.

**Handouts are an essential tool in working-up a successful presentation.** By giving the audience the material, they will spend more time listening and absorbing information, instead of scrambling to capture notes on paper. Many speakers will reserve their handouts until the end of the presentation, but this annoys many attendees, because they like to jot down notes as the speaker presents the material.

**Take a few moments before your session begins by stopping by the meeting room, familiarizing yourself with the equipment and location of items you may need at the last minute.** By doing this, you will be able to avoid the stress of adapting to new and possibly unfamiliar equipment. Also, this will help you ensure that all equipment is working properly. Feel free to practice using the microphones or other aides.

**Finally, take a few moments to relax and mentally prepare yourself for the presentation you are about to give.** Quickly review your notes and go over any sticking points, or places where you feel you need to be more clear.

By following these simple guidelines, you will find the presentation process to be more enjoyable and less stressful. Also, because of your thoughtful preparation, the audience will benefit much more from your presentation, giving you an excellent reputation as a featured speaker.