

## **Advanced Presentation and Communication Skills**

If all my talents and powers were to be taken from me by some inscrutable Providence, and I had my choice of keeping but one, I would unhesitatingly ask to be allowed to keep the power of speaking, for through it I would quickly recover all the rest.

DANIEL WEBSTER

Have you happened to notice the dramatic changes that have evolved in presentations, communication, and training over the last twenty years? The basic focus used to be on education. Now, the latest research is all about how to grab your audience's attention and then maintain their interest. We can no longer focus simply on educating; we must now entertain. We must keep our audiences mentally engaged.

Great persuaders can maintain the attention of their audience. Research shows that people's attention spans are getting shorter and shorter. You don't have to be a stand-up comedian, but you do have to make sure your audience sticks with you, your words resonate with them, they pay attention, and they understand you. The moment you lose their attention, you can no longer persuade them. You could have a great Website, be a sharp dresser, publish a great brochure, or have any manner of impressive credentials. The reality is, however, that the number-one persuasion tool is *you*, and a big part of how you present yourself is through your communication. Long gone are the days of counting on the subject matter to speak compellingly for itself, compensating for your inadequacies as a presenter. Nowadays, you've got to get inside your audience's minds, and you've got to get there fast. It can take only seconds before people's minds start to wander. To combat this tendency, you have to educate, inspire, and entertain with passion, compassion, and purpose.

Great persuaders are great communicators. Well-known motivational speaker and best-selling author Jim Rohm said it best: "When I learned how to effectively persuade and communicate, my income went from six digits to seven digits." Your communication skills are critical for your success, yet this is another set of overlooked skills that are not

effectively taught in school. Communication includes phone skills, face-to-face interactions, group presentations, and even email.

Most persuaders feel, incorrectly, that they have above-average communication skills. Are yours “above average” too? Our research shows that 34 percent of persuaders feel they have mastered the ability to effectively communicate. However, by talking to your audience, we know that your presentation and communication mastery was rated at only 11 percent. Great persuaders work on their presentation skills on a continual basis. There is always something to fine-tune and improve.

The studies show that, on average, a persuader communicates six to eight features of his product or service to his audience, but the average person will only remember one, two, or three of them. In over 40 percent of cases, the person will remember one of the features incorrectly. In 30 percent of cases, the person remembers a feature that was never even mentioned by the persuader. (Ouch!) We also found that 93 percent of persuadees misunderstood some part of a persuader’s message. The worst part is that most of them did not ask a question or even try to seek clarification. Remember, a confused mind says no. A “confused mind,” has to think about it. A “confused mind,” will get back to you. A confused mind is hard to persuade and influence.

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