

Capturing Attention Immediately

What can you do in the first thirty seconds of your encounter to capture your audience's attention? Can you prove to them that you are worth listening to? Think about this: Every time you communicate with someone, they are paying with either time or money. Your audience is rooting for you; they *want* you to succeed. They don't want their time or money wasted any more than you want to waste it. Then why is it getting wasted?

Sometimes when you're approaching something new, figuring out what you should *not* do is just as important as figuring out what *to* do. Let's first take a look at some communication "complaints."

- Speaking in a monotone.
- Avoiding eye contact.
- Fidgeting and other annoying mannerisms.
- Using vocal fillers ("uhm," "uh," etc.).
- Lacking any emotion or conviction.
- Sounding mechanical or rehearsed.
- Rushing through the presentation, speaking too fast.
- Talking down to the audience.
- Not finding common ground.
- Failing to help the audience see value in the presentation.
- Pushing or pressuring the audience.
- Overloading the audience with too much information.
- Being disorganized, jumping from one point to the next without any flow.
- Not checking environment beforehand to limit interruptions and distractions.
- Exhibiting poor listening skills.
- Saying the wrong things at the wrong moments.
- Not adapting to the particular personality or personalities you're working with.
- Displaying nervousness and fear.

- Jumping to conclusions.
- Constantly interrupting.
- Pushing a predetermined, one-sided solution.
- Listening selectively.
- Not being in tune with audience emotions.
- Allowing personal emotions to get involved.
- Being knowledgeable in an arrogant way.

The good news is most of these things are easily remedied once they are pointed out. We just don't realize how often we commit them. Great persuaders have found their presentation weaknesses. They record themselves as they present and talk on the phone. Recording yourself will let you step into your audience's shoes and give you a true-to-life representation that's easy to evaluate. Plus, there won't be any second-guessing—the recording doesn't lie. Sure, it can be a painful exercise, but you will gain invaluable insights that cannot be found in any other way. Remember what they say: “No pain, no gain.” Great persuaders will endure a little pain to maintain their high income.

Fear of Public Speaking

Given the choice of speaking in public or boiling in oil, most people would choose olive.

—PHILLIS MINDELL

Most of us have been faced with a bad case of laliophobia at one point or another. What is laliophobia? It is the fear of public speaking. As common as this problem is, there is hope in knowing that most all of our fears are not innate but rather are learned. Why is this good news? It's good news because if you can learn a fear, it also means you can *unlearn* it.

In the meantime, it is totally normal to feel some nervousness before you present. We are often tempted to “win over” the audience by being upfront about being nervous, tired, or unprepared (apologizing in advance), but this can backfire. They don't

know how you feel or how much you prepared; why would you tell them to start looking for these things?

Great persuaders still get a little nervous, but they take that nervousness and transfer it into energy. Here are some ways in which great persuaders channel or settle some of their nervous energy:

- Performing stretching exercises.
- Listening to soothing music.
- Quietly meditating.
- Walking briskly.
- Engaging in breathing exercises.
- Visualizing success.
- Rehearsing their presentation.
- Leaving the country (just joking).

As you improve this skill, it will rip you out of your comfort zone. There's some definite discomfort at first. After you gain more and more skill and confidence, however, it becomes more comfortable and the results begin to show. When you have mastered these things, you will see your persuasion skill sky rocket to the next level.

Another thing you often have direct control over before your communication has even begun is the physical environment in which you will be presenting. You can choose where you speak, or make adjustments to a facility that has been chosen by someone else. Speakers often overlook these details, even though they make an impact on how well a message is received. Here are some of the environmental factors that are easily adjusted:

- Lighting
- Ventilation
- Time of day
- Chair setup

- Number of attendees
- Entrances/Exits
- Audience expectations
- Distractions

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