

People Skills in Your Presentations

Part of the public-speaking package requires you to have great people skills. Such skills will definitely carry over into your presentation style. In this way, people skills and presentation skills should essentially become inseparable. You want your people skills to be so polished that they invariably permeate your presentations. You want every audience member to feel like you're reaching her/him individually. When it comes to effective people skills, there are two key areas: trust and connectivity. Trust obviously heads the list because if people don't trust you, you can forget everything else. In my persuasive toolbox, I have what I call "The Five Cs of Trust." If you consider each of these five attributes, you will recognize that you really must have all of them to be a truly trustworthy person. These Five Cs are character, credibility, competence, confidence and congruence.

To illustrate The Five Cs of Trust, let's use the example of moving into a new area and needing to find a dentist. Suppose a certain dentist was competent, confident in his abilities, had credible qualifications behind him, but lacked in the character and congruence areas. Suppose he did great work but was always over-billing his patients. Would you go to him? Would you *trust* him? What if he measured up in each of the other four areas but demonstrated a real lack of confidence? What if he was always wringing his hands, was always second-guessing his work and was just generally unsure of himself? Would you feel comfortable seeing him? Would you trust him? What if he was a really nice, well-meaning guy with solid credentials who wouldn't hurt a fly, but he was always making careless mistakes in his work? Would you go to this dentist? Would you trust him? In this light, it is easy to see that each area of trust is crucial. Put another way, strength in one area does not compensate for lack in another. So too it is in your interactions with others. You can't leave any room open for people to doubt you or your intentions in any way. If they do, their perceptions of even the most remarkable presentation will always be slightly tainted. For ultimate trustworthiness, and therefore the greatest potential to influence people for the better, always seek to be square with yourself and with others in each of the five areas of trust.

Connectivity is another area that is critical in the development of your people skills. Connectivity is the ability to connect with others and to make them feel that they can connect with you. It is a mutual rapport that develops spontaneously and naturally. How does this connectivity transfer from people skills into your presentations? If you can't connect with people on a one-on-one basis, how are you going to connect with an entire audience? Remember, your audience is a group of individuals, so you still have to think of connecting with them in that way. You still want your communication to penetrate each member of your audience in a personal and intimate way. The best place to begin working on your degree of connectivity then is in your interactions with individuals.

The first element of connectivity is attraction. As superficial as it may be, we feel more connected to people we find attractive. Did you know that research shows that ugly convicts get longer sentences than better looking ones? Did you also know that better-looking students get better grades? It's totally illogical, but that's what the research shows. I'm not saying that in order to be an effective persuader you have to look like you should be on all the magazine covers, but you should take care that you are well groomed and professionally dressed. A polished appearance truly does make a difference, even if only on a subconscious level.

The second element of connectivity is similarity. It's just basic psychology that we are drawn to people we view to be similar to ourselves. This similarity could come in the form of hobbies, interests, beliefs, etc. An interesting study shows, for example, that smokers buy from smokers and that people of certain religious backgrounds buy from others of the same religious background. Again, you want to cultivate the ability to readily establish your similarities with individuals on a one-on-one level if you hope to be able to do so with an entire audience.

Another way you can cultivate your connectivity is by being sure that your language and tone are always positive and empathetic. People want to know that they are being heard and understood. They want to feel uplifted and like they are in a better mood for having spoken with you. Always try to exhibit a positive, spirited aura about yourself. Besides

the fact that others will notice that aura and like being around you, your optimism will help you in your own life as well.

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