

Quit Talking Too Much

Being an extrovert, having the gift of gab, or being able to make small talk with anyone you meet can definitely be used to your advantage, but watch yourself. How can you persuade if you are always talking? It will be very annoying to your audience if they sense that you like hearing yourself talk more than listening to their concerns. Remember, it's about *them*, not you. Great persuaders listen more than they talk. In fact, great persuaders use their listening and questioning skills to get their audience to persuade themselves.

Often when someone comes to you, she already knows what she wants. She already has something in mind. She just needs to talk through it with someone. Which approach do you think will have better, longer-term results: you persuading your audience, or you helping them persuade themselves? It's much better if your audience feels as if they have made the decision themselves, without perceived external influences. When you do have to talk, be succinct and to the point. A good rule of thumb is not to talk more than 30 percent of the time.

Now, with these general guidelines in place, it is worth pointing out that you must always be prepared to adapt and adjust to the personality type of your audience. For some people, talking 30 percent of the time will still be too much. Discussing only what is relevant to the matter at hand and keeping chit-chat to a minimum is best for these no-nonsense types. Your attempts at being their buddy will likely annoy and maybe even offend them. Some people feel that being overly warm and personable is not appropriate when you have just met someone for the very first time. Polite and professional, yes, but warm and fuzzy, no. The bottom line is, don't get too friendly too fast.