

Structure Points

Once the call to action has taken place, your audience needs to remember, retain, and respond to your message. They have to keep doing what you want them to do. Have your points been memorable, easy to understand, and simple to follow? Remember, your message will boil down *not* to what you say and do, but to what the other person remembers. The following critical items must be included in your persuasive presentation.

1. Repetition

The use of repetition is very effective. We have heard that repetition is the mother of all learning; it is also the mother of effective persuasion. Repetition creates familiarity toward your ideas, and that leads to a positive association. When something gets repeated, it gets stuck in your memory. It improves your comprehension. You need to repeat your message several times so your audience understands precisely what you are talking about and comprehends exactly what you want them to do. You can repeat the message several times without saying the same thing over and over again. My motto: When you repeat, repackage how you say it. Each time you express your point, use new evidence and new words, so you don't sound like a broken record. If you use repetition too much, it might result in diminishing returns. You know how you feel about someone telling you a joke or a story you've already heard or that commercial you've seen one too many times. If you've heard it a millions time before, you tune out and quit listening. Keep your repetitions about each point to approximately three references, and definitely no more than five.

2. Theme

We see general themes in commercials and advertisements. A theme is easily remembered and easily retained. The famous lawyer, Gerry Spence, uses themes during his court cases. For example, when a small ice cream manufacturer sued McDonalds for breach of oral contract, Spence centered his whole argument and position around the theme, "Let's put honor back into the handshake." The jury was won over and Spence's client was awarded \$52 million. In another case, Spence's client was suing an insurance company for quadriplegic fraud. This time, Spence's theme was: "Human need versus corporate greed." The insurance company ended up having to shell out \$33.5 million *plus* the interest on \$10 million. Another example of effective use of theme involves the infamous O.J. Simpson trial. In that case, the theme was: "If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit."

Having a theme will give your presentation flow, order, and presence in the minds of your audience members. Themes provide an easy way for people to remember the heart of your message. If you have strong and well-organized themes, you can be sure your audience will understand and remember your message more clearly and more strongly.

3. Short and Simple

Keep your message short and simple. Boring an audience to tears has never yet seemed to effectively persuade. If the message is short and simple, it will most likely be clearer and therefore easier to remember. Consider the profundity of Abraham Lincoln's

historical Gettysburg Address. The whole speech, from start to finish, was only 269 words. He presented it in less than three minutes. How about Winston Churchill's "blood, sweat, and tears" speech? He read it in less than two and a half minutes. Even Nelson Mandela's famous speech signaling the end of apartheid after twenty-seven years of imprisonment lasted only five minutes.

Make sure your speech is articulate and intelligent, but be careful not to use esoteric language. You must be sure you're using simple terms and jargon that are familiar to your audience. Complexity will not impress them; rather it will muddle your message. Make your points simple, clear, and direct. Avoid facts, figures, examples, questions, or anything else that – if used ineffectively – might complicate your message.

Conversely, if you are trying to *dissuade*, use all the complexity you want. If a person feels confused, perplexed, bewildered, etc., well, as they say, a confused mind says, "No!"

4. Primacy and Recency Effect

Timing is everything. The Primacy and Recency Effects refer to timing your message so it will have its greatest impact. "Primacy Effect" is when initial information bears the greatest impact. "Recency Effect" is when information presented last (most recently) delivers a stronger impact. These effects can be powerful presentation tools since it is typically the very first and very last parts of your presentation that bear the strongest weight in your audience's overall impression. These impressions will linger longer than anything else about the presentation. Your first and final words determine how you will be remembered and thought of long after your speech has ended. Be sure you carefully craft your opening and closing statements, placing your strongest points at those times.