

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.