

## **Presenting – How to get off to the best possible start**

**Getting You off to the best start:** It is that time! The previous presenter is winding up, and you are due on in 5 minutes. You know that your initial impression on the audience is critical to their acceptance of both you and your message. And you know that it is your non-verbal language in the first few minutes that will make that impression. But what precisely is that initial impression you want to make?

To answer that question, imagine that you are sitting in the audience. Now imagine yourself saying - *“This presenter is going to be good, and really worth listening to!”* Getting that reaction should be your first objective and here are some excellent non-verbal habits that will achieve it:

- Relax yourself physically, loosen the jaw, and release the tension from your shoulders and neck. Breathe deep and slow.
- Enjoy the preceding presentation and tell yourself that you are pleased to be on next.
- Tune into the mood of the audience, feel confident that the tone of your planned introduction is right.
- Picture yourself on your feet delivering your presentation, knowing that it is prepared well and just right for this audience.
- Picture yourself walking to position and being on top of your game.
- Stand tall and upright and walk on looking out at the audience. Brisk but not hurried.
- Look glad to be there, keep eye contact with the audience as you get set. Do not wave! Do not point in recognition to a friend!
- If at a lectern, show command and take your time, place your script or prompts where you can slide the pages.
- Do not look over your shoulder at the screen, it sends out a signal of doubt!
- Look left, look right, look forward, smile and off you go.

**Getting your Message off to the best start:** So now we start and the ideal reaction that we would want next from the audience is - *“yes, this has definitely got my interest!”*

At the planning stage you will have decided on an appropriate opening to suit the anticipated situation. You have made any final topical adjustments as you tuned in to the audience on the day. Now it is critical that your message conveys command and confidence through a disciplined delivery of those planned opening words.

- **When you are informing across a range of messages:** Tell them where you are going and how you will get there. It is simple and ideal for focusing attention and aiding assimilation.
- **When you want to get them thinking about actions they should consider:** Pose a “Have you ever wondered?” style of question. It instantly connects their issues with your agenda and conveys relevance.
- **When you want them to eventually commit to actions:** Outline the key benefit to them that they will derive from the presentation, ensuring of course in your planning that you have identified this!
- **When you want to establish personal credibility:** Quote an expert or a major news story or a preceding speaker to reinforce authority, topicality and relevance.
- **When you want to get them curious about opportunities you will summarise later:** Begin to tell a story that analogises the message that you plan to subsequently deliver. This again allows the audience to apply their world and issues to your message as well as engaging immediate interest.
- **When you want to create rapport:** Empathise with their needs and issues to show like mindedness and relevance.
- **Things to avoid that could spoil it for you:** Avoid gratuitous attempts at humour or downloads from Youtube that really are not that relevant. Avoid going off script and improvising before you are settled in.
- **Things to do to that will ensure success:** Keep with your prepared words and focus on clarity for quick and easy assimilation. Maintain intermittent eye contact, pausing on sections of the audience in rotation.

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