

Planning to Present 6 – When there’s a need to persuade

We have to prepare a presentation where our objectives clearly require agreement by the audience. Maybe it’s an internal change presentation to employees or perhaps a new business pitch to a buying panel. It’s a situation where the audience will anticipate or quickly realize that we want something from them. So they will be guarded, questioning, maybe even resistant... and they will need to be persuaded!

Here are some structures and elements we should be building our presentation around:

Initial benefit Statement With a persuasion job to do on our guarded audience we clearly want to begin with the best possible start. And that is one that will engage their full attention and encourage them to stay with us into the presentation. The ideal initial benefit statement that will achieve this effect will have these characteristics:

- It signposts the key benefit so they will see what’s in for them.
- It shows audience-relevance and topicality in the benefit and so creates rapport
- It conveys something special about the presentation, EG: First, New, Easiest, Limited offer, guaranteed, Last opportunity to reinforce the value of listening!
- It avoids detail and generalizes the benefit to whet the appetite and avoid pre-emptive judgment.

It’s really corny but “Have I got a deal just for you!” is a classic IBS.

Persuasion Structures There are several structures popularly used in persuasion or selling but they all follow a “generic” sequence. This sequence simply presents the message in the natural path by which the minds of an audience can be influenced.

1. Gain their sustained attention (as explained with the IBS.)
2. Identify and confirm the need or the opportunity or the vision.
3. Demonstrate how our solution or plans or ideas will fulfill this.
4. Provide proof that we actually can deliver this and assurances that we will.
5. Introduce a reason to be decisive and ***ask for what you want!***

Persuasive Language We can then complete our structure with words, phrases and influencing techniques, some of which have been used for centuries.

- Talk the benefits of our ideas as they relate to this audience and express these in their own language.
- Appeal to the members of the audience who are risk avoiding, problem & cost minded, and those who are competitive, benefit & added value minded.
- Appeal to the members of the audience who are results and efficiencies minded and those who are people and conditions minded.
- Use assumptive power words like: “clearly, certain, sure, always, will, concrete.”
- Use anecdotes and explanations that are audience-relevant to reinforce empathy and rapport.
- Talk about the exclusivity and limited availability of the solution to encourage decisiveness.

- Use peer approval to appeal to aspirations and the “fear of missing out”
- Plan in overhead questions to the audience that ask for agreement when clear and certain benefits are presented.

Only when we take the trouble to pre-structure and load a presentation in this way and create patterns that become familiar to us, will we be able to talk with an audience. Reading a script never really persuaded anybody. Copyright © Bob Howard-Spink

Bob Howard-Spink is a partner in “*Persuadability*.” For more tips and information on how we can help you improve your persuadability visit www.persuadability.co.uk