

## **Preparing for a Business Speech**

Making a speech in front of customers and prospects or potential customers and prospects can be a great opportunity. Seldom will you have the attention of such a large audience. Delivering the right speech in the right way can be a very effective way to grow your business. Like many other things, it takes some planning and some effort.

### **Know Your Audience**

Spend some time before the presentation to learn who will be in the audience and try to identify what their interests may be. It is also helpful if there is some way to speak with some of the audience before the presentation and then include some reference to that discussion in your presentation.

### **Tailor Your Presentation**

Make sure your presentation is relevant for the audience. If the group includes major decision makers (not implementers), covering extensive details may lose them. For that type of higher-level listeners, it is important to appear credible and knowledgeable and not bore them with details they really don't understand or care about. You may want to include a "trends in the industry" section in your remarks. Decision makers are always interested in what is new and what the competition is doing.

Don't be afraid to use notes. Even the President uses notes when he delivers his State of the Union speech. You may want to just have bulleted notes instead of having your speech completely written out in your notes. This will probably make the speech delivery more natural. If giving speeches is new to you, you may want to consider having your first couple of sentences completely written out and then having only bullet points for the rest of your speech. That way, you are sure of starting the speech the way you want.

### **Use Visuals and Handouts**

The effectiveness of your presentation can be greatly enhanced by using images to help make your points. The use of presentation software, like PowerPoint, has made creating quality visuals much easier. You can create text and graphic images relatively easily.

Be sure any visuals you use clearly demonstrate your point. For example, if you are talking about trends, a colorful graph will probably make a more lasting impression than just reporting the numbers. If you are using text images, keep them readable. A few bulleted points on the screen are probably more effective than a full screen of text.

It is also good to have some handouts for the audience. Copies of your slide presentation with room for notes encourage the listener to follow along and reflect on

how your topic may affect them. Make sure to include your name and contact information on any handouts.

### **Be Comfortable Making the Presentation**

If at all possible, visit the podium before the speech and try out any audio/visual equipment you will be using. The podium should be about breastbone height so the audience will be able to clearly see you. If you are using a microphone, make sure you have enough cord to move about. However, don't walk around too much. Change locations only for a purpose. Don't walk in front of the speakers or you will get feedback and an uncomfortable screech.

Make eye contact with the audience when you are making the presentation and don't avoid questions. In fact you may want to ask a question at the beginning of your presentation to involve your audience and get a better understanding of their interests. Ask for a show of hands on some question.

### **Two Final Thoughts**

Make sure your presentation is organized. It should have a beginning, middle and end. And remember the saying – tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them and tell them what you told them.

Practice your presentation. The more comfortable you are giving the speech, the more effective it will be.