

TODAY'S MANAGER

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Presenting with Conviction

Paula Marcondes | Today's Manager

Want to know how to make your presentations stand out? Read on...



"Paula, can you write an article about executive presentations in a management-related context?" "Sure," I answered. "No problem!" I thought calmly. After all, I have been teaching this subject for 22 years across the region to every industry.

When the time came to write the article or to deliver that business presentation or keynote speech, it became clear that no matter how much experience I may have in public speaking or how much knowledge I have about the subject, the old saying still holds true: "The more you know, the more dangerous you

are."

Ultimately, most individuals would like to achieve the same goal: to differentiate their presentations, to stand out in a positive way, to make an impact, and to sell their message. Most individuals I work with think that to achieve this goal they need to focus on delivery. Reality, however, has taught me that even the best presenters, regardless of their knowledge and how many times they have presented the topic, will not impactfully differentiate themselves if they fail to craft a solid messaging strategy to every audience that they address. Note the emphasis on "solid messaging strategy to every single audience that they address".

Research shows that on average, with face-to-face context, 93 per cent of your message is delivered nonverbally. ¹ Many interpret this research to mean that if you speak the truth and you know what you are talking about, the differentiating factor would be your delivery, i.e. 'how' the message is delivered versus 'what', or the content that you are delivering.

This is the reason why most presenters are horrified of being in front of an audience: they fear that their delivery will not be "perfect" and that they will never be able to sell their message and achieve results regardless of what they are trying to deliver.

This view of communication fails to take into account congruence. See, the non-verbal aspects of our delivery must match the verbal aspects of our delivery. In other words, the "what" must match the "how". So, it is crucial that we define the "what", otherwise the "how" will never be impactfully received.

Most presenters define the "what" as the topic they are asked to deliver. For example, first quarter's performance, the 2020 budget, restructuring of procedures, etc. They become confused when I ask: "Okay, so your topic is about the quarterly performance, what's your message?" and this is when they start becoming consciously aware that they are just delivering content versus their intended message. If you are just delivering content versus intentional messaging, the audience will sense a lack of emotional commitment

and regardless of your delivery skills, you will come across as being just a presenter who regurgitates facts.

What we are looking for here is conviction! Yes, conviction. Conviction for what you've learned from your quarterly failures or successes, for your business vision, for progress towards better outcomes and behaviours, and even conviction for what needs to happen so that you and your audience are in a better place! Most importantly, conviction for what you are asking of them!

Here is a four-step process to develop your messaging strategy. You will not find this system in a book because it came to me on a flight from Penang to Singapore, and I wrote it on the back of a napkin.

In a nutshell, there are four elements to messaging which I usually spend hours explaining and I have now derived a diagram in the form of a triangle as per below:



1. Audience (in the centre of the triangle);
2. Purpose;
3. Message; and
4. Benefits.

Firstly, there are four types of audiences. Some expect to be soothed and calmed as they fear making mistakes. Some expect to be entertained and feel connected with the presenter. Some expect to be given information in greater detail, and others expect to be equipped by the presenter to help them come to decision.

Secondly, as a presenter, you need to know what your audience expects of you, because ultimately, you will need to match the style of the audience with your purpose in delivering the presentation: to stimulate, to instruct, to inspire a decision, or to inform. To make things even more complicated, there are times that the audience will be blended, and therefore, there will be more than one purpose in delivering the presentation.

Thirdly, once you know your audience and your purpose you will need to clarify your action plan. The focus here is on action, as in measurable, quantifiable, observable action, or the action verb, i.e. the behaviour.

Finally, you will need to define “what’s in it for them”, i.e. the benefits to your listeners to take the action you are asking them to take. It can boil down to these questions:

- Will they save resources like time, money, etc?
- Will they feel safer?
- Will they feel more desirable/loved?
- Will they have peace of mind?

In summary, if you have a clear “what”, your brain will give you the “how”.

References

¹ “Silent Messages: Implicit communication of emotions & attitudes”, Albert Mehrabian (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1981)

Paula is an Associate Trainer with SIMPD and she conducts 1) Managing Upset Customers & Service Breakdown and 2) Powerful Presentations: Designing & Delivering Impactful Presentations. Please contact Kathleen Tan @ 62489407/ kathleentan@sim.edu.sg for enquiries.

IMAGE: 123RF

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