



Five Ways to Develop Your Personal Speaking Style

by Alan Ovson

This may come as a surprise, but there is more to your presentation than your content and your slides. The two most important things in any presentation are (1) the audience and (2) how you and your materials relate to that audience. Research confirms that your presentations are as much about you as they are about what you're presenting.

There are only five elements to any presentation: (1) the audience, (2) your self-confidence, (3) your style, (4) the content, and (5) a structure that pulls all of these elements together. Believe it or not, two of these five elements are about you!

For any presenter, self-confidence and style are incredibly important. These two elements are like pillars holding up the roof of your house: no pillars, no roof and no house.

Remember, your audience is focused on you and how well you lead them through your presentation. If you can engage and connect with them throughout the presentation, they will be much more receptive to your ideas, services, and products.

Here are five strategies to help you develop a personal speaking style that not only engages and connects you to your listeners, but also builds your confidence.

1. Take the Stage Confidently

The most powerful personal style is self-confidence. When you move toward the stage (or make a move to take control of a meeting), be confident in your actions and in your thoughts. Make sure the other people in the room feel your physical presence and clearly see that you are taking the lead.

On the mental side, a large part of your confidence is tied to being honest with yourself. Clearly recognize what you know and also accept what you don't know. This acceptance of your strengths and limitations allows you to feel proud of your presentation, enables you to remain curious, and lets you ask questions without the baggage of always worrying about being right or the fear of being wrong.



2. Create Beginnings that Get Attention

The audience wants to be interested. It's your job to get them interested. Boring facts and statistics won't do. Instead, open with something that makes your audience reflect or think about your

subject. Ask a thoughtful question. Say something surprising. Tell a captivating story that relates to your point. Quote someone famous whose ideas support yours.

Beginnings are where you capture the audience's interest and attention. Spend some time planning this extremely important part of your presentation. How you start defines how your audience will think of you throughout the presentation.

3. Interact with Your Audience

Giving a presentation is not a one-way street. Presenters who think they are the smartest people in the room often fall victim to lecturing an audience into submission. View the audience as a valuable resource. If you view them in this way, they will be much more open to listening. And, you will be more open to feedback, questions, and responses.

One easy way to interact is to ask questions continually during your presentation to involve your audience in the thought process and make sure they are attentive and interested. These questions can be very quick check-ins with your listeners such as:

"Are you following me?"

"Does that make sense?"

"Do you see how that works?"

"Can I show you an example?"

Another great way to interact with your audience is to answer questions as they naturally come up. This keeps the audience attentive and makes the presentation feel more spontaneous and real. Audiences - whether one person or a thousand - appreciate this type of interaction and will trust you more because you show you are open and have an interest in them.

4. Recognize the Energy Level of Your Audience

It's essential to get your audience to feel comfortable. Otherwise, they won't listen. The best way to get an audience to feel comfortable is to recognize their level of energy and engagement so you can interact with them appropriately at their level of their energy - not yours.

Once you get an audience to feel comfortable, you can use your energy to move or change theirs. This is a huge stylistic issue. The more you practice taking your energy level up and down, the more you will see how recognizing energy levels enables you to increase the comfort level of your audiences.



5. Use Your Body, Face, and Eyes to Communicate

You CAN move while you're speaking. It's important to use hand gestures and eye contact to have a normal, relaxed feel while you're giving a presentation. Moving toward and away from your audience also changes the impact of what you're saying. Open vs. closed body language alters your listeners' perceptions of you and your message.

Before you make your next presentation, decide how you want to use movement to give your presentation a bigger impact.

Conclusion

These are five of the many aspects of your personal speaking style that will have a direct and lasting effect on your audiences. Please don't make the mistake of thinking that just having great content is enough to get your audience to agree with your ideas and take action.

Behind the content are your personality and your personal speaking style. Make sure you put some thought into how you come across every time you speak. Your style could make the difference between enormous success and crushing disappointment.

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