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BEP 33 - Presentations: Closing Down and Summarizing

Welcome back to BUSINESSenglishPOD! In today's episode, we'll be looking at closing down and summarizing your presentation.

As we mentioned a while back in BEP 101, a strong introduction is very important to giving your audience a reason for listening. Similarly, a strong conclusion is very important to leaving your audience with a great impression and giving them a clear message about what action to take.

So what structure should you use to close down a presentation? Well, I'm sure some of you have your own methods, but this simple format has always worked for me and covers all the main points:

1. Give your audience a clear signal that you are going to finish.
2. Briefly summarize the main points of your presentation.
3. State your recommendation or give your call to action—let your audience know what you want them to do.
4. Finish off by thanking your listeners and inviting questions or discussion.

In today's listening we'll be exploring this format. The listening takes place at Harper-Tolland, a major global producer of special purpose steel. Last year Harper-Tolland launched a new product line—ColorMax—which is a kind of brightly colored steel used in building and manufacturing. Unfortunately, the sales results in Europe for the first year have been quite disappointing. Nicholas Fischer, the new regional sales director for Harper-Tolland, has been hired to fix the problem. He is just finishing off a presentation in which he has been discussing his proposal.

As you listen, pay attention to the language and structure Nick uses to give his presentation a strong finish.

Listening Comprehension Questions:

1. What does Nick think is the biggest problem with sales?
2. What year's sales results does Nick mention?
3. What reasons are given for the failure to increase brand recognition?
4. In Nick's opinion, what do effective salespeople need?
5. How big of an increase in the training budget does Nick ask for?



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BEP 33 - Dialog

Nick: Product and industry knowledge is important. But the crux of the matter is that we simply aren't aggressive enough in our approach to selling. To sell you simply have to push and push hard.

So as we can see, a first-class CRM strategy and a great marketing plan are not worth the paper they're written on if we don't have qualified staff to push them through.

Okay, that's all I have to say on this topic for the moment.

Now I'd like to recap the main points of my presentation before I open it up for questions.

So to sum up: First, I analyzed the sales results for 2006. I talked about how our drive to increase brand recognition through a surge in advertising has failed because of mediocre initiative and inconsistent follow up from our sales people. Second, I explained about how our special taskforce found major deficiencies in our sales training system and in our staff's basic sales skills. Finally, I proposed a recovery plan for 2007. I stressed that the most important thing at this stage is not advertising or technology but the way that we train our salespeople.

Let me leave you with one thought. What I'd like to stress is—and I can't emphasize this enough—that it is absolutely essential to have an effective sales team. And effective salespeople must have effective training. Now what I'm asking from you today is a commitment to increase the training budget by 25% so that we can address this training shortfall. Then, by this time next year, instead of scratching our heads we'll be cracking the champagne.

Many thanks for your attention.

So now I'm very interested in hearing your comments.

Vocabulary

the crux of the matter – the most important thing

aggressive – showing determination and energy in doing something

CRM – Customer relationship Management

Analyzed – to examine, look at

brand recognition – term to describe how well a brand is known

surge – strong and sudden increase

mediocre – average but not very good

initiative – to come up with ideas and act with little help or advice from others

inconsistent – not maintaining a steady level of effort

deficiencies - weaknesses

essential – very important

commitment – a decision or obligation to do something

shortfall – the amount by which a target is missed

Debrief:

When the dialog begins, Nick is summarizing the main points in the last section of his presentation. As we said in BEP102, it is vital that you have an easily recognizable structure throughout your presentation. Maintaining a clear structure helps keep your audience focused and interested. So at the end of each section you should usually summarize your main point and signal that you are moving on to a new section.

How does Nick summarize his last main point?

So as you can see, a first-class CRM strategy and a great marketing plan are not worth the paper they're written on if we don't have qualified staff to push them through.

"So as we can see" is our signal that a summary is about to begin. The single word "so" is often used to introduce a summary or to change the topic. What is Nick's main point in this section? Unless we have qualified staff to push them through—that is, to make them work—a CRM or customer relationship management system and a marketing plan have no value—that is, they are not worth the paper they are written on.

Then Nick signals that the last part of his presentation is over.

Okay, that's all I have to say on this topic for the moment.

He could also say:

- Right, that ends the last section of my talk.
- That's all I want to say for now on the third part of my presentation.

Having clearly indicated that the last section of his talk is over, Nick signals a summary of his main points.

Now I'd like to recap the main points of my presentation before I open it up for questions.

"Recap" is short for recapitulate, which means to summarize briefly. There is a lot more language that Nick could have used to introduce his summary. For example,

- To conclude,...
- In conclusion,...
- Now, to sum up...
- So let me summarize what I've said.
- Finally, may I remind you of some of the main points we've considered.
- During my talk today, I've described the results of our investigation.

During his summary, Nick uses sequencing words (first, second, finally) to give a clear and concise summary of his main points. Also, notice the use of strong collocations. Collocation means word partnership—words that naturally go together. Nick’s collocations include “analyzed the sales results,” “find major deficiencies,” and “propose a recovery plan.” Using such word partnerships makes your English dynamic and fluent. So when you’re learning vocabulary, be sure to study words in groups or whole phrases.

So, Nick has finished his summary, but his presentation is not finished yet. Actually, one of the most important parts of his presentation is yet to come. As you know, the last thing you say is probably what your audience will remember best. This is called the take-home message—the idea that the audience will take home with them. It’s important to be decisive and clear. Also, try not to be too complex.

The conclusion should consist of a simple major statement, with no more than two or three connotations, if these are absolutely essential.

This is also where you should give recommendations or make a call to action. Your audience wants to know what to do next. Don’t forget to tell them.

How does Nick finish up his talk? Let’s listen again.

Let me leave you with one thought. What I’d like to stress is—and I can’t emphasize this enough—that it is absolutely essential to have an effective sales team. And effective salespeople must have effective training. SO what I’m asking from you today is a commitment to increase the training budget by 25% ...

Nick shows that he is making his final comments by saying “Let me leave you with one thought.”

Then, throughout his next few sentences, he uses a number of rhetorical techniques to add emphasis to his main point. He says “What I’d like to stress is...” and “I can’t emphasize this enough...” Notice how he lowers his voice and slows down. Longer pauses and a stronger voice add additional emphasis to his final message, which is a clear call to action: He says “Now, what I’m asking from you today is a commitment....”

This is a particularly strong call to action. There are many other ways, however, to make a concluding recommendation. Let’s listen to some more examples of phrases we can use.

- In conclusion, my recommendations are...
- I therefore propose the following strategy.
- I'd like to finish with...some observations based on what I've said.
- There are two conclusions to be made from this, namely,...
- I think we have to...
- I think we have seen that we should...
- What we need to do is...
- So, let me get straight to the point. We need action and we need it now.

Returning to our listening, it's worth noting that Nick ends off on a positive visual image for the future we will have by following his plan.

Then, by this next time year, instead of scratching our heads we'll be cracking the champagne.

So instead of scratching our heads in confusion, we will be cracking—that means opening—the champagne to celebrate.

Finally, how do you end the presentation? You should close your talk by thanking your audience and by opening the question and answer (or Q&A) session.

Many thanks for your attention.

So now I'm very interested in hearing your comments.

You can hear the smile in Nick's voice, can't you? Don't forget to leave your audience with a great impression by finishing off with a smile.

There is of course plenty of other language Nick could have used to finish off his presentation. Let's listen to a few more examples.

- Thank you for your attention. And now if you have any questions, I'd be glad to answer them.
- Thank you for listening. Now, I'd be glad to try and answer any questions.
- I thank you all for being such an attentive audience and now I'm sure you must have some questions, so I'll be happy to answer them.... Yes, Simon ..
- So, let's throw it open to questions.
- Any questions?

Well that's about all for today's Business English Pod episode on *Closing Down and Summarizing*. Today, you've learned language for finishing off the last part of your talk, summarizing, making a call to action, and opening up the Q&A session.

Remember—it's important not just to summarize your talk, but also to leave your audience with a key message and a call to action.

So here's our take-home message: Don't forget to visit the learning centre on our website at www.businessenglishpod.com. There you can find detailed study notes with a full transcript and extra vocabulary, definitions and language exercises to help you become a better English speaker.

Take care and see you next time on businessenglishpod.com.

Language Review Questions:

Rearrange the jumbled sentences to make phrases you can use at the end of your presentation.

1. I've said so what let me summarize
2. to this made conclusions two are there be from
3. propose I the following therefore
4. to my recap now points of I'd like the main presentation
5. to up sum so

Useful Language

To signal the end of a topic or section of a presentation:

- Okay, that's all I have to say on this topic for the moment.
- Right, that ends the last section of my talk.
- That's all I want to say for now on the third part of my presentation.

To introduce the summary:

- So, to sum up
- To conclude,...
- In conclusion,...
- Now, to sum up...
- So let me summarize what I've said.
- Finally, may I remind you of some of the main points we've considered.
- During my talk today, I've described the results of our investigation.

To make a concluding recommendation:

- In conclusion, my recommendations are...
- I therefore propose the following strategy.
- I'd like to finish with...some observations based on what I've said.
- There are two conclusions to be made from this, namely,...
- I think we have to...
- I think we have seen that we should...
- What we need to do is...
- So, let me get straight to the point. We need action and we need it now.

To finish off a presentation and invite questions:

- Many thanks for your attention. So now I'm very interested in hearing your comments.
- Thank you for your attention. And now if you have any questions, I'd be glad to answer them.
- Thank you for listening. Now, I'd be glad to try and answer any questions.
- I thank you all for being such an attentive audience and now I'm sure you must have some questions, so I'll be happy to answer them.... Yes, Simon ..
- So, let's throw it open to questions.
- Any questions?

Answers

Listening Comprehension:

1. Sales aren't aggressive enough
2. 2006
3. Mediocre initiative and inconsistent follow up from the sales people
4. Effective training
5. 25%

Language review:

1. So let me summarize what I've said.
2. There are two conclusions to be made from this
3. I therefore propose the following
4. Now I'd like to recap the main points of my presentation
5. So, to sum up