

Skills 360 – Presentations: Connecting with your Audience (2)

Discussion Questions

1. How do you usually like to begin or introduce your presentations?
2. Do you usually ask a lot of questions when giving a presentation?
3. What do you usually do when you finish a presentation?

Vocabulary

To leave something to chance: to not try to change how something happens or develops; "Instead of leaving our hotel's online reputation to chance, why don't we actively solicit positive reviews?"

To convey something: to communicate meaning or ideas; "We want our new logo to convey the idea that we are innovative, yet reliable."

To get something across: to successfully explain an idea; "Your sales pitch needs to get across the benefits of your product in less than a minute."

To matter: to be important or relevant; "Since we never meet our clients face to face, only online, our office location doesn't matter all that much."

To provoke someone's curiosity: to make someone interested in something; "A good homepage provokes people's curiosity and makes them want to click through to learn more about your company."

To grab someone's attention: to attract someone's interest or make them watch or listen; "Our new magazine ads feature amazing photographs that really grab people's attention."

Shocking: very surprising, often for something bad; "I found the news about the decrease in revenues really shocking. I thought we were doing really well!"

Eye-catching: something that is "eye-catching" is very attractive or makes you notice and pay attention; "We need our brochures to be really eye-catching so they stand out among all the other promo materials that people see."

To take notice: to pay attention, watch, or listen; "If you want people to really take notice of your trade show booth, you need something dynamic, like video screens or a product demonstration."

Lame: unoriginal, disappointing, or unimpressive; "Our website hasn't been updated in years, and it's looking pretty lame."

To tack on: to add something to something else, especially if it doesn't fit perfectly; "At the end of my resume, I decided to tack on my personal interests and hobbies just to give people a sense of who I am outside work."

Authentic: real, or true to one's own personality; "I don't respond well to salespeople who aren't authentic; I'm not fooled by a big smile and phony kindness."

To drop something in: to mention something; "During your interview, you should try to drop in that you know someone who works for the company."

One-way street: a situation or relationship in which information or ideas flow only from one person to the other; "Come on Dave, we're supposed to be working together on this report. It's not a one-way street you know, so how about taking some of my advice?"

On the fly: quickly and without planning; "Marnie is really good at making decisions on the fly, while I need much more time to think about things."

To sprint: to run very quickly; "The subway was running late and I practically had to sprint from the station to my interview."

To flick the switch: to turn a machine on or off; "Hey Tony, could you do me a favor and flick the switch on the photocopier there? I need to make some copies."

To stick around: to stay in a place, especially after something has finished; "Well, that's all for today, but if anyone has any further questions, feel free to stick around. I'll be here another 30 minutes at least."

Follow-up: an activity that happens after an event or other activity, often to give related information or see how something is progressing; "A month after your site launch, we'd like to do a little follow-up to see how things are going."

Promptly: quickly, or without delay; "Vera, this customer is pretty impatient, so can we get his order out promptly... like this afternoon?"

Follow-through: the ability or tendency to do what you say you are going to do; "Yeah, Jonas has pretty big ideas, but unfortunately he lacks follow-through."

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host, Tim Simmons, and today I want to look at how you can connect with your audience while you're actually delivering your presentation.

It's easy to **leave** your connection with the audience **to chance**. I mean, you might think that giving a presentation should be about **conveying** a message rather than "connecting" with your audience. But I assure you, whatever your message is, you'll **get it across** with much greater success if you have a good connection with your audience. And that connection isn't a chance occurrence. You have to work on it.

Last time I gave you some tips on what you can do before you start your presentation. Today I want to talk about what you can do *during* your presentation. And a great place to begin is at the beginning. One thing you should definitely do in your opening is to tell your listeners *why* your presentation **matters**. That might sound like this: "The information I'll give you today will help you come to a decision about such and such." Or it might be: "Today I'd like to share some ideas that could completely change the way you talk to your customers."

In your opening, it's also a good idea to **provoke** their **curiosity** with something interesting, *and* relevant. That could sound like this: "10 years ago I was working at a conference just like this... as a cleaner." Or maybe: "we had some pretty big goals for the third quarter... so, did we actually meet them?" In these two ways, you are connecting by making your presentation *relevant* and *interesting*.

I know you've probably heard that it's a good idea to **grab** the audience's **attention** with a joke, or a **shocking** idea, or an **eye-catching** visual that makes them sit up and **take notice**. To be perfectly honest, this bit of advice has led to a lot of really **lame** openings. I mean, you can't just **tack on** a surprise to the start of a boring presentation and think that you've done the tough work of audience engagement. If you're funny, and you've got a relevant joke, then tell it. Otherwise, don't. Because it's not **authentic**. I can't emphasize the importance of authenticity enough. Be *yourself*, and people will be more likely to connect with you.

But remember, it's not all about *you*, it's about your *audience*. If you learned something about them before your presentation, **drop** that information **in** somewhere during your presentation. Give examples from their own lives, or work. Another really simple but effective way to connect is using people's names. If you're presenting to a group of people you don't know, it's a good idea to find out a few names **beforehand**. So, by using people's names and information that matters to them, you make the presentation *about them*.

I've been talking a bit about what you should say or mention in your presentation. But no relationship is **a one-way street**. And it's much much easier to keep people engaged if you invite them to do a bit of talking themselves. Even just a bit helps. How do you do that? Well, you ask questions. Asking questions is one way to make people feel like *participants*, not just *listeners*. Hearing from the audience also gives

you ongoing feedback on how they're feeling and what's important to them. And you can use that feedback to adapt [on the fly](#).

Now, remember last time I mentioned that connecting with your audience starts before you actually begin? Well, it also continues after you finish. Don't plan to [sprint](#) out of the room once you've [flicked the switch](#) on the projector. Make yourself available. [Stick around](#) to answer questions. Keep the conversation going. And you can even invite further feedback by email if you like. Or you can offer to send people a short [follow-up](#), maybe a copy of your PowerPoint or a summary of your presentation. But if you do, do it [promptly](#). You don't want to be remembered for a lack of [follow-through](#).

All right, let's quickly review what we've talked about. Start off with a relevant and interesting opening. Be authentic. Incorporate the audience into your presentation. Ask them questions. And keep connecting with them even *after* your presentation. If you can do these things, you're sure to make a good connection. And if you've got a good connection, you'll be better able to inform, instruct, inspire, or persuade.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the BusinessEnglishPod.com website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. What should you include in the opening of your presentation? [choose 2]
 - A A shocking idea
 - B Something to make listeners curious
 - C An impressive picture
 - D Why your presentation matters

2. One of the most important elements of connecting with your audience is being...
 - A funny.
 - B authentic.
 - C attractive.
 - D informative.

3. Which of the following would be good ways to make your presentation relevant and interesting? [choose 2]
 - A Let me give you a brief outline of the information that I'll be giving you today.
 - B You know, I remember exactly how it felt to be a junior salesperson like you.
 - C I think you'll find that what I tell you today may change how you think about the purpose of a website.
 - D Let's begin here by going around the room and doing some introductions.

4. How can you make your audience feel that your presentation is about *them*? [choose all that apply]
 - A Avoid asking too many questions.
 - B Give examples from their work.
 - C Use people's names.
 - D Begin with something surprising.
 - E Mention information that they have told you beforehand.
 - F Ask them to tell a joke.

5. By asking questions, you will make people feel like _____, not just _____.
 - A presenters / workers
 - B participants / listeners
 - C leaders / followers
 - D decision-makers / students

6. Which of the following are good ideas once you finish your presentation? [choose all that apply]
 - A Ask people to send feedback by email.
 - B Offer to meet with people one-on-one.
 - C Revise your PowerPoint immediately.
 - D Stay to answer questions.
 - E Send people a summary of your presentation.
 - F Ask people for more information.

Review Answers

1. What should you include in the opening of your presentation? [choose 2]
B Something to make listeners curious
D Why your presentation matters

2. One of the most important elements of connecting with your audience is being...
B authentic.

3. Which of the following would be good ways to make your presentation relevant and interesting? [choose 2]
B "You know, I remember exactly how it felt to be a junior salesperson like you."
C "I think you'll find that what I tell you today may change how you think about the purpose of a website."

4. How can you make your audience feel that your presentation is about *them*? [choose all that apply]
B Give examples from their work.
C Use people's names.
E Mention information that they have told you beforehand.

5. By asking questions, you will make people feel like _____, not just _____.
B participants / listeners

6. Which of the following are good ideas once you finish your presentation? [choose all that apply]
A Ask people to send feedback by email.
D Stay to answer questions.
E Send people a summary of your presentation.