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.”
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.