

Patricia Fripp

HOW TO PRESENT TO

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

WITHOUT BEING TERRIFIED

Frippicism: "The key to career success is to learn to sell yourself and your ideas to your senior management."



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How to Present to Senior Management Without Being Terrified

The key to career success is to learn to sell yourself and your ideas to your senior management.

It's no secret. The higher up the corporate ladder you go, the more important your public speaking skills become.

If you have your sights set on increased responsibility with the position and the salary that goes with it, you will need to position yourself ahead of the crowd. At all stages of your career, it's vital to sell yourself, your ideas, your value, and your ability. To position yourself for promotion, you need to learn what it takes to sell yourself and your ideas to senior management. That requires high-level public speaking skills. Learn from these presentation tips and techniques.

Perhaps you're already speaking up in team meetings and getting your ideas across effectively. If so, how do you feel about facing a room full or even just five of senior management around a boardroom table, all staring at you? The same feelings apply to virtual meetings.

What is different? Simply, the stakes are higher.

All business communications are important; however, with senior management as your audience, you are in the hot seat. They are going to accept or reject the recommendations on which you, your department, or your team have worked so hard.

Weeks or months of your team's or committee's work depend on your few minutes. Who wouldn't be nervous?

Don't worry. You are human. That is a perfectly natural way to feel.

Remember, they can't see how you feel, only how you look and act.

You want your senior leaders to focus on and consider your proposals, not your anxiety. You'll look cool and collected when you follow these suggestions for dealing with senior management.

Seven Fripp Dos

- 1. Open with your recommendation.** Don't make your senior-level audience wait to find out *the purpose of your presentation*.
- 2. Describe the benefits of adopting your recommendation.** Make these benefits seem vivid and obtainable.
- 3. Describe the costs, and frame them in a positive manner.** If possible, show how not following your recommendations will cost even more.
- 4. List your specific recommendations, and keep them on target.** Wandering generalities will lose their interest. You must focus on the bottom line. Report on the deals, not the details. Naturally, any questions they ask you will have the specifics they need.
- 5. Deliver with *piece-of-the-pie* eye contact.** You will be more persuasive and believable. It is fine to have notes. In person or virtually, however, you cannot make good eye contact if you are reading your notes rather than just referring to them.
- 6. Be brief.** The fewer words you use to get your message across, the better. Jerry Seinfeld says, "I will invest an hour taking an eight-word sentence down to five." That's because he knows it will be funnier. In your case, shorter is more memorable and repeatable. You will always receive appreciation for being clear, concise, and finishing ahead of time.
- 7. Practice.** A report to senior managers is not a conversation; it must, however, sound conversational. Once you have your notes,

practice by speaking out loud to an associate or when you are driving to work, taking a walk, or, at my favorite place to rehearse, on the treadmill. Make sure you are familiar with what you intend to say. It is not about being perfect. It is about being personable. Remember, they do not know what you intended to say, so if your remarks do not come out exactly as you rehearsed, do not worry. As Oscar winner Sir Michael Caine said, "Rehearsal is the work; performance is the relaxation."

Four Fripp Don'ts

1. **Don't begin creating with PowerPoint®.** If you use slides, create them after your presentation is created on a white board or flip chart. Add your initial scripting, and go through your presentation out loud.
2. **Don't try to memorize the whole presentation.** Memorize your opening, key points, and conclusion. Practice enough so you "know it so well you can forget it." This helps retain your spontaneity.
3. **Never, never read your presentation, not from a script and not from PowerPoint slides.** Your audience will go to sleep. It is fine to have bullet points to keep you on track. When you invest more time on creating your content and delivery and less on working on the PowerPoint, you will feel more comfortable and confident.
4. **Don't wave or hop. For live presentations, don't let nervousness or enthusiasm make you too animated.** Don't distract from your own message with unnecessary movement. In a virtual meeting, make sure your background is tidy and does not distract. If you are using a virtual background, make sure you have a green screen or parts of your body will disappear when you move.

Where to Begin?

1. **What is the topic or subject of your report?** Be clear about your premise, central theme, or biggest idea and recommendation. How can you introduce it in one sentence? Make sure all your talking points reinforce your premise. Be clear in your mind and with your audience about what action, approval, or budget you want from them.
2. **Why is your topic important enough to be on the busy agenda of senior-level managers?** The clearer you are, the more simply you can explain your idea or recommendation, the more they will be clear. Remember, a confused mind says "No."
3. **What questions will your executive audience need answers to?** Can you anticipate your leaders' probable questions? If so, build the answers to their questions into your presentation. Most executives will feel comfortable interrupting any time they want clarification. Don't get flustered. Just smile and answer. Or say, "The answer will be clarified if you can give me five more minutes."
4. **Present your recommendations.** When addressing senior management, be aware they are charged with increasing sales, reducing costs, expanding markets, becoming more competitive, reinforcing core values, retaining top talent, and increasing shareholder value. Where will your recommendation fit?

How does this investment compare to other investments we have already made? "As a comparison, the initial cost of the pilot for all three offices is 2% of what we spend on plant maintenance in the Executive Briefing Center."

Senior leaders do not know how you feel. They see how you act.

Frippicism: "Act as if you are confident, and you will be confident."

Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE is a Hall of Fame keynote speaker, executive speech coach, and sales presentation and online learning expert. She was elected the first woman President of the National Speakers Association.

In Patricia's career, she has delivered over 3,500 presentations as well as hundreds of virtual presentations. Companies hire Patricia to help them drive more business by polishing their sales conversations and presentations and to help leaders inspire action and build commitment through their words. Clients of her speech coaching include corporate leaders, technical and sales professionals, and seasoned professional speakers. Her online learning platform—*FrippVT Powerful, Persuasive Presentations*—is embraced as a "must-have" by speakers and companies worldwide.

When her business was mostly keynote speaking, Meetings and Conventions magazine named her "One of the 10 most electrifying speakers in North America."

As a presentation skills expert, Kiplinger's Personal Finance wrote, "Learning presentation skills from Patricia Fripp is one of the best ways to invest in you."

She is the author of *Get What You Want; Make It, So You Don't Have to Fake It!*; and *How's That Presentation Coming Along?* Patricia is the co-author of *Deliver Unforgettable Presentations* and *Speaker's Edge* and a contributing author of *Speaking Secrets of the Masters and Insights into Excellence*.

Patricia has been named "One of the Top 30 Women in Sales" and "One of the Top 30 Global Gurus."



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Memorable Messages • Powerful Presentations • Successful Sales

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