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5 tips that add value to your words

By Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE

Some presenters think that if they talk longer, they are giving more value or getting their point across more effectively, when in reality, audiences of any size, from 5 to 500, are eager for content presented as efficiently and memorably as possible.

One of my friends was a sales manager at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. He was a great salesperson one-on-one, but now he was facing a group of ten. "I'm very nervous," he confessed. "How do I sell to so many people?" A professional association was debating whether to bring their convention to the city. Below are the five tips I gave him to make his message memorable:

Build rapport

His audience was convention committee. When building rapport with an audience, you need to emotionally and intellectually connect. Think of it this way: logic makes you think, emotion makes you act. You intellectually connect with your logical argument through specifics, statistics, charts and diagrams. You emotionally connect through eye contact, stories, content that creates a visual in the audience's mind, and "you"-focused (rather than "I"-focused) language. This is incredibly important if you want to sell your ideas, a product or service.

Don't be polite...get to the point.

"Let's step backwards," I said. "How long do you have for your presentation?"

"Seven minutes."

I asked him how he would start if left to his own resources. The sales manager took a deep breath and began, "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I hope you're enjoying our hospitality. I know..." and he was off on a stream of platitudes.

"You're polite," I told him when he finished, "and that's not a bad habit, but you don't have much time. They know who you are because you've been entertaining them. They know where you are. Make it about them."

I advised him to say, "Welcome and thank you for the opportunity to host you. In the next seven minutes, you are going to discover why the best decision you can make for your members and your association is to bring your convention to San Francisco and the Fairmont Hotel."

Make your message sound valuable

How valuable does your message sound? Just for fun, I had my friend choose either to rehearse his presentation and time it or transcribe it. He calculated the financial impact of his proposal, and the investment of his prospect, and divided by the length of his presentation. That gave him a dollar value for his words.

Then I asked, "What are you actually 'selling'?"

"Well, it isn't the Fairmont because if they come to San Francisco, they'll definitely use our hotel. I guess I'm selling San Francisco because they are seriously considering San Diego."

Then I asked him a question that rarely gets asked: "How much is it worth to the Fairmont Hotel if you get their business?"

"Half a million dollars," he said.

"Mmm," I said, grabbing my calculator.

"Let's see. Half a million dollars divided by seven minutes-that's \$1,041.66 a second, even when you pause."

Remove fluff and filler

Naturally you want to remove all the unnecessary fluff and filler. For example, avoid clichés like "each and every one of you in the room." How often have you heard presenters say that? It's adding nine unnecessary words! When you have made your message is clear and concise, divide the word count by the amount of time needed to deliver your presentation. Notice how much more valuable each word has become. Make every word count!

Watching the I-focused language, that is seven 'yous' or 'yours' and one 'Fairmont.' He should continue with, "San Diego is a magnificent destination, and you should definitely go there in the future. However, this year you should come to San Francisco because..." and then list the specific reasons.

This is an emotional opening because it's 'you' focused. And because my friend never disparages his competition, he's acknowledging that San Diego is fabulous. He connected emotionally with his audience, and the logical specifics connect him to them intellectually.

It can be argued that those polite opening comments are necessary, because the audience is still settling down and not focused on you. This may be true, but don't let it be an excuse. Go to the front of the room and wait until you have their attention, maintaining a strong, cheerful gaze and willing them to be silent. If needed, state the opening phrase of your comments and then pause until all eyes are focused on you, awaiting the rest of the sentence.

Logic sells, but close with emotion

Continue a presentation with logical incentives, but end with emotion. Remember that last words linger, and your goal is to be memorable.

Finally, I told my sales manager friend, "Imagine years from now when your attendees are sitting around a convention lobby reminiscing about the best conventions they've ever attended, and they talk about their experiences in San Francisco at the Fairmont. And you'll know you were part of that experience because you were on the planning committee."

Persuasive presentations give you a competitive edge. You now have eight tips that add value to your words and make your message memorable. Use my friend's model of how to emotionally connect in the beginning and end of a presentation and intellectually connect in between. Plus, you will be making your words sound more valuable.

Patricia Fripp, CSP, CPAE, Keynote Speaker, Executive Speech Coach, and Sales Presentation Skills Expert, works with organizations and individuals who realize they gain a competitive edge through powerful, persuasive, presentation skills. She builds leaders, transforms sales teams, and delights audiences. Fripp is Past-President of the National Speakers Association. For more information, contact her at www.Fripp.com, (415) 753-6556, @PFripp, or PFripp@ix.netcom.com

Husch Blackwell launches new blog on labor relations issues

Husch Blackwell said it has launched a new blog focusing on legal issues that impact the regional and national labor environment. LaborRelationsLawInsider.com is a free online site to offer news, information and relevant resources to anyone interested in labor relations issues, the firm said.

Partner Terry Potter, a 30-year veteran of labor and employment law, describes the blog as the next step in the firm's ongoing role as a full-service business counselor. "Labor Relations Law Insider is a place where our attorneys with experience and expertise in labor relations will review recent court cases, National Labor Relations Board decisions and how various statutes interact with labor relations," he said. "Since we deal with these issues on a day-to-day basis, the blog is an easy, up-to-date way for companies to find the information and answers they need."

Potter says that the location of the firm's attorneys also gives them a unique vantage point on the topic. "Because our offices include locations throughout the Midwest and eastward, and we represent so many clients with headquarters and operations here, we have in-depth knowledge of the labor issues that have traditionally affected these union-heavy areas over the years -- and what changes the future might hold." In addition to its offices in Arizona and Colorado, Husch Blackwell has two offices in Illinois, four in Missouri, two in Nebraska, two in Tennessee and one in Washington, D.C.

He said the blog is intended to be an interactive process. "It's not just about what we think, but what visitors to the site think as well. We won't just give you the 'what,' but 'what this means to you,' too." In addition to visiting LaborRelationsLawInsider.com, visitors can subscribe to the blog via RSS feed and email. It also is featured in the Employment & Labor section of the LexBlog Network, an online community for the legal field.

Husch Blackwell said it has extensive experience representing a variety of traditional labor and management relations clients, providing strategy and support for the preparation and administration of the collective bargaining process. The firm has successfully guided leading companies in traditional labor arbitrations, negotiations, defense of NLRB allegations, strike preparation and union-prevention campaigns.

Recently, Husch Blackwell's "strong breadth and depth" in labor and employment earned the firm a prestigious Chambers USA 2012 Band 1 ranking in the Kansas City and St. Louis areas. The firm was saluted for its strength in employee discrimination complaints and lawsuits, executive training, wage and hour issues, and employee benefits. When describing its labor and employment attorneys, clients said, "They are solid, responsive and know our business well."