How to Convince the Audience You Really Do Know What You Are Talking About

There are a few people out there who really enjoy getting out in front of large crowds. They feel comfortable looking out over a sea of bobbing heads, visualizing an agreeing nod from everyone. They begin to speak and there is no crackling in their voice. They have the power to communicate orally and they take command. Sound like you? If not, don't worry. Most of us mortals have a hard time speaking to groups of friends, let alone an audience of unknown quantity. Preparation has proven to be the best remedy for this fear of speaking.

PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

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Tips for Preparing Oral Presentations

PLANNING

1. **Focus**: When you plan your presentation, concentrate on what's really important. What is the exact problem? What are the major solutions?
2. **Simplify**: Support your main idea with just a few examples, highlighting at most three points.
3. **Organize**: You may choose to structure your presentation from the following outline.
   - State the main issue
   - Develop your viewpoint with specifics
   - End with a clear summary
   - Handle any questions
   - Make a last statement or request
4. **Dramatize**: Don't just tell it, show it. Find a vivid, memorable way to get your point across. Use visual aids:
   - Graphs
   - Handouts
   - Charts
   - Media
5. **Humanize**: People are more important than things.

VISUAL AIDS

Visual aids augment your spoken message in different ways. Pictures, drawings, and photographs have the potential to make an audience feel the way you do. Verbal material, including cutaways, models, diagrams, and copies of statistics help your audience think the way you do. *See the document: Simple Tips For Effective Handouts*

PREPARE FOR QUESTIONS

Anticipate questions and be prepared to respond to them – not just with more information but with real and relevant examples. As you repeat a presentation and as you become more familiar with different audiences, this should become easier for you to do.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Do your homework ahead of time and know your audience – their needs and their expectations. Tailor your presentation – content, style, and presentation method to respond to audience needs and expectations. A presentation for school administrators may look, sound, and feel very different from a presentation on basically the same content but delivered to classroom teachers. Again, anticipate different questions from these two groups as well. Be prepared to share stories and examples that will resonate with your different audiences.