

Giving a Better Presentation

Is the audience the enemy?

Speaking in public or in front of a group is often considered to be the most stressful thing we can do. Yet it is something that we are often required to do as part of our jobs. The question is "How can we do it better?"

One of the reasons people find it stressful is that it is easy to see the audience as the enemy: a group of people who are watching you, judging you and looking for what you are doing wrong, rather than what you are doing right!

So how can we feel more comfortable in front of a group, and get them to be on our side, rather than constantly feeling that they are somehow against us?

Positioning the audience

There are many techniques that enable us to position ourselves positively in front of an audience, thereby giving us greater confidence. Things such as how we stand, how we breathe, and demonstrating our expertise help us to look, feel and sound as if we know what we are talking about!

Perhaps less well-known are some techniques that enable us to "position the audience" instead - to "get them where we want them", so that they will want to listen and learn from what we have to say.

Wake, shake and take!

If we can "hook" the audience, hold their interest and inspire them then we can be more sure that they are on our side.

Here are 3 ways to do this:

Wake 'em up! - Perhaps your audience is expecting this to be yet another boring presentation that will send them to sleep - so don't let it happen! Give them something to do: ask them to share some information with the person next to them rather than just thinking of it themselves; get them to stand up if they answer yes to your question, rather than just raising their hand; give them an index card and after 5 minutes ask them to write down two things that apply to them from your first 5 minutes. Make them think, respond, act and move!

Shake 'em up! - If you're worried that they will be looking for a flaw in your argument, make sure it can't happen by giving them information that you know will be new to them. Find out what the implications of your information are, and confront them (nicely!) with that information. If you want your audience to listen to you, they need a reason: shake 'em up with fascinating, troubling, astonishing or unavoidable facts, figures and ideas - and they will be all ears to how you think they should deal with it!

Take 'em up! - it's rare for audiences to be inspired by the usual workplace presentation, so what better way for you to stand out? There is nothing quite like having the rapt attention of the whole group who believe that perhaps there is hope for the future! Be honest with them, show the real you behind the work-role, acknowledge the negatives, but let them know that, while it may sound corny, you really do believe that things can be better. Take them up to a level they never expected in a workplace presentation.

In summary: find ways to wake 'em up, shake 'em up and take 'em up and they will say "I wish I could be as confident in front of a group as you are!"