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TRAINING IN MANAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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No more siesta time!

Business presentations can often be boring. We've all dozed off in them at one time or another. But most of us have also experienced this from the other side of the fence: When you are the presenter, how many times have you seen the audience beginning to doze off? If you're honest, it's probably happened more often than you would have liked. Not losing or boring your audience is a tough act to pull off-all presenters find it difficult.

We'd like to show you four simple ideas that will help you hang on to your audience.

Idea 1: Limit Your Subject

Don't bite off more than your audience can chew! The biggest mistake many presenters make is to try to cover too big a subject in too short a time. The quickest way to bore and lose an audience is by rushing from one point to the next at breakneck speed. This is true regardless of the subject: presentations on business strategy, marketing focus and sales results will all suffer the same fate.

In a short talk of ten minutes, two or three main points are all you can expect to get across. Even in longer presentations of around 30 minutes, you will fail if you attempt to cover more than four or five main points.

Idea 2: Distil Your Information

As you prepare your presentation, you should generate as much information as possible-far more than you will ever use. Once you have all this information, think about your presentation's objective. Focusing on your objective will enable you to sift out the gold nuggets of information. This is the information that your audience wants and that you should include.

And what about all the information that doesn't make it into the presentation? Keep it in reserve! It may be invaluable to answer a question from the audience or if you have to change focus because of a previous speaker's comments.

Idea 3: Include Stories and Examples

Everyone loves a story! Nothing gets the attention of an audience quite like a story. If you can't find a story to illustrate what you're saying, always try to give several examples to support each major point-the more real and relevant to your audience, the better

A good way of making these stories and examples memorable is by filling them with names of people-

either real or fictitious-and details-where and when they happened.

Idea 4: Use Familiar Words

The surest way to hold your audience's attention is to use words that are accurate, brief and clear-ABC words. Don't use long and complicated words when simple everyday alternatives are available. Even audiences full of specialists appreciate keeping the technical language down to what is strictly necessary.

And the very best speakers provide plenty of specific, factual detail. Cloudy and vague language will float over the head of an audience, while strong accurate language will connect with your listeners and drive your message home.

So, let's put an end to the boring business presentation! Think about these four ideas and you will find it much easier to keep your audience's attention.

If you'd like to learn more, just sign up for one of our *Effective Business Presentations* courses (available in both English and Spanish). You'll find more information at www.readmatthews.com/opencourses/ocpresentations.html

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