

101

PRESENTATION TIPS

Establishing A Track Record for Truth

Tip 1: Find Commonalities.

People like people who are like them. And people believe and trust people they like. Try to discover attitudes, likes, dislikes, family backgrounds, experiences, personality virtues or quirks, careers, goals, or values that you have in common with others; then emphasize those commonalities. People reason that if you're like them in some ways, you're probably like them in other ways. Therefore, they begin to transfer trust as friend to friend.

Tip 2: Show Concern and Compassion.

People tend to trust people who show concern for them. When they bleed, they want to know others bleed with them. Even companies have to show concern over self-interest in times of crisis. During the Pepsi needle syringe-tampering reports, you may recall the criticism some expressed in the company's handling of that crisis. When the public asked about the possibility of recalls, Pepsi officials embraced logic: the cans were bottled at different plants in different parts of the country; there was no logical patterns for the alleged tampering incidents. No recalls: logical decisions. But Pepsi received criticism not for what they said, but for what they didn't say. The absence of what some believed to be concern about public safety. The same is true on an individual level. People have to feel your concern before they hear your words.

Tip 3: Demonstrate Cooperation with Good Intentions.

To be credible, you must demonstrate that you are acting in good faith to the best of your knowledge and ability. People must believe that you want to cooperate to help them achieve their personal and career goals. People will forgive you for poor judgment, but rarely for poor intentions.

Tip 4: Be Consistent.

We communicate by actions as well as words. We communicate by what we say and what we don't say; by which policies we enforce and which policies we don't enforce; by what we allow work time for and what we don't allow work time for; by what we fund and what we don't fund; by behavior we reward and behavior we punish; by what we do and what we criticize others for doing; by what we ask for and what we're willing to give in return. To be credible, our words have to match our policies, performance, and plans.

Tip 5: Demonstrate Competence.

People flock to experts, star performers, wise decision makers, and winners. People don't intentionally invest their money in poorly performing stock; neither do they want to invest trust in people they doubt can achieve what they claim. To be led, either by words or actions, followers need to have faith in your competence to perform. They want to know you can win the game. They want to know you can finish the project successfully. They want to know you can

turn the company around.

So how do leaders inspire confidence in their abilities while seeming modest and likable as people? They as leaders have to acknowledge accomplishments but avoid arrogance. Difficult, but not impossible. How? The attitude behind the talk turns the tables.

Tip 6: Be Correct.

Few people set out to be incorrect; it's just that when they have missing information, they make assumptions or reason wrongly. Instead of informing, they misinform unintentionally. Whether or not people routinely ask for the source of your information or conclusions, be ready to provide it. If they ask for sources, rather than be offended, welcome such testing questions as credibility checkers.

Why would people want sources for relatively insignificant information? Because we test validity on *all* important matters by considering the source. How do we test the source of important information? By checking the credibility of *all* information coming from that same source. Credibility is circular. Credibility in the insignificant breeds credibility for the significant. Once you're caught in an error, credibility creeps back ever so slowly.

Tip 7: Be Complete.

Are you telling all you know? Recognize the difference between lies, half-truths, omissions, and cover-ups. True, but incomplete, statements can lead to false conclusions; literal truths, when offered without complete explanations, can lead to literal lies. Knowing smiles accompanied by long silences can elicit wrong conclusions. Lying happens in numerous ways. Intentions stand center stage here. Ultimately, questionable intentions cast doubt about character.

Tip 8: Be Current.

Give up outdated data, opinions, and stereotypes. With information overload, data more than two or three years old can't support your decisions. Correct, but outdated, statistics soon become incorrect. Recollect.

Tip 9: Be Clear.

Sometimes the better we understand something the worse job we do of explaining it; our familiarity makes us careless in describing it. It's difficult to remember when we didn't know something that has become second nature. Ambiguity creeps in when we least expect it. Meaning depends on context, tone, timing, personal experience, and reference points.

Back in the days when copier equipment was said to "burn copies," an Army colonel hand-carried an important document to his new assistant and asked her to burn a copy. When the paper did not resurface on his desk in a few days, he discovered that the assistant had recently transferred from a high-security division. She had had the document incinerated. Are you clear? Are you sure? The best test of clarity is the result you see.

Tip 10: Avoid Exaggeration.

Was the score 50 to zip or 30 to 10? Did you have to wait half an hour or half a minute? Did the caller slam down the phone or hesitate to talk? Did the supplier raise the prices on your raw materials 10 percent or 2 percent? Exaggeration makes great humor but destroys credibility.

Tip 11: Evaluate Criticism and Objections.

If you reject or refute criticisms and objections out of hand, without hearing them out and giving yourself time to consider them fully, you lose credibility. People identify you as a reactor rather than a reflective, credible thinker. The more thorough your consideration of contradictory information the more credible your final opinion or decision.

Tip 12: Keep Confidences.

When people know you share personal, confidential matters about others with them, they'll fear you'll do the same thing where they're concerned. Keeping confidences when "nobody would know you told" speaks volumes about character. Those who observe your discretion in deciding to keep quiet about hurtful or personal information involving others bridge to other favorable conclusions about your credibility in times of stress.

Tip 13: Avoid Lying "Offstage."

When you lie to a third person in front of a second person and that second person knows you're lying---for whatever reason---you lose credibility with the second person. Once observers have recognized your willingness to lie to others, they will doubt your truth-telling to them in a tight spot.

Tip 14: Be Sincere and Genuine.

Sincerity is easy to fake and hard to make. That is, people who pretend to be sincere can pitch an earnest plea, look at you with pleading eyes and straight face, and promise plums that dance in your head. But genuineness comes from character and is therefore harder to make. You either are or you aren't. What you experience is what you share. What you value is what you give. What you say is what you believe.

Tip 15: Make Your Appearance Work for You.

Picture yourself lying on the operating table in a hospital emergency room. A guy in sweats and Nikes jogs toward your bedside and says, "I'm Kelly, the brain surgeon. I'll be ready to operate in a moment. Just let me give you this shot first." Would you have a few second thoughts? Appearance counts. Physical appearance, dress, grooming, posture, presence, and poise either underscore credibility or damage it. Look at the part you want to play so others will believe and applaud your lines.

Being Persuasive

Tip 16: Establish Credibility.

People believe people they like, people who are similar to them, people who are trustworthy, and people who have demonstrated expertise. Work on one or all of these to build your credibility with any given group. The higher your credibility, the greater impact your message will have. Aristotle summed it up this way: "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken readily than others; this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided."

Tip 17: Talk About Rewards and Incentives to Those People Who Think in Terms of Payoffs.

Some people wake up every morning looking for ways to make their life better: how to save time, how to save money, how to move ahead in their careers, how to be better managers, how to get their coworkers to like them, how to win the lottery, how to complete a crossword puzzle. If these people are the group you have to win over, highlight the personal and corporate benefits of acting on your ideas.

Tip 18: Talk About Facts and Statistics to Those Who Think Analytically.

These people don't buy cereal without figuring out the cost per ounce. Even if they are persuaded by emotion, they'll ask for the supporting evidence so as not to be embarrassed should anyone ask the reason for their breakfast choices. They don't believe in "soft dollars," "soft skills," or "soft data." Quantify everything.

Tip 19: Talk About the "Bandwagon" to Those Who Like to Jump On It.

Whether to save the effort of thinking for themselves or to meet their needs of belonging, these people pay a great deal of attention to what everyone else is doing. Passwords here include: "The trends show..." "Experts in the field seem to think..." "The leading-edge companies have implemented..." With these people, you need to provide testimonials of what others think of your ideas.

Tip 20: Talk About Obstacles to Be Overcome to Those Who Welcome Challenge and Change.

Some people wake up each morning ready to climb mountains. Tell them they can't do something and they start circulating petitions. Routine bores them. Tell them the system doesn't work, tell them you can't afford something, tell them it's too late or too early for a change--and that's when they'll start to work. Motivate them to act on your ideas by presenting them as obstacles to be overcome. Negative circumstances merely challenge them to climb mountains of

opportunity.

Tip 21: Sell What People Want to Buy

Don't limit your thinking to product and services here. I'm also talking about ideas, policies, concepts, and feelings. Think along two channels: what people *want* and what they *want to avoid*.

Tip 22: Use the Lesser-of-Two-Evils Approach.

If the decision you want from your listener is not particularly pleasant or desirable, consider creating fear about the other alternatives. Outline what happens if they stay with the status quo, what happens if they do X, what happens if their competitors or customers do Y. Your purpose is to get the listener to decide *against* the other options rather than necessarily deciding *for* your option.

The American public makes a similar choice every year at election time.

Tip 23: Use the Jelly Principle.

When I was sick as a child, my mother used to put cough syrup in a spoon of jelly to camouflage the taste. The same principle comes in handy with bitter messages. You may have to wrap them in more pleasing ideas or get them across in more subtle ways.

Tip 24: Let the Decision Maker Hear from the Converted.

Second-hand testimonials are not nearly as effective as the words straight from the mouth of those already converted to your way of thinking. If possible, bring these satisfied users/buyers/believers/beneficiaries to the discussion with you---in person or by letter, video, or satellite. Unscripted and in their own unique way, let them speak to the effectiveness or truth of what you say.

Tip 25: Play on the Power of Your Expertise.

We rarely question our CPA, our neurologist, our air-conditioner repair person when they tell us the causes of our difficulties and recommend solutions. Why? There's power in the perception of specialized expertise. If you establish credentials early in a certain field, people seldom question them. They'll give you the benefit of the doubt on your facts and conclusions more often than not.

Tip 26: Choose Your Timing.

The time to sell roofs is right after a tornado. The time to sell investment expertise is after the stock market takes a drastic upturn or downturn. The time to sell a quality process in your organization is after you've been removed from the bidder's list because of the rising percentage

of defects in your deliveries. Timing is crucial. Ask any politician.

Tip 27: Create a Favorable Atmosphere.

Meeting planners claim that registrants rate educational seminars higher when they're held in resort locations. Job applicants prefer jobs where they are interviewed in plush surroundings. Shoppers shop longer where music plays in the background. Diners linger longer over meals served in comfortable restaurants. So it stands to reason that the principle can work for you.

Tip 28: Stand Up for People to Take You Seriously.

If your office culture is generally laid-back, with people walking in and out to see the boss without appointments, with no-agenda meetings, with "your office or mine" casualness, you may want to get attention to the seriousness or urgency of a problem by changing the atmosphere drastically. Be formal. Do the out-of-the-ordinary. Use a flipchart or overhead. Make it official. A stand-up presentation adds to your authority. Put people on notice that your idea deserves unusual attention.

Tip 29: When There's a Parade, Take the Last Spot.

If you're one of several people trying to persuade your audience to choose among you, ask for the last time slot. By the time the others finish with all their statistics, charts, and promises, the buyers will have grown weary and forgetful. Your presentation will be the last on their mind.

Tip 30: Limit Your Objectives.

Rome wasn't built while they were working on Sicily. You can't accomplish everything at once. Determine your primary objective in presenting your case, and focus your efforts on accomplishing that one goal. If your chief concern is getting your boss to hire three extra people in your department, leave discussions about rearranging the workstations and lobby until another day.

Tip 31: Recognize That People Support What They Help Create.

Rally support for your ideas in a subtle way by asking people to contribute to them. Tell them what you're about, what your goal is; then set about asking for their thinking on the subject before you put together your formal presentation of the idea to the entire group. What figures, resources, or anecdotes can they supply for you? If this plan meets with opposition, what do they think the focus of that disagreement likely will be? If others react negatively, what would they suggest you try as second best?

The White House uses this strategy in building support for major legislation in Congress. They seek out the facts, the opposing views, and the supporting views *before* the vote, not during.

Tip 32: Be Careful About Opening with a Broad Question.

Wrong approach: “So tell me a little about your operations now---what’s automated and what’s not?” First of all, the other person will be reluctant to answer because he or she doesn’t know where the question will be leading. Second, much of the answer would probably be irrelevant to the discussion at hand. Even with the consultative approach, people want to know where you’re trying to lead them. If you start with a question, focus it and give the benefits or the point of knowing the answer.

Tip 33: Cite Your Sources and Ask for Those of Others.

“They” have probably become the most vocal group in our society. “They say” this and “They say” that. When you have credible sources to support your information, cite them. When the other person tosses out objections based on “they says,” ask specifically where those ideas, statistics, policies, or preventative originated. Then, when given a credible source, ask how current the information is.

Tip 34: Vary Your Intensity.

If you intend to build to a passionate appeal, you can't start pit screaming. Consider how the singer begins with a timid croon, builds with up-and-down variations, and finally crescendos to a rousing finale. Do the same with your own delivery.

Tip 35: Increase Your Pace to Increase Comprehension--Up to a Point.

The typical listener thinks about six times faster than the average person speaks. When you want to keep others' attention, you have to increase your speaking rate. Otherwise, they take a mental recess. You don't, of course, want to speak so quickly that you don't articulate. Variety is the key. Slow down for complex technical information (if you can't skip it altogether) and speed up for the remainder of your persuasive points.

Tip 36: Package Ideas Like Products.

People are lazy thinkers if you permit them to be. Make your concept understandable by its packaging. Politicians, policies, and plays are packages like soaps and telephone services. For example, insurance rates, employee compensation, unemployment, and tax incentives can all be packaged as "health-care" issues in Washington. Think beginning, middle, and end (idea, action, implementation) and tie them all together in one packaged concept.

Tip 37: Triple Things--Use Triads and Alliteration.

One of the first lessons in speech writing is the use of triads (groupings of three). If you can add alliteration (repetition of the sound from word to word), so much the better. Our ears love the sound of:

Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Blood, sweat, and tears.

Clearly, quickly, concisely.

Motivate, renovate, captivate.

Pray, prepare, preach.

They want jobs, they want justice, they want respect.

Change the rhythm or omit one word or phrase in any of the above groupings and you lose the impact.

Tip 38: Use Both Rounded and Exact Numbers.

Exact numbers sound more credible: "The number of employees dissatisfied with their paychecks was 51.4 percent" sounds exact, therefore accurate. Rounded numbers, on the other hand, give the appearance of estimations. Yet "slightly over half" is easier to remember than 51.4 percent of the employees surveyed. So which to use if you want the numbers to be both credible and memorable? Use the exact number first, and then round it off with later references.

Tip 39: Never Let Facts Speak for Themselves.

Facts need interpretation. According to Mark Twain, "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics." If you don't believe it, tune in to the next political campaign, people can make facts and numbers mean almost anything. Interpret yours.

Tip 40: Provide Memory Aids.

Listening expert Dr. Lyman K. Steil estimates that the average-knowledge worker listens at an effective rate of 25 percent. Other research shows that after a 10-minute presentation, a typical listener forgets 50 percent of the information heard. After two days, the recall level drops to 25 percent. After a week, the recall drops to about 10 percent. Therefore, you have to help the listener remember your points.

Use metaphors to make concepts easy to recall. Give your listener a personal experience with the concept; that is the idea behind ropes-training for team building in organizations. You can use a mnemonic device for your key points (the three P's of Universal Services: Prepare, Plan, Promote.) You can provide a demonstration model to let the customer get a "feel" for extending his or her memory. Whatever method you choose, work on increasing others' recall of your idea, service, or product.

Tip 41: Don't Ever Read Your Key Points.

When reading, the all-important eye contact is missing. Rapport suffers. Reading, rather than telling your ideas destroys your credibility, sincerity, and enthusiasm. The listener always toys with these thoughts: Who generated these ideas? Doesn't she care enough to learn them? Isn't he

convicted enough to give them from the heart? Why is he afraid to look in the eye? Does she doubt what she's saying? Aren't these fact important enough to remember?

Tip 42: Repeat, Repeat, Repeat.

If nothing else works, try the broken-record technique. If you state your message often enough in a variety of ways, somebody eventually will listen. If you hear something often enough, it becomes part of the atmosphere--like humidity. Repetition forms the core of advertising.

Holding Your Own in Meetings

Tip 43: To Meet or Not to Meet---Study the Question.

How many times have you accepted an invitation to a lunch meeting only to realize that you spent an hour and a half on something that could have been done in a 5-minute phone call or a 10-minute memo? The higher you go, the busier you get. And the meetings you attend must count. If you get a reputation for conducting useless meetings, the busiest and best people won't show up.

If you're asking to attend someone else's typically unproductive meetings, defer with one of the following: "Is attendance mandatory?" "I'm unavailable. Is my attendance important enough to change my schedule?" "Could I send a representative?" "Would you mind if I offer my input in writing or by phone?" Others will generally surmise that you expect meeting time to be well spent.

Tip 44: Call a Meeting Only for the Right Reasons.

When you call a meeting, make it significant and be prepared. In a client situation, you may have been working on a deal for months that will either thrive or nosedive on a single meeting. The higher you go in your own organization, the more expectations others have for your abilities to conduct yourself in a meeting--either as a participant or leader. Take things seriously.

Skip the meeting if you have nothing special to discuss, if you don't need others' input, if you have already made up your mind about what you plan to do, or if getting others involved would only complicate your plan.

Do call a meeting if you need to present information to a lot of people quickly and you don't want to write it, if you want input from others on your idea, if you want to gain "buy in" from the team, or if you want to motivate and energize the team about the idea.

So how about the wrong reasons? Meeting as a substitute for work. Rubber-stamping a decision. Complaining. Demonstrating power to make everybody show up. Because joy and misery love company, sorting out true motivations may require some soul-searching.

Tip 45: Set an Agenda.

Some people think that agendas lend too much structure to a meeting, that people can't be spontaneous, or that the atmosphere will be too formal. Nonsense. That's like saying if you plan for a vacation by packing the right clothes, arranging for transportation, and deciding on a destination that you can't relax and be spontaneous along the way.

If you're leading the meeting, set an agenda. Use active verbs, summarize in a sentence the issue at hand, and let the group know what you expect on each issue--"for discussion only," "for their information only," "to collect your data," or "for decision." Whether you stay right with the agenda or take a few minutes' detour, having an agenda will give others a little peace of mind that the meeting is going somewhere.

Tip 46: Start with the Most Important Idea or Issue and Work Backward.

There's a great temptation to begin with the routine matters--the FYI items. But the all-too-frequent problem is that when you save the most controversial and important item until the last, you run out of time. Maybe a Freudian move?

Tip 47: Own the Setting.

If you plan a clandestine affair, go for a dark bar with soft music. If you want an energized group, go for a well-lit poolside table. If you want an informal chitchat session, try somebody's office. If you want an equal, on-target exchange, look for a conference table in neutral territory. If you want authority and a no-nonsense atmosphere, schedule the boardroom. If you want to play host-and-guest, provide coffee and snacks in a parlor. Whatever your choice and purpose, if you're in charge, be comfortable with and "own" the surroundings.

Tip 48: Stay Out in Front if You Intend to Lead.

Nothing frustrates more meeting attendees than having a supposed leader who doesn't lead. State your role at the beginning and what authority the group will have. Do you intend simply to facilitate a discussion? Will you let them set the process and agenda? Do you intend to tell them how you will discuss each idea and come to a decision--consensus or vote? Do you intend to have the final say or will the group have authority to make the final decision? Are you going to keep the discussion moving or abdicate that responsibility to others randomly? Are you going to be a silent observer on each idea or do you plan to put in your two cents worth? Are you strong enough to stop a feeding frenzy should the stronger people begin to attack the weaker person's ideas? When the group starts spinning its wheels, be there with a comment such as: "Where do we go from here?" "What's the solution?" "Which way do you want to do?" "Let's back up and redefine the problem."

Tip 49: Encourage Participation from Others---If You Want It.

Some meetings serve only to inform. If that's your purpose, tell the audience what you're going to tell them and be done with it. But if your intention is to generate ideas, get feedback, or come to a decision, you may need to take a more active role in encouraging participation.

Try these techniques: Ask for a show of hands on an issue. Toss out an open-ended question and

see who takes the ball. Toss out an open-ended question and suggest that you go around the circle and let everyone give his or her views individually. Present your question or issue in writing, give all members a copy, and ask them to jot their responses quickly. Take up the responses and read them to the group for reactions. Invite nonparticipants by name: “Carl, we haven’t heard from you--what do you think?” Finally, you might assign two or three people a devil’s advocate role and ask them to toss out any objections that they can think of.

Participation takes effort, and some people are too preoccupied, uninterested, or tired to contribute without encouragement.

Tip 50: Don’t Set People Up to Refute You.

If you’ve already made a decision and intend simply to present the decision at a meeting, say so. If you still have doubt that your decision or planned course of action is the best, say so. But not like this: “I’ve decided to do X unless someone has a serious objection.” Few will have the chutzpah to speak up. If you want to get feedback whether or not you plan to change your mind, try something like this: “I’ve decided to do X. What do you think the fallout will be from our customers/employees/management?” or “I plan to proceed with Y; what positives and negatives do you think I might have to deal with?”

Tip 51: Discuss Taboo Issues Anonymously.

If you know certain issues are hot topics and politically dangerous to careers, you have to work hard at creating a safe environment. Consider doing an anonymous survey on the issues and simply “reporting the results” for discussion. Or, you can quote anonymous sources from the grapevine. Say: “Someone has expressed the fear that...How do you think we can handle that fear?” “Other people have stated that they don’t intend to...What would make people feel that way? What suggestions do you have for convincing them otherwise?”

Tip 52: Participate; Don’t Pout.

Even if you didn’t want to attend and “you’re there,” be there. Listen to what’s going on rather than fidget with your paperwork, glance at your watch, or roll your eyes. Your body language can speak volumes to those who think the meeting is important and do want your ideas.

Tip 53: Summarize Frequently.

Whether or not you see your official role as the summarizer or leader, if no one takes on that role, do so. To keep the discussion moving on target, somebody had to recap what’s been said and point out the next topic for discussion.

Tip 54: Call for a Process Check Occasionally.

At times, the group process will stall. You’ll be talking in circles, covering the same territory. You’ll hear tempers flare. You’ll feel that people are under personal attack. You’ll notice that you are deciding, undecideding, and redeciding the same issues. Be the one who calls attention to

such breakdowns: “We don’t seem to be getting anywhere. Let’s see where we got off track. We had started to brainstorm the Y issue. Does somebody have a more effective suggestion for moving us along?”

Tip 55: Don’t Digress, Ramble, or Sidetrack.

Determine that you’ll not be part of the biggest meeting problem of all. Stay on target. If you can’t remember the issue, jot yourself a note as the group moves from agenda item to item and refer to it often. Not only is the agenda topic important, but also you should keep track of where you are in the process of dealing with each topic. Are you into the overview? The analysis? The idea-generation phase? Suggesting solutions? Testing agreement on the proposed solutions? Don’t be two or three steps behind everyone else.

Tip 56: Omit War Stories.

While they have an audience of admirers, some people fall to the temptation of telling war stories, sharing inside jokes, and recounting wonderful things they once did. Unless time is of no importance to the rest of the group, don’t.

Tip 57: If you Don’t Have Something to Say, Don’t Say It.

Participating doesn’t mean you should necessarily feel obligated to comment on every issue. If someone hands you the baton and you have nothing to contribute, pass it on: “I think everybody has already expressed my views.” “I don’t have an opinion one way or the other.” “I don’t know a thing about the subject and don’t want to confuse the issue.” “Thanks, I’ll pass.” People will love you.

Tip 58: Don’t Set a Pattern of Expressing the “Downside.”

Yes, you will disagree from time to time and make a valuable contribution by expressing that differing viewpoint. But don’t make it a pattern. Offer solutions and encouragement when the others get down, dumb and defeated.

Tip 59: Disagree Without Being Disagreeable.

Never let yourself become a victim of “groupthink,” a condition in which group harmony becomes more important than results. If the purpose of a meeting is to generate ideas and get input, by all means speak up when you disagree. Just don’t be disagreeable. The difference is attitude.

Tip 60: Don’t Invalidate Others’ Feelings.

Examples: “Jim, I don’t know why you’re so punchy about that.” “Jennifer, there’s no reason to get so defensive.” “It’ll be okay, Javier--really, it will.” To say or imply that people don’t have a

right to their feelings makes them robots. People do not live by logic alone.

Tip 61: Use Another's Question As Your Platform.

An excellent way to get a message across without having to hog the floors is to look at someone's question as a platform--an invitation to speak up. Have your prepared message ready and look for the opportunity to step in when someone raises the appropriate question. You'll be accomplishing your goals on someone else's time.

Tip 62: Be Flexible on the Issues.

We're not talking about flip-flops like the politicians make--whatever the polls support today they "believe" tomorrow. Instead, be open to the facts and flexible in your feedback. The purpose of meetings--most staff meetings anyway--is to exchange ideas. If someone presents facts and sways your opinion, don't hesitate to change your position. That's not being wimpy; it's democratic.

Tip 63: Listen to What's Going On.

Consider listening to be more than the absence of talking. It takes careful attention. And listening increases in difficulty as the number grows from one person to a group of individuals all competing for airtime. Listen and interpret so that you're not the one who's always asking for a repeat of issues already discussed and clarified.

Tip 64: Remain Seated if You Want to Emphasize That You're Tossing Out Ideas "Off the Cuff."

Bringing up an idea while seated plays down your forethought and preparation. It conveys that the ideas are spontaneous and relevant to the issue at hand. Your position says that you're on equal footing with the rest of the group and that you encourage give-and-take. As a result, you'll probably get feedback, pros and cons, agreement and disagreement.

Tip 65: End With Impact: Don't Just Fade Away.

If you're presenting an idea, don't limp away with a sputter. Don't simply drop your eyes, tune out with body language, or let others grab the floor and run away with it. Bring the discussion to closure. Summarize your idea, the pros and cons mentioned, any decision made, and suggest the next follow-up step. Also take responsibility for the fate of the entire meeting. Do your part to make it successful. If the meeting is unproductive and disruptive, decide on the corrective action you'll take next time to change the dynamics.

Tip 66: Don't Sound Like a Broken Record.

Present your idea and support it. After a fair hearing, if the group nixes it, move on. Bring that discussion to an end and meet the next agenda item head on. Nothing irritates others more than

having someone continue to bring up a pet proposal or peeve and whine, whine, whine.

Tip 67: Withhold Your Ideas Until Last if You Want to Encourage Others' Input.

This strategy makes sense if you're in a position of power to make the final decision. If you state your views first, your team may lapse into groupthink and let the matter pass without expressing concerns or opposing views. When that's the case, toss out the issue, minus your opinion, and ask for others' reactions first. The responses may be more honest.

In any case, don't announce your decision or plan in such a way that people have to "refute" or "oppose" you to give you feedback. If you want feedback and forewarning of the difficulties, make it easy for people to speak their minds.

Answering Questions So People Understand and Remember What You Say

Tip 68: Answer One Question at a Time; Avoid Multiples.

When someone asks you multiple questions in one large chunk, you have several choices: (1) Answer all of them. (2) Pick one or two to answer. (3) Lump them all together and give a general answer. Examples: "You've asked three good questions. For the sake of time, let me deal with only the last one...." "Whoa--I don't know if I can remember all those. Let me pick out a couple to respond to...." "Your questions really all point to one concern, I think: Do we know how to Y? I can answer in a word--yes."

Tip 69: Stop Your Own Monologue Answers.

Long-winded answers irritate as much as long-winded questions. If you intend to wax on about an issue, seek a group platform where the audience knows you intend to give a speech and grants you the privilege. If your answer runs longer than 30 to 45 seconds, you're no longer in a dialogue; it's a monologue. If you feel you're going on too long and haven't finished what you intended to say, pace yourself by stopping to ask the other person for some reaction to what you've just said--do they agree, disagree, not care, have different information? Then, after you listen to their comments, deliver your next point on the earlier answer.

Tip 70: Turn a Negative Question into a Benefit Statement.

A customer asks, "Why do you have so much red tape associated with these service agreements?" "Benefit" answer: "Why does having a list of all the company liaisons benefit you: Well, let's say Kathy in your word processing department calls for service. Within seconds, we can check the file, verify her as an authorized contact, and answer her question while she's on the line--without waiting for a callback. You're doing the paperwork up front in providing us names of liaisons saves you time when you have a problem and need service immediately."

Tip 71: Bridge from the Questioner's Agenda to Yours.

If you don't want to answer the question you're asked, bridge to your own points with one of the following: "I appreciate your question, but more to the point in our organization, I think, is the issue of X. The X issue involves..." or "A more fundamental issue than that in your question is..." or "The larger question than the one you raise is..." Chase your own rabbits.

Tip 72: Know When Flippant Answers Are Out of Line.

Having a sense of humor is an advantage in any situation, but flippant answers about serious issues or during a time crunch frustrate people. Some people find themselves tossing out humor when they can't face issues squarely. Try to identify those times when you're using humor as an avoidance technique. Recognize that even humor, however generally welcome and refreshing, has a time and a place.

Tip 73: Forget Feedback if You Want to Show Confidence in Your Answer.

In situations with your superiors, to end a question with "Did I answer your question?" or "Did I cover what you wanted to know?" makes you appear insecure, lacking confidence in your ability to answer. Give the best answer you can and wait for your superior to assume his or her question was unclear or inadequate. If the question is rephrased, make another attempt to answer it.

Tip 74: Use Verbal Stalls with Care.

As a lecturer or instructor, you may have learned to reinforce questioners or give yourself thinking time with comments such as "That's a good question" or "I'm glad you brought up that point." But when talking one on one, these comments may sound patronizing. And comments such as "As I mentioned earlier today in the staff meeting..." can sound like a verbal slap on the hand and a reprimand for not listening. They destroy rapport with your listener. Be silent with a reflective gaze rather than stall with judgmental phrases that sound as though you're about to hedge, make something up, or respond with great reluctance.

Tip 75: Remember That the Whole Performance Counts.

When it comes to questions, style is equal to substance. Your competence can be communicated in the clarity, resourcefulness, and conciseness of the content; in your delivery of the answer---with courtesy, confidence, composure, concern; and finally, in the results you achieve with your answer. Substance plus style equals success.

Negotiating So Everyone Feels Like a Winner

Tip 76: Avoid the Term *Negotiate* When Possible.

The word *negotiate* connotes a winner and a loser, or at best a compromise between two dissatisfied people. Instead of "negotiating" use phrasing such as "come to an agreement," "work out a plan," or "arrive at a workable solution." Wording goes a long way in establishing a friendly atmosphere where everybody feels like a winner.

Tip 77: Consider Several Kinds of Goals Before You Begin Discussions.

To make sure you don't get sidetracked in talking, identify several different kinds of goals: your primary goal, your immediate goals, your long-term goals, your "nice to have," and your safeguards. Within each of these frameworks, set ranges. What is the "best" you can expect and what is the "worst" position you can accept? Keep all in mind as you work toward agreement.

Tip 78: Research Your Position and the Situation.

Take the time and make the effort to support your position or requests. Read. Gather statistics. Talk to experts. Survey others for majority opinions. When you get ready to talk, you'll have adequate facts and opinions to support what you want done. And the more you know, the better your position to negotiate a win for everybody involved.

Tip 79: Set Up a Cooperative Atmosphere.

When the other person feels like a loser in your discussions, you'll worsen your own position. Yes, work to get what you need, but work also to get the other person what he or she needs. Body language, tone, and word choice go a long way in establishing cooperation rather than competition.

Tip 80: Give Something at the Very Beginning.

When you start a discussion, be gracious enough to offer something for the good of the others involved: give them a small gift, buy them dinner, spend extra time with them, give attention to their hobby or family, or concede a point. Thoughtfulness in any of these ways returns to dividends. Giving something makes the other person feel as though he or she should reciprocate.

Tip 81: State Your Needs Up Front and Ask the Other Person to Do the Same.

You can both investigate invalid assumptions and find common areas of agreement before you tackle more difficult issues. Often people are surprised--pleasantly--that people's wants and needs are easier to satisfy than they first assumed.

Tip 82: Mention *Everything* You Want Sooner, Not Later.

If you delay in mentioning a key issue until later in the discussion, chances are the other person will consider your attempt to be deceptive. To avoid casting doubt on your intentions, start with all the issues on the table.

Tip 83: Bring Success Stories to the Table.

As you begin discussions about conflicts or needs, suggest that both of you relate ways you've seen other people solve the same problem or conflict you're facing. Tossing out these stories as alternatives offers a starting point for your own situation in a "safe" way--sharing them reminds both people that success is possible.

Tip 84: Make Good Eye Contact as You Negotiate.

If you avoid eye contact or look at the other person only briefly as you talk, that person may interpret your lack of contact as evasiveness, dishonesty, incompetence, or lack of conviction. To show your honesty and openness, look at people directly.

Tip 85: Start on the Less Important Issues and Work Toward the More Difficult.

You'll gain momentum toward agreement, and you'll have more time invested in finding a resolution. The more "success" you have in turning each minor point to a mutual advantage, the more emotional strength you'll gain to work on the more complex issues.

Tip 86: Get Others to Invest in Agreement.

The more time, money, or effort people have spent in negotiating, the more likely they will continue trying to come to agreement. They hate to think all that work, money, and frustration, or delay has amounted to nothing. The more time they spend working with you to hammer out an agreement, the more committed they will be to working out any problems that crop up along the way.

Tip 87: Start with Goals, Then Move to Solutions.

If you start with solutions to a problem and one or both of you can't accept the stated solutions, you may remain at odds forever. If, on the other hand, you state only your goals or motivations, then you can either accept or reject solutions as necessary and still come to an agreement that allows both of you to meet your goals.

Tip 88: Adopt a Brainstorming Technique to Generate Solutions.

Once you have stated goals or motivations, then generate possible solutions together as a team rather than as adversaries. After you have a list of possible solutions, select the best two or three solutions and focus on those. Finally, work out the details of each of those solutions and select the best.

Tip 89: Substitute "We" for "You and I."

Let language imply your intention to work out an agreement to everyone's advantage. Examples: "What would we have to do to get X to happen?" "What if we changed our criteria for hiring to include only five years' experience?" "How can we design this schedule so your people don't

have to work overtime and so our people can meet the customer's deadline?"

Tip 90: Tag the Other Person's Unalterable Positions.

As you brainstorm solutions and test the details, tag unalterable positions the other person mentions or implies. Determine the difference between "won'ts" and "can'ts." Once you tag the unalterables, you'll know how much leeway you really have in coming to agreement.

Tip 91: Ask for More Than You Expect.

First, you might be surprised and get everything that you want. Additionally, you allow yourself room to move--trading coupons for other issues you want to buy during the discussion. Finally, you have some spare coupons to give to the other person to make him or her feel like a winner also.

Tip 92: Negotiate by "The Golden Rule."

Treat others with the same respect for their best interests as you would like to have shown for your own best interests. This rule should set the stage and raise and lower the curtain on any successful discussion.

Putting Your Best Body Forward

Tip 93: Lower Your Pitch to Sound More Authoritative and Credible.

We generally use musical terms to categorize people's voices: soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass. People with a high-pitched voice give the impression of being nervous, immature, lacking in confidence, or even slightly emotional and hysterical. People with low pitches sound confident and competent.

You can modify your own voice once you become aware of your pitch; voice coaches and self-help tapes and books tell you exactly how to effect and practice this change. If you want to make it to the board room, adopt the lower hushed tones most often heard there.

Tip 94: Speak at a Slower Rate to Convey Seriousness, Authority, and Thoughtful Deliberation.

A slow rate of speech implies well-chosen words and underscores the import of the message. The pace give a listener time to contemplate what's being said and attach the appropriate significance.

Tip 95: Speak at a Faster Rate to Convey Excitement, Enthusiasm, and Energy.

A faster rate creates interest and demands attention. The pace makes listeners work hard at hearing and translating what's being said, but prevents opportunity for their minds to wander. They have to "listen up" to stay up.

Tip 96: Use the Appropriate Volume.

Loudness has become synonymous with vulgarity and unruliness; a soft volume has come to mean shyness, nervousness and even incompetence. Stay away from these two extremes.

Tip 97: Avoid Mannerisms and Toys When You Talk.

Watch trying to talk with a pen, pencil, paper clip, toothpick, or gum in your mouth. Other annoying habits include scratching your head, jerking a knot in your tie or scarf, jingling money or keys, strumming your fingers, twirling your pen or stapler or letter opener, clearing your throat, or snapping your fingers. Besides making it more difficult to understand you, these trinkets and mannerisms detract from an image of authority.

Tip 98: Place Your Office Furniture So That People Respect Your Personal Space.

If people seem to "lean over" and around you as they work, consider your own work space and equipment or desk items. Are they functionally placed so people who interact with you can reach what they need without invading your sense of space? Either use the "obstacles" to reinforce the personal space you need or remove them to create an open, inviting space for others to enter.

Tip 99: Respect Status with Your Eye Contact.

The person with more authority has the privilege or responsibility of making or breaking eye contact. If you continue to stare belligerently after someone has broken eye contact and "dismissed" you, your behavior may be considered defiant and rude.

Tip 100: Don't Point Your Finger.

People often associate this gesture with an authoritarian in their life--a scolding parent or teacher or boss. Most people are turned off by a wagging finger in their face.

Tip 101: Tell Your Body What Mood You're *Supposed* To Be In.

When a person feels sexy or romantic, the voice takes on a different pitch, the breathing rate changes, the eyes flirt, and the gestures and movement become more fluid. Or when an individual feels laid-back and informal, the voice seems to yawn with little or no energy, the eyes dim, the movements become more haphazard. All that coordination between mood and body is fine--unless the mood is inappropriate for the time, place, or relationship.