



Getting your Messages Across with Ease

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Body movement and voice projection are the two most powerful forces for effective communication in presentations.

Fifty-five percent of communication is nonverbal and words matter little; with 38% of the message delivery down to volume, pitch and rhythm of the voice, leaving just 7% dependent on the actual content.

A key study conducted in 1970 analysed the relative contribution of verbal and nonverbal signals, and found that all types of nonverbal cues combined – especially body posture – had 4.3 times the effect of verbal cues. While these nonverbal signals are often so subtle that we are not consciously aware of them, research has identified several different types including facial expression, eye gaze, gestures, body language and posture, tone of voice and appearance. They reveal who we are and impact on how we are perceived by others.

When giving a presentation, it's important to match content with physical expression in what I call the three Vs; *Verbal, Vocal and Visual*. If tone, nuance, or stance is unaligned, there is a perceived inauthenticity with the message which will come across as insincere or fake.

Given that more than half of a successful presentation is dependent on what one reveals visually with the body, hands and arms, getting your movements right is more vital than focusing on the message. In fact, the message, words and full self-expression flow more fluidly together when your outer movements match your inner intentions.

Notice, for example, when you make spoken statements, how you are able to show what you are telling by making easy-to-recognise symbols and images with your fingers, facial expressions, hands and arms to further clarify the message. The audience will see the message – even before you open your mouth – and will retain and recall it better.

No matter how often you have presented, find something different and new to speak about each time. Draw on the audience, the location, your own mood or events to keep the presentation fresh.

Whether you are speaking with two people, or 200, always talk one-to-one. For large audiences, find one person and begin your sentence to them – move your gaze through the audience then come back and

find another, ideally a person who is also giving you attention and positive energy. Do this in a structured way by dividing the audience up into a grid pattern.

If you get lost, don't say out loud, "Where was I?" Include the audience with something like, "Where do we go from here?" or "Let me go back over what we've been talking about." Use it as an opportunity to recap and include the audience. Just like the strategy of moving through a skid, going more deeply into the skid brings one right out of it.

No matter what you have to say, practice backing up each point you make with one example and one application before moving on to your next point. Your audience will more easily understand and remember what you said. The best speakers tell their audiences what they have told them, what they are telling them and what they will be telling them. Indeed, there is value in repetition, particularly if the same point is made with slight nuances in vocal and visual expression and verbal content. Saying the same thing in different ways will also enable you to 'think on your feet' and speak more spontaneously.

When you are making an important point in your presentation and you would like to come from a place of deepest authority in your vocal expression, direct the sound of your voice down towards the base of your spine to demonstrate that you mean what you are saying. If you allow your voice to trail upwards at the end of the sentence as though you were asking a question, it could be interpreted as uncertainty by those who are sensitive to the tone in your voice.

There's no greater thrill than confidently presenting a well researched and rehearsed presentation, giving that information to the audience and seeing, feeling and hearing exactly the response you planned for. It's an adrenalin surge of the best kind.

For over 20 years, Dr Gary Wohlman has been training people from around the world in the art of effective communication. To find out more, visit www.mypresentationdoctor.com, or phone 0433 126 019.