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Presentations Newsletter (1/23/2008) Featured Articles by

Hello, Are You Out There?

Audio conferences aren't phone conversations, however, people often treat them like they are, says Diane Diresta, an internationally recognized expert on the fine art of public speaking and a speech and presentation coach. "Just because people are meeting on the phone doesn't mean that it's less formal," she says. "Meeting via phone shouldn't be any different than when you are meeting in person."

If people think of an audio meeting as just another phone call, Diresta says they usually aren't as prepared as they should be and don't organize their thoughts as they would in a formal presentation. They may not have a clear agenda or stick to the point, which, in turn, may make them lose control of the call.

Diresta offers some guidelines for successful audio conferences:

Test phones before the meeting and have a backup plan. Don't assume technology will run smoothly. Try not to use a cell phone if you have a land-line available. Cell phones don't work well with speakers.

Introduce people at the beginning. Many times people don't position the call so it isn't clear who is doing the talking or how the meeting will progress.

Ask people to use the mute button during the presentation; it will eliminate distractions.

Use an agenda. Give the people an agenda at the beginning of the call after you introduce yourself. The agenda should have a clear focus or purpose statement and it should be a document so that people can follow along and know exactly where you are taking them.

Facilitate. A facilitator is necessary especially when you open the discussion to questions and answers. For example, a facilitator can keep the call focused and remind people to identify themselves before asking questions. Note: the person doing the presentation can be the facilitator.

Don't assume everyone is 100 percent present. Many times people are tempted to do other things while on an audio conference. They check their emails, straighten their desks, or drift off. **Keep the presentation interactive so that you're checking in with the people to make sure they pay attention. For example, ask them to take notes.**

Communicate effectively. "Your body language is more than half the message so you're missing all of those cues with an audio conference," says Diresta. "As a result it's very hard to gauge and engage compared to face-to-face. In audio conferencing, your voice and your words are 100 percent of the message so you need to use your voice more effectively."

Use word pictures, stories, and analogies. "Since you're missing the visual, you need to create the visual with your voice," says Diresta. "The more that you use vivid language and word pictures, the clearer your message and the more engaged and stimulated your audience will be."

Sit up when speaking. If you are soft-spoken, Diresta recommends that you stand up during the call. "It immediately adds more energy and power to the voice," she says.

Use voice and subject changes because people tune out very quickly with audio. Speak with inflection, not in a monotone voice. "The more changes you make, the more you will stimulate their attention," she says. "The more you stay the same, the more they will tune out. Tell stories, get feedback, and ask questions. In training, we instruct that you do something different every seven minutes."

Use pauses instead of fillers. If you start using "ah" and "um" people will be focus on that instead of your message.

Use words to sound out letters when spelling. For example, say, "S as in Sam."

Employ hand-outs and make reference to them. Make the page numbers large and highlight things.

Provide good instructions when referring to your hand-out. "It's not enough to say, 'Now on page three...' because their eyes will be going all over the page," says Diresta. "What you need to do is direct them and use pauses throughout. **You need to be very precise in giving instructions. For example, 'Let's look at page three, [pause] go to the bottom of column two.'** It's another way to keep people with you. Repeat the page number again in case someone missed it the first time."

These tips should keep your conference call running smoothly and efficiently, says Diresta. For more helpful tips, visit www.diresta.com.

Making Your E-Presentation Work

Are you using your email to its full advantage? "There are lots of cool services online to send your Power Point slides and your voice in these nice little containers off to the VITOs (Very Important Top Officers) of the world," says Anthony

Parinello during one of his online e-lessons.

Parinello, also offers the following e-presentation tips from his book *Getting to Vito; The Very Important Top Officer* (Wiley, 2005). His number one piece of advice?

“Put the slide you would normally present as your last slide first...and proceed backward from there,” advises Parinello, who says that he actually learned this trick by mistake. While working for Hewlett Packard, he was preparing his presentation and mistakenly put his last slide first. This slide showed the ROI that the viewer (the VITO) could expect. Long story short – the CEO saw the slide and told his CFO to ‘make it happen’ and the deal was won in record time. Parinello says he learned an important principle about communicating with VITOs that day.

“Things the rest of us consider conclusions (like ROI) are starting points for VITOs,” Parinello says. “Forget all that other stuff about your company’s history and project parameters and everything else. For VITOs that translates as ‘Yap, yap, yap...blah, blah, blah. Skip it. VITO doesn’t care who you are until VITO understands what you can do...for VITO.”

Parinello’s other guidelines in creating a successful e-presentation include:

- Any e-presentation you create and send must be as short as possible.
- You must never exceed three slides per presentation.
- You must never have more than 20 words on each slide.
- You must never speak for more than 10 seconds per slide.
- Don’t show or use the names of your other customers unless they are shared by you and this VITO, they are prospects shared by you and this VITO, they are suppliers of this VITO, or they are on this VITO’s board of directors.
- Put your slides in this order: the most powerful result first, then assets or what’s required from VITO’s side of the fence, and finally, your track record (to build social proof).

To learn more, visit www.gettingtovito.com and click on Chapter 15.

Seven Keys to a Great Presentation

Make sure you have a solid core message before beginning your presentation, says Arthur Germain, principle of Communication Strategy Group, a firm that helps businesses develop their brand story to be remembered, repeated, and rewarded. “Be prepared and focus on one message,” he says. “It will provide you with more impact than 75 percent of any of the other people that your audience is ever going to meet. Many people just ramble on? If you’re the one person who doesn’t do that, you’ll actually stand out.”

With that said, Germain gives us seven key points to improve presentation performance:

1. **Focus on one idea.** Too many people try to get too many things in one presentation,” Germain says. “They present slides with 15 bullet points and they read them, while the audience is thinking, ‘How can I get out of here?’ What your audience really wants to know is, ‘What’s in it for me?’ So presenters need to focus on that point.”
2. **Give it structure.** Try something such as “Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow” to get your company information out, suggests Germain. “You can quickly say, ‘We were the leaders in 1970. Today we are here, and tomorrow...’ It’s much better than doing an outrageously long timeline.”
3. **Be flexible about time and content.** “This trips up salespeople the most,” says Germain. “Sometimes salespeople expect to talk with an entire team for an hour and they walk in the room only to learn that there’s one person and they have 20 minutes to present. Then they don’t know what to do. As a salesperson you have to know what you can throw away before you get there. You need to have a bag of tricks, and be ready to throw away the PowerPoint, reorder the content, or share an anecdote.”
4. **Say something interesting.** This may seem like a no-brainer, but have you really thought about what your customer wants to hear? They don’t want to hear you ramble on about yourself and your company, they care about their own needs, says Germain. Think about your presentation from your audience’s point of view.
5. **Stop repeating yourself.** It’s boring. “Yes, it’s nice to reinforce your point, but if your point of view was sharp and focused in the first place, you wouldn’t have to say it three times,” says Germain.
6. **Ditch the PowerPoint.** This scares everyone, but it emphasizes the point that you need to know your content, says Germain. “If you know your content, you don’t need your slides,” he explains. “If you know your content, then you own that presentation.”
7. **Practice.** “I mean really practice,” advises Germain. “This is difficult for many executives because they haven’t

given themselves enough time.” Often, he says they’ll get a group together to listen to the presentation, by doing this they may not receive the feedback they really need such as, “I didn’t get your presentation” “You rambled on too much” or “What did that third slide have to do with anything?” He advises asking someone from outside your organization to give you objective, valuable criticism.

Final suggestion: Ask yourself what one word you want your audience to leave with when your presentation is finished, says Germain. Once you think of that word, look at your presentation and your slides and make sure everything speaks to that one word. If it doesn’t, drop it; you didn’t need it.

Check out Germain’s website at www.gocsg.com.

Google’s New Presentation Tool

The new presentations feature of Google Docs, launched in September, is receiving a lot of good feedback from users. This new Google feature helps users to easily organize, share, present, and collaborate on presentations, using only a Web browser.

Google says that it created the presentations feature to help eliminate the frustration and wasted time it takes to assemble slide decks, attach, and email them to different people. Google’s tool allows users to import existing files or create new slides that can be shared and edited with several collaborators working on a slide deck simultaneously. It can also be published for all or only a few select participants to view.

“When it’s time to present, participants can simply click a link to follow along as the presenter takes the audience through the slideshow,” says Google. “Participants are connected through Google Talk and can chat about the presentation as they’re watching. Not wanting anyone to feel left out, we’ve made the presentation feature available in 25 languages.”

Blog reviewers all like the new tool and its ease of use. There are templates to use, but you can add text or images as you wish and the tool bar (which is similar to those used by pc document creators) contains everything you need to produce your presentation. It’s free and there’s nothing to download; you can access your documents, spreadsheets, and presentations from any computer with an Internet connection and a standard browser. There are also other advantages... you can:

- store work safely knowing that a hard drive or power failure won’t affect your presentation.
- publish the presentation as a Web page.
- control who can view your presentation. Once you create the presentation, you can invite others to view it either as collaborators (which means they can make changes, suggestions) or as viewers.
- un-publish your presentation at any time.
- control who can see your pages. You can publish to the entire world, just a few people or no one – it’s up to you.

Check it out. You may find out that’s it’s just what you need to complete your next presentation with ease.

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