

# Polishing Your Image

## *Presentation pointers to help you shine.*

In a recent survey, Americans' three most common fears ranked in the following order: public speaking, snakes, death (Human Information Interaction Lab, February 2000). In other words, most people would rather die than speak in public. But we already knew that. As insurance Agents, however, public speaking is absolutely essential to the job. Whether making a presentation to two or fifty people, communicating effectively to an audience is what sales is all about. To help you hone your skills and polish your image, we've put together the following pages of pointers, ideas, tips, and suggestions. Let the healing begin.

### **Before You Begin**

Little things can make a big difference. When preparing for a presentation, always keep in mind that you are selling yourself as a knowledgeable and trustworthy professional. Everything from handouts to personal appearance will contribute to that priceless first impression. Here is a checklist to run through prior to the meeting:

- Am I dressed professionally?
- Is all my equipment working properly?
- Are my materials organized?
- Am I relaxed and comfortable with the presentation?

Furthermore, you must know your material. Rehearse it. Know where the potential pitfalls are and how to avoid them. Try not to memorize, though. Inevitably, you will miss a few lines, and you don't want to detract from the message by losing your train of thought. If you can visualize yourself as successful, you will be. See yourself giving a presentation that closes. In short, make sure you are knowledgeable, organized, and comfortable before getting in front of prospects.

### **It's Showtime**

Okay, everything is in order, and you are ready to begin. Use your notes to guide you through the presentation but don't hesitate to improvise a little. Try to engage your audience by making eye contact and allowing for questions. A good presenter is able to incorporate questions and comments into a guided discussion. It is good to get into the practice of pausing for a moment before answering a question. This will give the impression you are considering the issue and keep your response from sounding canned. It also actually helps draw attention away from the questioner and back toward you. Also consider the following:

- Make sure you are using a presentation approved by the Home Office.
- Try to avoid reading directly off the slide or from your notes. Only glance at the slides or notes when you need to find where you are.
- Avoid using jargon or talking down to the audience. Be an educator rather than a salesperson.
- Too many facts and figures can overwhelm an audience. Make sure any you use come from a good source and are current.
- When presenting to Seniors, use bullet points with large print. Many have difficulty reading lots of copy or very small type.
- Try not apologize. Most likely, the audience will never know you missed a slide or were going to provide additional handouts. Pointing these things out will only call your organizational skills into question.

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## Wrapping Up

Many speakers allow a Q&A period at the end of the presentation. This is advantageous because it helps manage the flow of the discussion. However, sometimes the last question is such that it casts a negative light on you or your product. To avoid this situation, always have a quick wrap-up speech prepared. The speech should hit on key concepts and highlights. It will end the presentation on the desired note, and you can always skip it if it's not needed.

Practice does make perfect, so the more presentations you make the more expert you will become. Experience will give you the confidence to handle the trickiest situations and polish your presentation to an art!

## Here's to Perfect Public Speaking

A fun way to practice your public speaking is to join your local chapter of Toastmasters. Toastmasters is a non-profit, worldwide communications and leadership organization with roughly 185,000 members in 8,900 clubs in 70 countries. Members get together for about an hour a week to practice their public speaking skills. During meetings, members participate in "table topics" which work on improvisational skills by giving short one or two minute speeches. Once through the basic program, Toastmasters offers specialized training in specific business areas, such as speaking to inform, public relations, and speeches by management.

As Alfred Herzing, international president of Toastmasters, put it, "Toastmasters provides an opportunity for people to practice public speaking in a warm, friendly environment before taking it out into the cold, cruel world. Besides public speaking skills, you're also learning leadership and how to motivate and influence, and those skills directly transfer over to the workplace." If you are interested in joining Toastmasters, log onto [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org) or call (800)993-7732.

### Don't forget!

UA offers both Final Expense and Medicare Supplement presentations, which are pre-approved for use in the field. Branches may order these presentations by contacting the Home Office.

# Secrets of Seminar Success

Seminars are a great way for Agents to address many prospects at one time. The contacts and referrals that result from these presentations are invaluable, not to mention the sales themselves. So, what ARE the secrets for a successful seminar?

### ➔ Show up extra early.

Seniors typically arrive early anyway, so being there extra early will enable you to avoid the embarrassment of being seen fussing at a faulty projector or crawling around on your knees trying to locate the electrical outlet.

### ➔ Put out plenty of directional signs.

Seminars are often held in hard-to-find rooms, so make sure there is directional signage in the hallways and lobbies.

### ➔ If you're nervous, don't let it show.

People will think you're a rookie.

### ➔ Get to know the audience.

Greet your attendees as they arrive.

### ➔ Speak up.

Make sure your voice is projecting towards the audience rather than into the screen.

### ➔ Make eye contact.

This helps hold people's attention.

### ➔ Repeat the question.

When a question is asked, be sure to repeat it so that everyone hears.

### ➔ Hold the questions to the end.

Let attendees know at the beginning to hold their questions to the end. This will keep you on track and ensures you actually do get questions during that period.

### ➔ Remember who asks questions.

Often, further elaboration on an issue raised earlier will spark more discussion.