

Polish Your Public Speaking Skills

You've just been given the assignment to present your team's idea for a new product to the marketing department. What should you do?



A Message to Managers from Claremont EAP

Often, the employee who needs their Employee Assistance Program the most doesn't think to call for assistance.

A manager's referral to the EAP can be an effective strategy for improving an employee's effectiveness, productivity, motivation and morale. A referral to the EAP can also decrease absenteeism, reduce turnover, foster acceptance of change and reduce stress.

An EAP referral can make a difference.

First, consider yourself lucky. You're about to get noticed by management and have an opportunity to advance your career.

"Speaking is the number one promotable skill in your work-skill tool kit," says Jeffrey Patnaude, an author, executive coach and president of the Patnaude Group, a training company in Agoura, Calif. "By learning a few strategies that will help you to overcome the number-one fear people have -- that of speaking in public -- you'll benefit greatly and give a great presentation."

Structuring your presentation

A presentation is like a three-course meal. The appetizer, the opening, should include an attention-getter -- a story, quote or powerful statement that relates to your topic.

Next comes your main dish, the meat of your presentation. These are the points you want to make. Each point should have an illustration or story. This gives people something to relate to so they can understand and remember your point. It's best you limit your presentation to three main points, but a long presentation can have as many as five.

"The closing, your dessert, should include a call to action of some kind, depending on the purpose of your speech," says Mr. Patnaude. "You should also end with your most powerful story. People will remember your closing, so make it dynamic."

Now that you have the basic ingredients, you'll need to add flavor. When you pepper your speech with the four P's, you enliven your topic.

Passion

"You can get by with a presentation that has all the necessary information, but, without passion, it won't engage your audience or advance your career," warns Mr. Patnaude.

Uncover at least one element in your presentation that you feel passionate about, and highlight that point.

Presence

Having a presence means fully being in the moment and being authentic. The authentic speaker shows emotion, and therefore is humorous, playful, open, creative and passionate. He or she also is open to questions, as well as to being wrong.

Having a presence also means keeping connected to your audience through observation. Pay attention to participants and make adjustments based on their nonverbal cues. If people are yawning and looking around the room, then you've lost them.

Parables

"Storytelling is one of the key elements of great public speaking. Start and end your presentation with a story. 'Three nights ago I was walking down the street at 2 in the morning when...' Everyone will want to know what happened at 2 in the morning," says Mr. Patnaude.

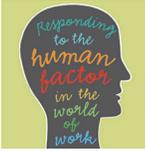
"One word of warning," he adds. "Your story must relate in some way to your topic or it's a waste of time."

Payback

Your payback comes from serving the audience.

"Something positive can happen as a result of your presentation -- a motivation to change, a new attitude, a new outlook, lives are shifted a little bit," says Mr. Patnaude. "Therefore, your payback is the knowledge that your audience is better in some way and that you have made a difference."

Krames Staywell



Being a Strong Leader

Tips on Making Decisions, Coaching Employees, and Communicating Effectively



As a leader, you wear many hats. In addition to overseeing others, you are also likely to be in charge of making important decisions, coaching employees through situations, and communicating with team members about important matters. To better develop effective leadership skills that will help you be successful in each of these areas, follow the guidelines below.

As someone who makes decisions, you should:

- Think things through. Don't decide too hastily, and make sure to consider alternatives. Employees can be a great resource. Ask them for input regarding decisions when appropriate.
- Take risks, but know the consequences before you jump.
- Admit when you make a mistake, and use it as a learning tool. Share with others the lessons that you have been taught.

As a coach who guides employees, you should:

- Envision the goals that you and your team can accomplish. Seek and share the goals with your team, motivating them to get there.
- Show each member of the team that you are interested in his or her success. Notice unique skills and talents, and work with each member to develop them.

- Help resolve differences between team members. You can act as a mediator between two employees who don't see eye-to-eye. When doing this, make sure you are fair and supportive to each employee.
- Be enthusiastic and honest to each employee. This will inspire them to be the same way.

As a communicator, you should:

- Give the employee your full attention when he or she is speaking to you. Don't be quick to criticize or judge, hear the person out, and think before you speak.
- Check if employees understand goals.
- Give feedback to employees. This can be constructive criticism, but make sure you present it in an encouraging and supportive way. Be specific when an employee needs to make a change.
- Be calm when stressful situations arise. Be the voice of reason when things are tough.
- When communicating praise or criticism, use "I" statements to demonstrate how you feel. For example, "I was impressed by your latest presentation to our clients," or, "I was hurt by what you said to co-workers about the team leaders."

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