

Speaking Full-out to Magnetize New Business Bring more of *you* into your presentations.

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A common problem for speakers is doing too much of the same thing. Predictability is the enemy of the presenter. Eyes glaze over; people stop listening.

Just as artists work with a full palette of colors, we can use our voices and gestures to paint a more attractive picture for our clients. When we communicate in a vibrant, multi-faceted way, people are drawn to us. Expressing ourselves with originality elevates us above cheap imitations.

Bringing more of ourselves into view is critical for the success of our business. I learned a lesson from Bette Midler after the critics labeled her as only being able to sing one song well. This negative feedback inspired her to create “Divine Madness” where she let herself go from being a raging bitch, to singing a touching love song, to extreme comedy, and ending with gut-wrenching vulnerability. Watching her, I realized how stagnant I had become in my speaking style. I dared myself to expose more.

What does this have to do with business presentations? Clients want to know who they’re dealing with. Playing full out, expressing ourselves authentically while staying connected with them, can mean the difference between getting the sale or being passed over. This naturally leads to getting the clients we’re supposed to be working with.

Voice

A speaking voice that is low-key for a long period of time is boring. On the other hand, too much enthusiasm or passion without a break will exhaust your audience. We’ve all become accustomed to speaking in a certain way. Natural is good, but audiences need variety. It’s simply more engaging.

The longer we talk, the more important it is to add vocal variety. Some daring speakers even bring their voice down to a whisper when they really want to get the listener’s attention. Horse whisperers have had tremendous results; why not become a “client whisperer?”

Along with volume, vary the pace. It’s perfectly fine to talk fast, just remember to slow down once in a while when you want to make a point. It shows people that you are in control of yourself and not on automatic. Repeating an important thought followed with a pause can be very powerful. Let your words sink in.

When you’re connected with your audience, you’ll feel what’s appropriate.

Content combined with connection is an art form that knows no limits. Developing a wider vocal range gives us an ability to use the most appropriate tone for each situation. Being aware of the effect our voice has on our clients will either draw them toward us or push them away.

Gestures

How can we bring a little variety to our body language to insure our clients feel comfortable with us? Linear, pointing gestures indicate a rigid, controlling person. That's not all bad when you need someone who can get the job done for you. Trouble is, when your clients only see this one type of gesture, they won't be as willing to open up and confide vital information. Rounded gestures with open hands indicate acceptance and care. That's essential at certain stages of the dialogue.

Is this to say we should always have rounded gestures? Not necessarily. A combination shows your clients that you have depth. It shows them that not only do you care; you can get to the point. When something needs to be done they know by your body language that you're the kind of person who can get things done. The problem lies not in one or the other, but not knowing when to shift gears.

Do you have a predominant style? Most of us do. Next time you're speaking, vary it a bit with congruent body language that adds to your message. Have fun with it! Being video taped is invaluable to notice habituated patterns that have gone on automatic. Awareness is the first step.

The care you put into your communication is the starting point of a lasting business.

You've heard of the law of diminishing returns? It applies to our speaking style as well. Our strong point can become our weak point if it's overdone. A colleague of mine walked by a breakout session and listened to an enthusiastic speaker for 5 or 10 minutes, thinking the speaker was brilliant. Trouble is, when she walked by an hour later, the speaker was in the same mode like an Energizer bunny. What draws us in initially may be the very thing that ends up turning us off. A predominant style is fine, just be conscious about adding a different flavor from time to time. Keep them hungry for more.

Take note of your predominant style on this scale. It will give you an idea of where you can add some depth. Is your mark way to the left, all the way to the right or somewhere in between?

Logical.....Emotional
Serious.....Humorous
Facts.....Stories

Scripted.....Spontaneous

If you're really brave, have a couple friends rate you and then compare notes.

Bring the many dimensions of *you* into your next presentation. The more of you that shows up, the more your ideal clients will show up.