

LI BUSINESS

Making a successful presentation



In the course of owning a business, chances are you'll have to make a presentation to one of your key stakeholders. It can be a daunting task and could make or break your business.

What you have to say is important, but timing, delivery and tone all play key roles in making a powerful presentation and capturing your audience's attention, say experts.

"You really want to try to engage with your audience," says Jean-Louis Van Doorne, senior vice president at Dale Carnegie Training in Hauppauge. You want communication where you win both the hearts and minds of your audience, he explains. "Good presenters always have in their minds the audience and what

it is they really want to hear," she adds.

■ **Know your audience.** Research your audience members ahead of time, says Lisa Braithwaite, a Santa Barbara, California-based public speaking coach. "Find out what they need, want and care about."

Consider their demographics, including education, age and gender, adds Marla Seiden, president of Seiden Communications Inc. in New Hyde Park, a public relations and presentation skills training firm.

Consider what they already know about your subject, and what they want and need to know about it, she says.

Have your own objectives for yourself and for them, suggests Braithwaite.

■ **Connect emotionally.** Find ways to involve the audience members, including asking questions, and involve them on an emotional level, she adds.

You can do that by telling stories, says Braithwaite. Use

humor or incorporate relevant quotes that make them think. "That kind of triggers emotions for them," she notes.

■ **Stick with structure.** As for the presentation's actual structure, ideally you want a strong opening that intrigues the audience in some way; a middle with three main points that support your message; and a strong closing that leaves the audience with your big idea and/or a call to action, says Braithwaite.

Know going in what your goal is, and tailor your message so it ties in to that, adds Seiden.

Prepare ahead of time so you are organized and don't ramble, she says. "If you wing it, chances are you won't have a direction and you won't get your message across in the best way."

■ **Say it with feeling.** When delivering the presentation, always be dynamic, says Jayne Latz, president of Manhattan-based Corporate Speech Solu-

FAST FACT

Filler words have no place in a presentation. As a general rule, any word that's used more than two times in two minutes that does not add content to the message is a filler word and should be avoided.

Source: Jayne Latz, Corporate Speech Solutions

like and you know, she says. Record yourself and count how many times you use those words, to increase your awareness of where it's happening. That can help you reduce them down the line, says Latz.

■ **PowerPoint isn't everything.** If you're using technology to assist you, such as PowerPoint or slides, don't be too dependent on them, says Van Doorne.

"You are the message," he says. "Not your slides."

The slides should be there only to complement your presentation.

"You are the center of attention," says Van Doorne. "What you do, how you do it and how you say it is much more important than your slides."

Lastly, pay attention to body language, says Seiden. For example, make eye contact, but don't stare a person down.

"With body language, you can send mixed messages," she warns.

tions, a professional speech training and consulting firm with an office in Garden City.

"Learn to use your diaphragm and power up your voice," she notes. "Use vocal variety," varying your pitch, tone and volume.

Also use strategic pauses; people tend to talk too fast during presentations. A pause allows your listeners to process what's being said, says Latz.

Avoid filler words like um,