

Giving an Effective WBN Business Talk

By Melissa McGavick, WBN Cranberry Chapter Member, WBN President of the Board 2009 -2010

Great! So it's your turn to stand up and talk about your business. This is the day many members question if they should show up for the meeting. I have heard time and time again, "Do I have to do a presentation? I really don't like to talk in front of people." Speaking in front of a group of people is the most disliked thing a person can do. In fact, public speaking is more feared than death.

So how do you not just "get through" this presentation but SHINE?

Let's break it down into bite size pieces: introduction, opener, body, and conclusion.

The first thing I notice about women in general is they find it hard to boast about themselves. As a gender, women rarely run around telling everyone about our own accomplishments. Yet we tell the world about our great best friend. So outsource this part of your presentation. Write out a one to two minute introduction for your presentation and have another member read it aloud. Include awards, education and any interesting facts that don't have to do with your business presentation but may help your audience to relate to you as a person.

The introduction is the grand opening of your presentation. It determines your audience's first impression. This is a great place to talk about why you do what you do. Tell the audience about your motivation and what difference you want to make in the world through your business.

The body of your presentation should have three to five points (maximum). You could use each point to highlight a product or service you offer or a segment of the population you serve. Each point can have a few (read two-three) sub points.

The conclusion is a recap of why you do what you do and how that makes a difference for the people you help. This is the last thing people hear and it is what they will remember.

The key to good flow and overall impression of your talk is how well you transition between parts/points and the congruency of the opener and conclusion. Take time to think how each point fits together.

A great way to start writing your presentation is to write it backwards. What do you want your audience to remember? What feeling do you want to leave with them? (Conclusion) What three key points are important to them to know? (Main points) How can you help them understand how those key points work together? (Transitions) What is will catch their attention about your subject? (Opening)

Then practice. Practice. Practice. Practice in front of a mirror. Say it out loud. Don't just read it from the computer screen in your head. Words act differently "on paper" than they do "on the ear." There may be things that look great on paper but are not so fabulous when they leave your larynx. Stand up to practice. You'll sound better and have more energy.

On the way to your meeting, in the car or in a stall in the ladies room, make every funny face you can think of. Stick your tongue out, role your eyes, make fishy lips and your shocked look. The more limber your face muscles the more natural your facial expressions will appear.

When you are in front the room, remember the women in your WBN chapter are in your corner. They are cheering for you and want to succeed. They believe in you and know you can do this.

Happy speaking!



About the Author: Melissa McGavick is President of McGavick Interactive Training, and a professional public speaker. Typically she works with successful business people who want to develop their public speaking and communication skills, leadership potential, and sell their ideas or products more effectively. She can be reached at by phone at 412-400-3414. More information is available at www.mcgavick.net.

Melissa has served as a Chapter Rep and Chapter Chair of the Cranberry WBN chapter, chaired ten different WBN committees, served as both Vice-President (2008-2009) and President (2009-2010) of the WBN Board of Directors. In 2008 she was selected as the WBN Woman of the Year. Melissa has also served in the top leadership positions in four other non-profit organizations, including the Pittsburgh chapter of the Downtown Women's Club, Women Entrepreneurs in Business, Women Think P.I.N.K., and Toastmasters International District 13.

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