



On Your Next Presentation: "Don't Let the Deck Wag the Dog"

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WHAT'S YOUR JOB AS A PRESENTER? TO GET THROUGH THE DECK WITHOUT A HITCH? ... *OR SHOULD IT BE SOMETHING ELSE?*

As an Executive Trainer and Presentation Coach with Louws Management Corporation I've had the great privilege to help some really talented people connect with their audiences. I've even had the opportunity to "coach-the-coaches"...working with some of the legendary coaches in the NFL and NCAA helping them prep for television and media assignments. Champions like:

Bobby Bowden, Florida State Seminoles

Don Shula, Miami Dolphins

Steve Spurrier, Florida Gators

Billy Donovan, Florida Gators

Urban Meyer, Florida Gators

In working with them I've discovered something they share in common (other than National Championship and Super Bowl rings), and that is "a very clear understanding of what their job is." Sounds simple? It's not. Sure their responsibilities encompass a myriad of details; recruiting top talent, leading the Assistant Coaching staff, coaching and training individual players, designing plays and "the game plan," dealing with the media and sponsors, speaking on the Booster Club circuit... a big list that keeps ongoing both on and off-season. But, when you ask a Bobby Bowden or a Don Shula or a Steve Spurrier what their job is. The answer is two words- "to win." That means that when the game plan goes south... and all the plays taped to the quarterback's wrist aren't working... you figure out another way to win. So it's not about "the game *PLAN*." It's about WINNING the game. Game after game.

What's this have to do with your job as a presenter? For a presenter (who wants to present at a championship level) it shouldn't be about "getting through the deck." Just getting through all 88 PowerPoint slides smoothly with no wrinkles--- memorized everything and didn't get any tough questions of objections from the audience. What should it be about? It's about making certain that each individual in the audience *UNDERSTANDS* the key ideas, key drivers, and that they "GET IT!" That's how a presenter scores and wins.

Microsoft did a survey and found out that there are over 30 million PowerPoint presentations given around the globe everyday.

- How many of those 30-plus million presentations "connect" with the audience?
- How many of those 30-plus million presenters think their job is to "get through the slides?"
- How many of those have you sat through?

I think you get the point.

Like many of you, we fly a lot on business. On every flight I see business execs creating PowerPoint presentations on their laptops. And, with almost every one of those, I'll bet the presenter is thinking that they need to put in a lot of data so that when they make a Xerox copy of the PowerPoint slides, they'll have a leave-behind deck. And, during the presentation when it comes time to show a data-loaded slide that looks like The Dead Sea Scrolls, they'll say..." now I know there's too much stuff on this slide...but just bear with me."What does that make you think in the audience? Dummy, why did you put too much stuff on the slide in the first place? The deck wagged that dog. They put The Dead Sea Scrolls on the screen so you would have a lot of data in your deck.

Think about it- what media is a leave-behind deck? It's print media- a book- you can put a lot of stuff in it. But what medium is a PowerPoint slide- it's audio-VISUAL- not a book. It needs to be rifle-focused on the idea and very visual- SHOWING the idea.

So, do the leave-behind piece first when preparing a presentation and then create PowerPoint slides by visualizing the key ideas, key drivers. Less words on a slide- more visuals.

And, don't hand the deck out at the beginning of the presentation. It's a leave-behind. You can pre-empt any data-driven concerns by letting the audience know you'll give them the leave behind piece –with all the data- at the end to take with them... but "in the 45 minutes we have together- I have visualized the key ideas and key drivers I need your feedback on."

Making certain that the audience "gets it" is more than separating "The Deck" from the PowerPoint slides. It's also making certain that, as the presenter, you have the mindset that you are there to make sure that they UNDERSTAND the message. The presenter gets "into communication" with individuals in the audience- pays attention to them- gets them involved by asking questions throughout the presentation (not holding Q&A to the final 15 minutes). As a presenter, you are there to make something happen- to accomplish something- namely that each person in your audience really gets your message- gets the benefit of what you have for them that is of value to them. It's not about the slides- it's about them. As a presenter, if you have a strong mindset that your job is to connect and get the audience to understand, you're on the right track to doing the things that will help you connect- with each person in the audience, not the screen.

"My job is to make sure they get it" as a Presenter's mindset leads to:

- Organizing presentations that "get to the point." That do not ramble.
- Preparing PowerPoint slides that help communicate the idea visually.
- Paying more attention to the audience than the screen.
- Getting into communications with persons in the audience- they talk too.
- Encouraging interactive, two-way presentations with questions throughout. Keeping your audience interested, engaged and involved in the discussion, not in their Blackberries.
- Taking care of the audience- showing them you care, treating them as if they were "guests" at your party.
- Convincing and persuading audiences with relevant benefits for them- not a data dump.
- Having individuals thank you for a great meeting- time well spent.

That's a "win" for a presenter.