



Presentations Lessons at 35,000 feet

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"I'd rather be the guy in the coffin than the guy giving the eulogy..."
Seinfeld

The Secret has been long out

Most business executives dread having to do it. It causes sleeplessness, 'the sweats,' nausea, anxiety, panic attacks and even the back of your neck to turn red like a thermometer- from the bottom up. Given a choice, most people would choose anything else- even a trip to the dental chair. And yet, mastering the skills needed to do it well can be the most important step an executive can take towards achieving their career potential.

It's giving a presentation or speech. To prospects, clients, stockholders, board members, peers and the boss.

Almost everyone in business at some point in their career, is called upon to stand up and give a presentation. Yet very few executives are effectively trained and prepared to master the skills necessary to give a presentation. Correctly. So that it Captivates, Inspires and Convinces an audience of the point being made.

The Learning Ground

When I go to work, Delta, American, America West gets us to the "office".

Flying is something I don't take for granted.

My partner Toni and I couldn't do what we do without flying to our next client workshop. On almost every flight, I see business travelers working away at their laptops putting together or polishing their power point on the way to give a presentation.

I know that most of them really believe that their job as presenters is to get through all 87 power point 'slides' perfectly... and that they'll get up in front of their audience and focus most of their attention on the screen.(their laptops).

When a presenter gives most of their attention to the screen and just gets through the slides, those of us in the audience feel like we don't even need to be there.

I have seen some of the basic mindsets and skills needed to be an effective presenter at 35,000 feet.

Delta's flight attendants actually do many of the basic skills that an effective presenter needs to use.

If you want their attention you'd best make sure you are giving yours first

Like "paying attention to individuals." I get bumped upfront a lot with my Gold Medallion Skymiles and it makes me feel great when the Delta Flight Attendant gives me a lot of attention and calls me by my name. They are there "for me."

That's what great presenters all share in common- they pay attention to individuals in their audience. They talk to people (as opposed to reciting what their slides say). It's not about "eye contact." I've asked people to close their eyes, I talk to them and they still pay attention to me. Sight-challenged individuals can be wonderful presenters. It's about paying attention to someone- talking to people.

Making certain that they 'get the message!' It's not about punching through all 87 slides and getting on the next plane.

When a presenter pays attention to individuals in the audience- talks to people- the audience pays attention back.

"At 35,000 feet it's not just about getting me a cup of coffee... Delta Flight Attendants know their job is really to make sure I'm safe, comfortable and enjoy the flight on my way to where I need to be. Hot coffee is just a part of that"

Effective presenters know that their job is to make sure every individual in their audience 'Get's It.' Understands the message. That means that if the presenter gives the presentation five times and they present it differently each time but the audience gets the message- they've done their job.

Interest begets interest

One of the principles we coach is that an effective communicator is interested in interesting the audience they are talking too. A way to look at this is think of yourself as the presenter "hosting" ones audience as their "host".

The audience is their "guest."

When you throw a party and greet your guests, who is the most important person in the room? Your guests are. You're there to satisfy their needs, take care of them.

Actually, the folks at Delta & American are pretty good at applying this presentation skill too. They're good hosts and treat me like their guest. It's a skill that really works when you're flying and I'd recommend it to anyone who travels.

If you treat others like a guest in your home... you'll be surprised at the effect you cause. In a presentation, hosting skills become "interest" - your audience 'feels your interest'. They give you their attention and interest back... and those are two keys factors you need to get a message through to them."

An involved audience is a buying audience

"Another skill that's essential to a good presenter can also be experienced at 35,000 feet and that's "involvement."

If you get your audiences involved you can change them from sitting out there being passive and turning into a critic to becoming active and turning into a buyer.

The person who is talking is being sold' is a maxim taught by Louws and very well understood by all great sales people.

Get the customer to talk. Great presenters get individuals in their audiences to talk, they get them involved. Try it on your next flight. Initiate a conversation with the passenger next to you by asking an open-ended question- a "where, what, why, how" question that relates to something you both might share in common. (Where are you flying to? Or What were you doing in town? are perfect ice breakers.)

Find something to talk about that they are interested in. Be a great host, treat them like your guest. Pay attention to them. Show an interest in them. Be interested in what they have to say. You'll be surprised at the effect you cause and how enjoyable the flight might be.

"If an individual can improve their ability to get up in front of a group and effectively get their ideas across, the impact can be significant for their customer, their own company and their career ... in two words -life changing."

I hope these insights give you a lay version of how to get this done.