



The  
Pittsburgh IT LDP

# Ten Tips for Improving Your Presentation Skills

# #1 Your Speaking Comfort/Nervousness

## Everyone is nervous...but:

- Remember, the audience wants you to succeed.
- There is a perception difference – your perception is over the top when the audience doesn't notice (to them you look calm).
- Memorizing your opening statement will help with nerves.
- Exercising can help use up adrenaline and get rid of shakes.
- Preparation and practice are key to calm, natural delivery.

## Check It Out!

[A Very Nervous News Reporter - YouTube](#)

[A one minute TEDx Talk for the digital age  
| Woody Roseland | TEDxMileHigh](#)

[Goals Are Overrated: How to Build  
Systematic Habits - James Clear](#)

## #2

# Audience Profiling & Connection

**Developing an audience profile – knowing your audience – is the basis to any successful presentation.**

- Who are you speaking to?
- What level are they in the organization?
- What is their professional/educational background?
- What is their technology affinity?
- Are there any cultural or generational considerations?
- Endeavor to make a connection prior to speaking. Before your speech, walk around the room, find a friendly face, and then talk to that person.
- Make “you” statements, so you include everyone. *“What do you think...”*
- Observe the audience (and their body language) to ensure you’re engaging them.
- Empathize! Acknowledge the emotions in the room... *“Thank you for taking time out of your day.” “I know this conversation isn’t an easy one.” “I know you’re missing lunch.”*

**Remember, most executives are bottom-line-focused, strategic thinkers who want you to get to the point.**

Check It Out!

On Finding Yourself |  
Jade Simmons

## #3

## Physical Movement

Figure out what will augment your presentation vs. what will distract from your presentation.

*Physical Movement*

- Shifting feet conveys nervousness
- Pacing back and forth is acceptable, just don't overdo it!
- Avoid repetition (same hand gesture for everything)

*Body Language*

- Natural movement enhances delivery
- Hands attract the eyes
- Match your gestures to verbs
- Avoid hiding behind a podium or notes (i.e. "glued to...")
- Do not allow your movements to distract from your message

*Eye Contact*

- Builds rapport
- Encourages trust
- Demonstrates confidence
- Involves listeners
- Reinforces your message
- Be sure to look at multiple individuals (don't focus on only one leader)
- Look at more than one spot in the room

**How We Communicate**

10% = Words

45% = Tone & Inflection

45% = Body Language

**Check It Out!**

4 essential body language tips from a world champion public speaker

Cassandra Worthy - Steady Disruption is the New Status Quo

## #4

# Voice & Rhythm

- Enunciation is key. If you don't know how to pronounce something, Google it!
- Be aware of your rate of speech. Your base pace doesn't change (i.e., NYC = fast, southeast = slow), so make adjustments where appropriate for emphasis and variety.
- Volume – use both soft and loud, as appropriate.
- Pitch – use vocal variety (don't be monotone!).
- Use your rate, volume, and pitch of speech to highlight key points or thoughts.
- Where to pause:
  - Between sentences
  - Between ideas
  - Long list of items
  - As a transition
  - To let ideas or messages sink in
  - To give your audience a moment to think or gather their thoughts
- Practice out loud!

## Check It Out!

Acknowledge Obstacles—  
Don't Give Them Power |  
Vernice Armour

## #5

## Qualifiers &amp; Junk Words

Many people are not aware that they are using junk words or phrases, jargon, or qualifiers, so ask for feedback. These things distract and irritate your audience and dilute, pollute, and block your message.

*Junk Words*

- Uh
- Um
- Anyway
- Like
- OK?
- Yup
- Next

*Junk Phrases*

- You know?
- I know
- To be honest with you
- If you will
- Totally complete
- Absolutely
- Like I said

*Jargon*

- Manpower
- Man-hour
- Chairman
- Acronyms
- Shortened job titles

*Qualifiers*

- Probably, possibly
- Sort of, kind of
- I think, I hope, I might
- I could be wrong

**Alternatives to replace qualifiers and junk words:**

- Ask a question – “How many of you...”
- Point-by-point – “There are several points...”
- Flashbacks – “Do you remember when I said...”
- Internal summaries – “To recap the points...”
- Numbering – 1..2..3

Check It Out!

What Corporate People  
Sound Like

## #6

# Using Visuals

## Images add life to your presentation.

- Visuals stay in mind longer than text because they evoke emotion.
- Keep them simple so they are easy to understand.
- Visuals can be used to cue thoughts, guide discussion, and control pace.

### *Handouts*

- Audiences like handouts
- One page summary or fun presentation slides
- Useful for notetaking
- Delivered before or after presentation (your choice)

### *PowerPoint*

- Good for large audiences
- Professional appearance
- Use font big enough for audience to read
- Incorporate graphics

**When presenting to executives, plan to present 1/3 of the time, and then leave the remainder of time for questions and discussion.**

## Check It Out!

[Turn Off The Tap | Plastic Bank | David Katz 2 Minute TED Talk](#)

[1-minute clip | Jo Boaler's TED talk at Stanford](#)

## #7

# Recovery & Handling Q&A

## *Forgetting your place/point*

- You will survive – don't panic!
- Move on – don't dwell on it
- Call it out – use humor

## *Interruptions*

- Anticipate people sticking their head in the room / walking in late
- Cell phones – make sure yours is silenced!
- Wait – don't try to talk over the interruption

## *Coughing*

- Be prepared and have water handy
- Wait for it to subside before moving on

## **Best Practices for Q&A**

- Be prepared and anticipate questions beforehand.
- Set the expectation that you'll take questions after the presentation. When finished speaking ask, "Who has the first question?"
- Really listen to the whole question – don't jump in and cut the questioner off.
- Paraphrase the question back before answering to ensure that you understand.
- Separate multi-part questions.
- Answer to the group, not just the questioner.
- Establish a questioner batting order if there are multiple questions.



# #8

## Handling Difficult Audiences

### There's one in every crowd...

- Ignore, use humor to diffuse, or politely confront the person/situation
- Use peer pressure – “Does anyone else...”

Assistant Professor	
<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Coping Strategy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feels responsible</li><li>• Wants to help you</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Redirect</li><li>• Acknowledge and then move on</li></ul>

Victim	
<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Coping Strategy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “We tried it before, it won’t work”</li><li>• “My situation is different”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State the positive</li><li>• Move on</li></ul>

Heckler/Saboteur	
<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Coping Strategy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continually cutting in or interrupting</li><li>• Attacking your points</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confront – “Please hold comments until the end.”</li><li>• Don’t get emotionally hooked</li></ul>

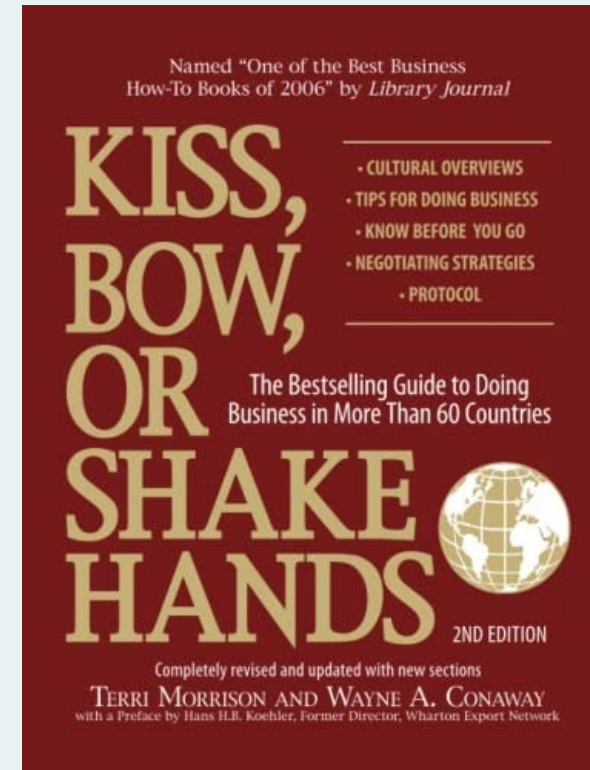
Storyteller	
<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Coping Strategy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Likes to tell long stories/anecdotes</li><li>• Isn’t aware of the timing this takes up</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You’ll be able to tell after the first story – cut the second story short</li></ul>

## #9

# Incorporating International Audiences

## Before presenting, be sure to research your audience.

- What cultures and backgrounds are represented in your audience? Audience reactions may differ.
- Use references and examples outside of your culture.
- Convert numbers to metric.
- Avoid colloquial expressions, jargon, acronyms, sports metaphors, and humor.
- Quote someone from the audience's culture.
- Double check graphic symbols and colors for meaning.



## Check It Out!

TEDx Southbank - 1  
Minute Pitch Winner -  
Joseph Knox Wheeler

# #10 Adjusting for Virtual Audiences

**Delivering a speech virtually means people will see and hear you alone, in their offices or at home, instead of being shoulder-to-shoulder in community with their colleagues.**

- Confirm web/meeting tools are working – ask a moderator to help wrangle the technology and field questions from attendees.
- Do a mini-ice breaker/hello to start the meeting just as you would in person (i.e., favorite thing about where you live, last great movie you saw).
- Keep the audio clear. Remove distractions such as cell phone, notifications, pop ups, rustling paper, etc.
- Keep your presentation simple and clean.
- Look directly into the camera, not down at your notes.
- Remember that without a camera, your voice and slides are the only tools you have to connect to your audience.
- If you lose your audience, make a comment or ask a question that plays off something said earlier.

## How We Communicate With Video

10% = Words  
45% = Tone & Inflection  
45% = Body Language

## How We Communicate Without Video

30% = Words  
70% = Tone & Inflection