

PRESENTATION BY CHUCK LOHRE

A standing ovation at your next presentation?

If you've ever had someone fall asleep during your presentation, you certainly remembered ... but he didn't!

The keys to a memorable presentation are using real-life examples and effectively demonstrating your message. Here are a few tips on grabbing—and then holding on to—your audience's attention at your next "Dog and Pony Show."

Match the message with the audience

Think about the audience that you—and your message—will address.

What are their responsibilities? Age group? Education? Technical experience? What specific concerns do they have about your products or services?

If it will be a large group made up of different segments, prepare your presentation to address each audience. Instead of giving a "generic" half-hour presentation to the whole group, tailor it in 10-minute segments that speak to each type. For example, when presenting a new product to

a contractor, divide it into one presentation to the field installers and another to the purchasing group.

Vice presidents of field operations want to know how to install the product and the time- and cost-saving benefits. Hands-on demonstration works best for journeymen, while purchasing agents want to know what quantities will give them the best discount and delivery.

If possible, bring your product—and the competition's—then let them at it. One top salesman's presentation to some young electricians was just

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Charles Lohre is a featured speaker at Adventure 2000 June 25-28 Kiawah Island, S.C. see Page 74 to register

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that: “a hands-on workshop.” After several minutes of wiring the different manufacturers’ steel electrical boxes, his audience came to their own conclusion that one brand did not cut their fingers—solid proof and a memorable reminder when they spec their next order.

For purchasing agents, e-mailing spreadsheets and regular updating of delivery information may be your best way to help. Show them how easy you can make their job, whether it be a superior system for updates or how to access data online from your Web site.

A superior product—showcased with a well-targeted presentation—will prevail and you will be the hero.

Keep your message simple. What are the points you want your audience to remember? Are you introducing new products? Do

you need to change or challenge existing perceptions?

If it’s service you are pushing, lay out an example like Pratt Electrical Supply in Sandy, Utah did. On a recent expansion of the Salt Palace convention center in Salt Lake City, the contractor, Newco Electric, discovered one Sunday morning, in April, that the connectors specified were of the wrong type. This project required the shut-down of all power to allow for a reconnect of the new addition. Paul Prawitt, of Platt Electric, contacted Kent Brown of Porter Brown Sales Inc.,

its local ILSCO manufacturer’s representative company. Kent called the factory and located the quantity of connectors needed. ILSCO’s traffic department sent the goods via Delta Dash for Monday delivery. Everyone was a hero on Tuesday, when the convention center opened on

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Salt Palace in Sandy, Utah, opened on time thanks to Pratt Electrical Supply and ILSCO.

time. Specific examples, rather than general statements like, “We give great service,” stick in the listener’s memory.

Since it’s impossible to impart all you want an audience to know about your company and its products, prioritize: Build your presentation from a list of no more than six specific “take-aways” that effectively address your client’s concerns, then decide how to best communicate each point. Whatever you do, keep the messages and the executions simple ... and always repeat your priority points in a quick summary as you close.

For example: A top salesman sold more than the competition even though his product did not have all the bells and whistles of the rival product. He kept his presentation focused around three key points where his product was clearly superior. When the board of directors had to decide which product to choose, they remembered his simple points and not the long list of detailed features/benefits of the competition.

The rules are simple: Tell them what you’re going to tell them. Tell them.

Then tell them you told them. ◆

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Three steps to a great presentation

1—KNOW YOUR STUFF Get into the jungle and talk with people on the front lines. Understand the new technology. It’s simple. Everyone is trying to achieve the same goal: To do things better and faster.

2—KISS (KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID) Explain your material in a logical manner the audience can relate to: Begin with the end in mind and put first things first. Present your material in the same order that it will be procured, used, specified, purchased or installed. Present win/win situations. Deliver solutions that help all sides.

3—KEEP IMPROVING Never decide your presentation is the best it can be. Make note of what was successful—and what wasn’t—and customize your next presentation accordingly.

The secret to a great presentation is persuasion, and nothing is more persuasive than first-hand knowledge. Get out in the field. See your products at work as your clients use them. Inquire about and document their real-world experiences. Then, work those persuasive, attention-grabbing stories into your next presentation and watch what happens. —C.L.