

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

You are a 'sales' person.

Surprised? You shouldn't be.

Consider your own personal experience. More than likely, you 'sold' your parents on the college you wanted to attend. You routinely 'sell' your friends on joining you in activities, courses, clubs, and excursions. And you 'sold' your unique accomplishments and skills to land the job you wanted.

In each case, you do more than *neutrally inform* your audience of their options; you *persuasively advocate* one option!

Effective communicators perfect the art of persuasion to advocate their ideas and causes. Their communication is interactive and convincing. It identifies a need (or harm) and articulates a clear choice that has a competitive advantage over other choices.

Whether speaking to one or one thousand, the successful communicator plans and personalizes her message to her audience keeping these questions in mind:

- What do I want my listener(s) to do (end result/goal)?
- What are the audience's likely attitudes and/or objections?
- What points, statistics, and/or anecdotes are most likely to resonate with this particular audience?

Planning to Succeed — Terry Sjodin, noted public speaking expert and author of *New Sales Speak*, argues that memorable, persuasive speakers are made not born.

Her advice on the *Nine Mistakes to Avoid* are well worth noting:

- **Winging it** — Organize, memorize, and rehearse your message. Committing to memory your key points, phrases, examples and anecdotes will (1) reduce nervousness/stress for the speaker, (2) keep the presentation crisp and on point, and (3) free the speaker to focus on and interact with the audience. Anticipate questions/objections and prepare answers in advance.
- **Informing, not persuading** — Teachers neutrally inform; activists build logical factual arguments to advocate their cause.
- **Failing to 'close the sale'** — Make clear what action you want your audience to take and why that action is necessary *right now*.
- **Providing inadequate supports** — Enhance the credibility of your message with anecdotes, analogies, definitions, examples, statistics, testimonials, and rhetorical questions.
- **Being boring** — Keep the audience with you and the message engaging, interesting, and entertaining: moderate your voice, change your physical location/position, pause at strategic moments or transitions, and use humor to solidify a point.
- **Misusing allotted time** — Time is precious and attention spans can be short. Make the most of an opportunity by conveying all your message in the time allotted.
- **Overreliance on visual aids** — Speak your message; don't 'text' it. High- and low-tech visual aids should be used sparingly to nail a point, and each should have a WOW factor.
- **Distracting, annoying body language** — Nervousness brings out idiosyncrasies; solid preparation diminishes them. A video of an impromptu presentation will help identify any distracting gestures and body language.
- **Inappropriate dress** — Dress *to* the audience *for* confidence, comfort, and, most importantly, credibility!

For more information and resources, watch Terry Sjodin at www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nt7YWymVakreat, or visit her website: www.betterlifemedia.com