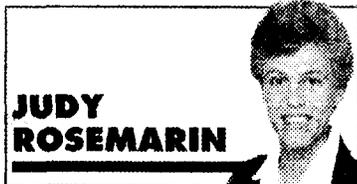


• YOUR GUIDE TO WORKING SMART •

Some Tips for Presentation Jitters



**JUDY
ROSEMARIN**

WHEN you were a kid in elementary school, did you ever have to stand in front of your class and recite a poem? Did you try to hide behind your desk so as not to be called to read a report in front of everyone? Or, as a grown up, do you sit in meetings, slouched down and fearful of participating because you don't think you have anything to offer? In other words, do you have the presentation jitters?

All too often the presentation panics come from not being clear or prepared for what you want to achieve. Years ago, I made a presentation to a women's group on the techniques of interviewing. A woman asked me if I gave assertiveness training. My answer was that I did not but what intrigued me was why the woman thought it necessary.

She said that she thought it necessary to be successful in the business world. Then, I asked her if she thought she would need assertiveness training to go directly to the principal's office if her young son was hit by his teacher in school. Of course not, she said. "I wouldn't need assertiveness training because I would know exactly what I was there for and what I wanted to say."

THAT'S exactly the point. You always need to know "exactly what you are there for and what you want to say."

When you are focused on results, then you can plan the meeting. Planning the meeting helps you get the results you are seeking. In other words, you have to know what you

want to achieve BEFORE you step into any meeting.

Joyce Newman, President of the Newman Group, who works with top level executives for speaker and media training and executive leadership development thinks that many people have presentation fears but they can be managed and even conquered.

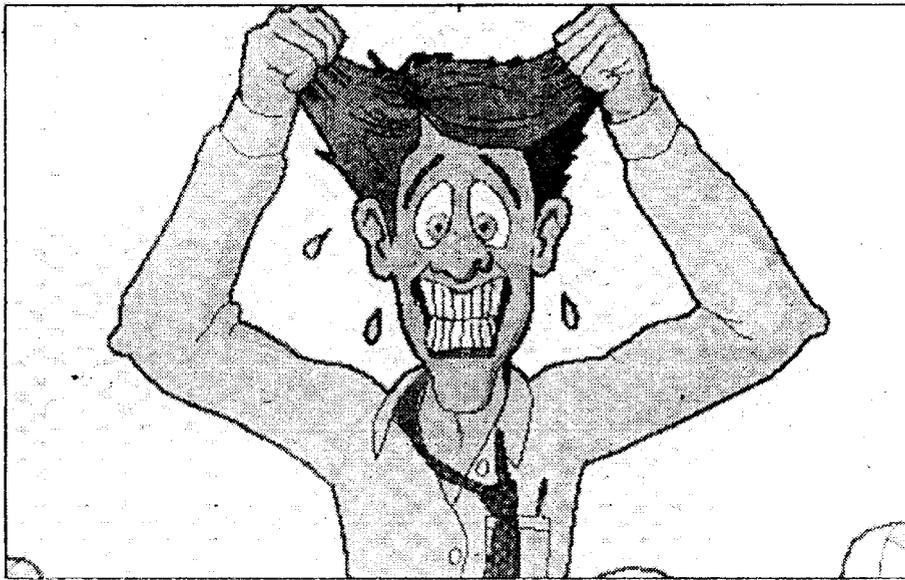
There are five steps to becoming a better presenter:

■ 1. Decide what you want to have happen and set it up to make it happen. If you are heading a meeting, get it organized, think about who will be in the meeting and make sure that you present the tone and the message congruently. If you want something to happen, or you want just to brainstorm, make it clear from the minute you open the meeting.

If it's not your meeting, don't "wait for the red sea to part and wind up not participating," says Newman. She has seen too many people leave a meeting feeling upset and shut out of meetings because they thought that they had nothing to contribute or were scared to speak up.

What happened was that these people "Edited themselves out of existence", Newman says. They thought that they had nothing to contribute. People should trust themselves, and add something to the meeting since no one knows their jobs and viewpoints better than you do. Of course, that is not a carte blanche for talking just for the sake of making noise.

■ 2. Get to the meeting early. When you get to the meeting early, particularly if the meeting has some potential tension attached to it, you can position yourself strategically. You can also collect your thoughts and settle down. If you are a woman, you may want to look for the highest chair and take that so you ensure a presence at the table. If you are asking for a raise, you can go over



DON'T PANIC!: Carefully plan out your presentation in advance, following the five steps outlined and you'll be on your way to being a better presenter.

key points that you will be raising.

■ **3. Work first impressions:** Over the years, I have worked with countless executives who think that the bottom line results are all that count in business. They are woefully shocked and surprised to discover that impressions are just as powerful as the bottom line. At times they are even more powerful, particularly when they don't fit and are out of synch with the company or culture.

Become more aware of what you wear at meetings or presentations. There are lots of theories about color and what men and women should wear. What is the current power suit? Brown is in, brown is out. Black is ultimate. Newman thinks that colors can make a difference. A woman wearing a black suit creates a different impression with a dash of a red scarf. It can be just enough of a statement so that you can be noticed. Of course, that is if you want to be noticed. For men, the same goes and Newman suggests a red tie. Red also reflects flattering light on your face when you are photographed.

Newman recalls, "I worked and coached a female banker who, it seems, no one remembered. She was talented and nice. The reason no one remembered her is how she looked. She was all brown. Her hair, was eyes, hair and suit was brown. She was hiding and it was no wonder no one remembered her."

■ **4. Check your voice.** Voice is important and you better know what you sound like. Since most of us have an answering machine, give yourself a call and listen. Listen and see if you like the way you sound. Ask yourself these questions. Would I want to leave a message for this person? Does this person sound like he or she cares about me and my call?

If you don't like the way you sound, try to tape yourself again and see what other ways you can sound more

credible, caring, concerned and connected to the caller. Sometimes you can help yourself by keeping a tape recorder in your office and tape your side of your telephone conversations. That's a sure fire way to really hear what you sound like. It can really make a difference. I think I will try that myself this week

One pet peeve presentation faux pas of mine is when people want make a statement but elevate their voices at the end of sentences so they sound like they are asking a question. This is a highly ineffective way of speaking and it amazes me how many top level people talk this way. You will not be taken seriously by anyone if they hear your voice in a questioning tone when the content is not a request.

Imagine asking for a raise with a sentence that sound like question. It would sound like this, "The results of my efforts last year saved the company \$2 million dollars?" Don't bank on success with that approach. Drop your voice when you make a statement. Don't raise it. The only raise you want is the one that has your boss's signature on it.

■ **5. Anticipate Objections** and show benefits If you are presenting at a meeting, pre-empt the objections so that you can deal with them clearly. Giving clues to the attendees that you are aware of the objections from the get go gives you a leg up on credibility. Then make sure that you show the benefits to your ideas.

Be clear and organized. Keep good eye contact and a steady voice and be sure that you show your value or the value of your ideas.

If you are asking for a raise, make sure that you show your boss what's in it for him or her. One of the best ways is to use clear examples from your past that show your current and future value to the organization. If you know the company wants to save

money and avoid problems, then your stories and examples should be positioned so that it is clear that you are expert at anticipating problems before they occur. If your company wants to grow, expand and develop, then be sure you position your stories with that point of view for your boss's eyes to see.

If you anticipate objections, then you won't be shocked and you may have a chance to show how they can be turned around. Newman says that when you bring up the objections right up front, "you own them, can deflect them and diffuse them and then you are in control."

■ **If you still have the presentation "heebee jeebies",** role play your presentation or meeting beforehand. Ask a friend, colleague or significant other for some time, or a lunch so that you can rehearse your presentation.

When you think about it, you are always presenting, in some fashion or another. Whether you are running a huge IPO meeting, defending corporate policy, running a yearly meeting, brainstorming for new fund raising ideas, sitting in weekly meetings, interviewing for a new job or negotiating a raise. It's all presenting, after all.

Preparation and practice is the key to success. You will never really know what others might ask you or think about you. You can become more prepared and a more effective presenter. Careful preparation can make the difference between shaky knees and disappointment and solid presentations with gratifying results.