

Effective rhetorical skills – Either you have it or you don't?

Rhetorical skills can be learned! Many of us may think that rhetorical skills are a gift that only a few of us have. But rhetoric – the art of effective expression and persuasive use of language – can be learned! There are a few simple tools that will help you structure your ideas and transport them effectively: non-verbal elements, effective structure and language choice, are three of them.



Non-verbal elements – More important than you may think!

59 Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear what you say! Is your body interfering with your message or supporting it?

The movements your body makes can be very important in helping your message come across clearly. Your confidence (or lack thereof!) is reflected in your body movements. And your audience reads this while listening to you.

- **Gestures up, out and slow down!** – Get your hands up above your belt and out on either side of your body. Keep your movements slow and exaggerate them.
- **Move to express another point of view** – Where you stand represents a position. By moving just half a step and coordinating it with what you say will focus the audience on a second position: e.g., My department and the client.
- **The power of silence** – Work with two types of pauses: the pause at the end of a sentence is necessary for the audience to follow you; the dramatic pause in the middle of the sentence helps you underline your point.

Non-verbal communication is a basic fundamental in every HPS training; in “PowerTalk” special care is given to this aspect – especially in the impromptu-style presentation where you have no time to prepare.

Being aware of your non-verbal cues and using them effectively needs practice and focus. Listen not only to what you say, but think about what your body is saying as well. Your audience listens to both!



Invest in structure – For YOU and for ME!

60 The automatic reaction to structure: Sure, but only for longer talks. A couple-minutes talk should be off the cuff, right?

As communicators we must expect that our audience is not concentrated, is inattentive, forgetful... – even if it's only for 3 minutes. Therefore:

- **Get to your point RIGHT away – By asking a (rhetorical) question:** “Why are we going to deal with X today?” It's worth the risk to forget those “warm-up” phrases and offer your introduction (if even necessary!) afterwards.
- **The power of THREE – especially when structured.** Three parts are easy to understand, offer clarity and build content. Help yourself and your listeners by putting them into a structure, e.g. when honouring someone: “as a person – as a colleague – as an employee,” or in a company presentation: “our company – the market – the clients”
- **Emphasize your transitions – repeat the key message.** Your structure needs support: “that was one alternative to topic X – now let's look at another.” Use with short statements, too!
- **Positive, clear call for action at the end.** Summarize and tell your audience what to do. If you don't tell them, who will? This needs to be PLANNED AHEAD of time, or you might just finish with that ‘oh so helpful’ phrase “Thank you for your attention.”

In the “PowerTalk” seminar we work through a number of these simple structures (Blitz-proposal, HPSpresso...) – both as impromptu statements and with brief preparation. Experience the difference!

Use these “power Tips” to make yourself more confident and clearer – and its easier for you, too!



The words you use – Are they really what you want to say?

61 Giving a presentation isn't like carrying on a conversation at the water cooler. You need to have impact and be understood the first time you say it.

Imagine a jockey urging its horse on but pulling back at its reigns at the same time. Very often the "little" words we use undermine our message and weaken its effect on our audience. The race will be won by someone else.

- **Use inclusive language:** Use words like we, our and us and avoid the words like I, me and my. Keep your ego hidden and include your audience more. Chances are they will support you more.
- **Squash the qualifiers:** Soften your message by saying "I sort of thought that," "In my opinion," "this might be a better approach" and you'll lose your audience. Your presentation needs to be powerful. Keep it that way.
- **Get straight to the point:** List your points clearly and concisely. Numbers help: "Point 1 is..., point 2 is... and point 3 is..." Your audience doesn't want rambling and digressions.

The language used is an integral part in every seminar we offer. Additional attention is placed on this in "Personal Presentation Power" and in "PowerTalk."

Keep the words you use focused on your audience. Use vocabulary they are used to hearing – keep your language polite, yet forceful and you'll come out on top.



Repetition is easy and effective – Hammer home your message!

62 Simple repetition of a keyword or phrase is a very powerful technique you have at your disposal. It's easy and effective – but it needs practice!

But what kind of word should you repeat? Let's take a look at four ways (Practice reading these out loud – don't forget to make pauses!):

- Repeat the modifier:
"It's **way, way** too soon to decide..."
"Let's look **very, very** closely at that step..."
"There are **many, many** reasons to move on..."
- Repeat key comparative words:
"Our presence in Asia is getting **stronger and stronger**"
"**Fewer and fewer** flights are being booked..."
"It's getting **harder and harder** to find good employees..."
- Pause, then repeat a single word for real emphasis:
"No one has beaten us on quality – **no one.**"
"We've won every race – **every one.**"
"Nothing could be better than this – **nothing.**"
- State _ Repeat _ Explain
"Profits are up...**Profits are up** because we ..."
"It won't work...**It won't** work because they..."
"We have to change ...**We have to change** before it's too late!"

Our programmes in English are especially useful for the non-native speaker. The goal is to forget the grammar and concentrate on the message, while giving you the tools to make you more fluent.

Try this in your own language, too! Simple, effective, powerful!

Questions, Ideas & Tips...

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Owner & Publisher: HPS GmbH

Editor: Charles La Fond, charles.lafond@hps-training.com

Address: HPS Hierhold Presentation Services GmbH
Mariahilferstrasse 32, A-1070 Vienna
Tel: +43 1 524 17 17 – 0
Fax: +43 1 524 17 17 – 101



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