

Focus on your audience – even in the line of fire

We're not looking at TV duels, but rather at handling questions and objections during and after business presentations. First off, preparation is paramount – 80% of all questions are predictable; but only when you have properly analysed your audience and especially their interests.



Show you care – by showing them you're listening!

79 You can only WIN with a satisfactory answer, but you can start to LOSE much earlier – even before you begin to answer!

How well your answer to a critical question or an objection is accepted depends on your relationship level with the questioner(s). Keep in mind that they may be under stress as well! They have to feel that you are listening attentively to them; that you take what they say seriously. But how?

- **Turn to them.** Step towards the questioner (if possible), stand solidly on both feet and face with your whole body – don't just turn your head!
- **Strong eye-contact.** Imagine you are sending a laser beam into the questioner's eyes.
- **Nodding shows understanding.** Don't worry, that doesn't mean that you have agreed with the objection!
- **Show interest – make polite noises.** A soft "Mmm" or "Uh-huh" shows you're listening. Avoid signals that show impatience – pay special attention to your fingers. If necessary, press them together.

Learning the visual and noticeable signals that show you really care are the last part of the classic "Effective Business Presentations" seminar.

DON'T think about how you are going to answer yet; concentrate only on one point: What is the questioner really interested in?



Cushion the question – find the real meaning

80 "Short, concise answers!" are great, but not always possible, especially with complex questions. 'Give me time to think' phrases such as "Thank you for the question" can sometimes be quite awkward.

A good answer has to fulfil two requirements: a) it has to show the questioner that you understood the question and b) it has to strengthen your own position – give support to your message. Whether the questioner is satisfied with your answer is another aspect altogether.

- **Direct reformulation** as an open question with a "wh-" question word: "What are the reasons for this ... (e.g. pricing policy?) First of all..."
- **Reformulation using the "You-opening":** "You asked why we have chosen this pricing policy. We did because..."
- **Answer with a built-in key word:** Our pricing policy is the direct result from..."

Difficult questions and questions which are really objections in disguise are part of the "Power Talk" programme. Participants who want to learn to think on their feet quickly and effectively can practice this skill here.

Observe very closely whether the key word (here; price policy) gets the questioner to nod. If not, then stop your answer and clarify.



Objections are not attacks – they are opportunities!

We often view objections as attacks, as “No” to our presentation or person, Under stress, they seem like threats – especially when they are disguised as questions.

Learning to deal with tough questions and objections using this method is a key focus in the “Selling to Groups” programme, which targets presenters who work with small groups of decision makers.

We need to deal with objections constructively. The best way is to use the five-step ACAAC method:

- **Accept:** Signal to your partner that you take the objection seriously. “Exactly. Production costs are an important aspect.”
- **Clarify:** Say/ask what is meant by that (exactly/specifically) - what the standards of comparison are “*These costs include distribution expenses...*”
- **Answer:** Deal with the content – inform, resolve, disprove, weaken. “*If you spread the costs over the planned capacity for next year, the production costs remain the same.*”
- **Counterbalance:** Confirm the objection and then offset with advantages. “*You are right - initial investment is high. How-ever, over a 5-year period, costs/unit decrease significantly.*”
- **Check:** Check to see if that takes care of everything, re-entering the loop if the answer is “No!” “*Does this answer your question?*”

TIP: “Let the garbage go by” – Don’t react to EVERY objection.



English Tips – Reformulating and opening up closed questions

Listen carefully to the question and then reformulate it simply and clearly for everyone to hear.

Our international English seminars focus on the non-native speaker of English. The goal is to forget the grammar and concentrate on the message, while giving you the tools to make you fluent.

There are three important steps to reformulating and opening up closed questions which will show your questioner you understand the question. You will also be able to focus on your key message. Highlighting information:

- **“wh-“ question words** are question words like: When...? Why...? Which...? Who...? What...? and How...? *Have you calculated that? → Which calculations have I made?*
- **Reformulate positively.** Leave out the negative elements (not, none, never) and negative words (lose, fail, waste). *Aren’t there any negative consequences? → What kind of consequences are we facing?*
- **Remove the emotive words** and do not let yourself be provoked by them. Restate the question as positively as possible. *Are you even qualified to make such a claim? → What qualifications do I have to make this statement?*

By using these suggestions, you’ll show your questioner you care and still get your message across, too.

Questions, Ideas & Tips ...

NEW ADDRESS
Mariahilfer Straße 34
Tel: 522 40 50-0 Fax Ext. 50

Owner & Publisher: HPS GmbH

Editor: Charles La Fond, charles.lafond@hps-training.com
Adresse: HPS Hierhold Presentation Services GmbH
Mariahilferstrasse 34, 1070 Vienna
Tel: +43 1 522 40 50 - 0
Fax: +43 1 522 40 50 - 50

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