Communicating to a Group — Making Your Presentation Memorable

By BOB GREENFIELD

We’ve all listened to presentations, some good, some great, some awful. What makes the great ones so memorable? As more and more of us are required by our jobs to give formal presentations, this is an increasingly important topic and a truly essential skill set. Every presentation is an amazing and inevitable opportunity to set yourself apart from the crowd. So, how do you ensure that you are memorable for the right reasons? There are plenty of books about formal communication and presentations addressing proper structure, format, and providing a host of novel techniques. I’d like to focus on three simple things that any presenter can do to make your presentation more effective at creating the results you want.

1. MAKE YOUR POINT

Unless your purpose is purely entertainment, you’re there to make a point (or perhaps more than one) and to ask for something. You need to be exceptionally clear about both. Surprisingly, unskilled presenters often neglect to actually make their point once they get to talking. So, what is your point? What’s the one thing that must be communicated? What’s the one thing you want your audience to remember? Keep in mind that your audience actually wants and needs some structure from you. Tell them what you are going to do and what your purpose is.

In addition to a central point, nearly all good presentations include an “ask.” Your ask is what you invite, encourage, or challenge your audience to do as a result of your presentation. Do you want your audience to take action? To make a decision? To consider a proposal or new idea? To see something through a different lens? To adopt a perspective? To agree or disagree with something? To simply come to a different understanding than they started with? Your ask is integrally related to your purpose. It is not uncommon for a presenter to give an otherwise good presentation but neglect to make their ask. Common reasons for this include anything from fear to lack of preparation and poor structure. Whatever the reason, don’t let it happen to you.

2. FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR PRESENTATION

Does your presentation turn you on? If not, change it, quickly, before you get anywhere near your audience. If you do not like your presentation, what do you think the chances are that your audience will differ with you? It is not principally the content or what you say that engages the audience. With a live presentation, whether in front of 500 people or just 5, the main attraction is always the presenter. That’s right - you! Before the audience can buy into your message, it must first buy into the messenger. If your audience cannot easily buy into you, your message has no chance. To be compelling, you have to believe in your message. Unfortunately, if you are not sold on or excited about your presentation, that will come across much more clearly than you’d like. It doesn’t matter how ordinary or dry you think your topic is. You owe your audience your best effort to make it interesting. Tell stories of horrendous failures or awe-inspiring successes. Offer new insights about a familiar idea. Discuss an overlooked quality of something easily taken for granted. Give a demonstration. Your local bookstore has a shelf of books full of tips and techniques for incorporating “sizzle” into your presentation. You want your audience to believe you start by making sure you can believe yourself.

The best way to do this is to turn your presentation into something you can’t wait to deliver. If you want it to be fun or exciting for your audience to hear, make it fun or exciting for you to deliver. There is a portion of stage fright or pre-presentation anxiety that comes from an irrational fear that your audience won’t like you or your message. If you’re feeling some of this, welcome to the human race. There is also the very rational and quite predictable anxiety that your audience won’t like your presentation because it’s a dog. If you’re feeling some of this, get back to work. You should be feeling uncomfortable because you are about to break the cardinal rule for presenters — never waste your audience’s time.

3. KEEP IT PERSONAL

As a presenter, you cannot hide, nor should you. This doesn’t stop many of us from trying. Again, a great presentation is not just about information. Otherwise you could just hand out copies of your well-written presentation and be done with it. Reading aloud a written report is the epitome of impersonal. A presentation is supposed to be personal, and your audience doesn’t want to watch a perfectly programmed robot deliver a presentation utterly devoid of personality. So put your personality on full display. Any personality at all is more interesting than written or monotonously spoken words, and it certainly beats staring at your PowerPoint slides. Subscribing to and truly embodying this may not be easy, but it’s worth remembering and working at. Believing that you deserve your audience’s attention and that it will want to see your personality is mostly about self-acceptance and confidence. Some thoughtful preparation and consideration of what is appropriate to your audience, topic, and setting will also help.

Clearly making your point, loving your presentation, and being yourself will improve your presentation and make you more memorable. Here are three final tips that any presenter can apply.

1. Be imaginative. Think outside of the proverbial box, and bring your unique spin or touch to the presentation.
2. Be prepared. Audiences are just as uncomfortable as the presenter when he’s bombing. Rehearse and refine your presentation until you have it nailed. Rehearse your presentation out loud. Reviewing your presentation is not rehearsing it. Regardless of what you have typed or written out, you’re not going to know what’s going to come out of your mouth until you hear yourself say it.
3. Be selfish. Again, make it interesting for yourself. If it’s not interesting to say, it’s probably not going to be interesting to hear.

Bob Greenfield is an organization development consultant, and is owner and principle consultant of Greenfield Management Strategies (GMS). Established in 1999, GMS helps individuals and groups in the private, non-profit, and public sectors become more effective at creating the results they want. Bob can be contacted directly at (818) 506-7100 or via gms@icentral.net. GMS’ website is www.greenfieldmanagementstrategies.com.
The Office Holiday Party: The Top 5 Reasons to Go Bowling and 5 Super-Helpful Tips for Booking Your Event

Exactly your company across the country search for the perfect setting to host their holiday party and the perfect activity to engage, entertain, and reward their employees. So how can you make sure that your party stands out from the rest? One way is to treat your office to the team-inspired fun of bowling. Bowling? Really? Definitely. You may remember bowling from your childhood friend’s 10th birthday party, but today more and more companies are choosing to bring their teams to enjoy blacklight bowling and gourmet dining in impressively designed Bowlmor Lanes and Bowlero venues. Here Bowlmor AMF, the owner of LA’s ever-popular Bowlmor Lanes and Bowlero bowling lounges, shows you how bowling with your colleagues can turn your annual office holiday party into the Best Meeting Ever.

TOP 5 REASONS TO GO BOWLING FOR YOUR OFFICE HOLIDAY PARTY

1. It’s Interactive. When you’re bowling, everyone is engaged—and no one is feeling like that lonely guy or girl in the corner office holiday parties can be notorious for that. Bowlmor and Bowlero take this engagement to the next level—incorporating dynamic video walls, up-tempo music, and laneside service to make the party experience undeniably immersive.

2. It’s Team-Oriented. Team building is in bowling’s DNA; it’s built into the experience. When you bowl, your informal teams become a kind of mini-community for your party (and sometimes, well after the party). The takeaway: office camaraderie comes standard with every laneside holiday event.

3. It’s Upscale Without Being Stale. Bowlmor and Bowlero bowling lounges bring a fun, chic, classy vibe to your holiday party without the stuffy air of a fancy restaurant where people mingle but don’t actually have fun.

4. It Covers the Office Age-Gap. From the Baby Boomer boss to the Gen-X manager to the Millennial up-and-comer, everyone can get in on the fun—whether you want to enjoy a drink on plush laneside couches, roll like a rebel on the lanes, or hit up the arcade and unleash your inner child.

5. It’s Not the Conference Room. Taking your team out of the office shows that your party took some thought—and that it wasn’t just an afterthought. (What? People don’t like eating chips and salsa on the same table they prepared reports and hold meetings…? No, they don’t.) When you leave the office and hit the lanes, you have officially entered party-land.

5 TIPS TO BOOK LIKE A PRO

1. Plan Early. Really Early. Area venues fill up quickly (our locations in Pasadena, Santa Monica, and Mar Vista can all attest to this). And it’s never a fun experience when you discover that your ideal venue has a months-long waiting list.

2. Plan Early. Yes, we mentioned it twice. It’s that important. Plus, you can usually get exclusive extras and special deals on your holiday party the earlier in the season you decide to book. (Take advantage of Bowlmor’s special early booking offers now—book before 9/30 and get Free $20 Gift Cards for each of your guests plus Free Dessert for your event. Go to Bowlmor.com/holiday or Bowlero.com/holiday to learn more!)

3. Work With a Professional. A party planning expert can help alleviate the stress and frustration that can accompany planning your company’s office holiday event. Fortunately, Bowlmor and Bowlero venues feature on-site party planning professionals ready to facilitate every aspect of the process.

4. Know Your Numbers. It helps to know just how many will be in your party. Will you need a few lanes? More than 10? Or do you want to go all out and reserve the entire venue for your holiday event? Every Bowlmor and Bowlero gives you the flexibility to customize your party—from the number of lanes to the kind of menu items your guests crave.

5. Find the Venue That’s Right for You. The Greater Los Angeles area has three world-class options for businesses looking to book memorable office parties this holiday season: Bowlmor Pasadena, Bowlmor Santa Monica, and Bowlero Mar Vista. Each venue has its own distinctive style and approach to office holiday fun—with private bowling lounges, semi-private event spaces, and patio-inspired lounge areas that can help set the tone perfectly for any office holiday party.
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10 Tips and Hacks for Perfect Catering at Your Event

When you are handed the daunting task of organizing the catering for the office, business or even private party, it's hard not panic, especially once you start browsing online at the million and one options when you search the term “party food” or “catering,” the mind melts, where do I start? The options are far and wide.

The best place to start is to ask yourself what size of event am I undertaking here?

Big events (100 people or more) take a lot of work and you will definitely need professional help. But if you are catering for less than 100 people it is definitely possible to organize this with a minimum of fuss, if you answer ten basic questions:

1. **Do you have a budget?**
2. **What time is your event?**
3. **How long will you need food?**
4. **Who are you feeding?**
5. **Is it a meal or something just to eat?**
6. **Is it standing or sitting? Or both?**
7. **Are there any special dietary requirements?**
8. **Is there a place to prepare and serve the catering?**
9. **Do you need staff or self serve?**
10. **Who is cleaning up?**

### 1. **Do you have a budget?**

Everyone has a budget, even if you haven't formulated it yet. It's first thing to finalize. Try your hardest to stick to it, otherwise things can get out of control and you could be in a lot of trouble with your boss.

### 2. **What time is your event?**

This determines the style of food you need, do you need breakfast, lunch, dinner or just something to absorb the alcohol before people move on.

### 3. **How long will you need food?**

Sometimes people come and go from parties so it's important to cater to everybody as they arrive at the party, this is the definition of a good host. Sometimes people also want something later in the night, midnight munchies are not uncommon at many modern weddings.

### 4. **Who are you feeding?**

Gender and age go a long way in determining what type of food, how much food, what quality food, that you are preparing to serve. It's so obvious a point that it's something that people forget to consider – they think we all eat the same amount, but that's not true. This can determine whether you order over or under order the amount of food for your function.

### 5. **Is it a meal or something just to eat?**

Subsequent to all the questions up to number four, this point will answer itself once you have examined the guest list, the time of eating, the style of party, whether you want something substantial or just something to tickle the fancy.

### 6. **Is it standing or sitting? Or both?**

This is an important question because finger food and seated dining are two very different types of catering. Canapés can start the night on a special note, then the chef can whip up something very special for your seated occasion. It's also worth noting that canapés or finger food are not going to fill people up, unless you have 10 to 12 per person. It's so obvious a point that it's something that people forget to consider – they think we all eat the same amount, but that's not true. This can determine whether you order over or under order the amount of food for your function.

### 7. **Are there any special dietary requirements?**

More and more we are seeing that people are allergic to food, this can cause anaphylactic reaction which can cause severe injury or even death. This means you have to be on top of your game when ordering food for people with allergies. The other issue concerning this question is the diversity of food lifestyles on offer – i.e. vegan, vegetarian, or cetera.

### 8. **Is there a place to prepare and serve the catering?**

The place matters for yourself or the catering company to know, as experience tells us that if you don't have a private or semi-private area to organize your food, then interruptions and general confusion will reign, you’ve heard the saying – too many chefs spoil the broth!

### 9. **Do you need staff or self-serve?**

Sometimes people like to do these things on their own, which will save a lot of money. This is definitely possible, as so many people these days are such good cooks, however there are other options available. Our company - Box Catering - does drop off catering. Drop off catering is where chefs prepare the food to the point where it’s ready to serve and load into temperature controlled boxes, be they hot or cold, and those boxes are delivered to the party venue, ready for the customer to serve when he or she is ready. This is a great option for many people, especially as all the food can be ordered online and we are always available for consulting if you need any help.

### 10. **Who is cleaning up?**

The rule in many homes is that if you cook you don't clean. However this might not apply as your business event winds up, just be sure to have people allocated otherwise it will all fall in your lap.

Information for this article was provided by Box Catering.

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### The Implications and Opportunities of Strategic Meetings Management

As part of its commitment to furthering the success of the meeting and event industry, the Meeting Professionals International (MPI) Foundation has concluded its research study on Strategic Meetings Management (SMM).

The goal of the research initiative was to gain a deeper understanding of SMM as a disciplined approach to managing enterprise-wide meeting and event activities, processes, suppliers and data. Specifically, the researchers evaluated how SMM has evolved as well as the implications and opportunities future applications. SMM has been a hard concept to define. While there are many best practices, SMM varies from organization to organization, said Cindy Danton, chief operating officer of MPI. “With this research, we are looking to broaden the scope of SMM and position it as a framework for optimizing meetings across enterprises.”

The SMM concept was first introduced more than a decade ago as businesses strove to manage costs and mitigate risk. That need grew throughout the recent recession a few years ago. However, as SMM programs matured, businesses found that they also proved useful in designing events that meet organization-wide goals and for improving the delegate and stakeholder experience.

Following are highlights from the study published in the “Strategic Meetings Management (SMM): Taxonomy, Growth and Future” report:

- **ROI** is both financial and emotional. Successful SMM can engage attendees before, during and after the meeting is over.
- **Measurements** must not be based solely on ROI but on RCOO as well – return on objectives and RCOO metrics need to be developed for the industry.
- **Stakeholder support** from all levels of organization is critical for SMM success.
- **SMM** is not “one size fits all.” It must be aligned to fit each company’s business goals, objectives and corporate culture.
- Creating and nurturing business partnerships is an increasingly important aspect to SMM in helping to reduce risk, garner better service and improve negotiating power.

The study was commissioned by the MPI Foundation and conducted by the International Center for Research Events, Tourism and Hospitality (ICRESH) at Leeds Metropolitan University. SMM subject experts from Your Corporate Source and Bonduard Consulting were collaborating partners.

Phase I of the research project involved collating and cataloging published SMM documents, surveys with meeting professionals, participation in educational sessions and interviews with subject matter experts between October 2012 and June 2013. Phase II will continue through 2014 and includes utilizing the findings to create professional development tools and make recommendations for the future. Tools include case studies, video guides, white papers and research reports for practitioners at all levels.

According to Dr. Elia Hiscon from ICRESH, who conducted several of the interviews from the study, “Many larger organisations within the U.S. are moving towards mature SMM Programs (SMMFs), and we can see benefits expanding from simply cost consolidation to one more focused on the participant experience. We are seeing recognition of the value SMM can bring to event activities and long-term business goals.”

To access the research report and additional SMM resources, visit www.mpifoundation.org.
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Whitepaper Unveils Best Practices for Increasing Efficiencies with eRFPs

Last summer, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Meetings Committee and the Convention Industry Council (CIC) APEX Workgroup (APEX) released a joint whitepaper, “Improving eRFP Efficiency and Effectiveness for the Meetings Industry.” The whitepaper combined findings from complimentary research conducted by the two groups examining eRFP use, drivers and efforts to provide recommendations for improving the eRFP process. GBTA conducted an online survey of 412 buyers, suppliers and third party agencies that looked at the impact of eRFPs on buyers, third parties and suppliers. CIC’s research included 20 interviews with individuals representing a cross section of planners who source locations for events and was conducted by Tern Breining (Breining Group) and Manuela McBooth (Meeting Change).

Use of electronic Request for Proposals (eRFP) to source hotels and venues has boomed in recent years. This joint whitepaper focuses on trends in eRFP use from the perspective of all constituencies involved in the sourcing process including corporate/association buyers, hoteliers, third party buyers, meeting management companies, meeting technology companies and convention & visitor bureaus. While this has brought many benefits to the meetings industry, it also brings significant challenges due to the high volume of eRFPs issued, which are outlined in the whitepaper.

“eRFPs are clearly a positive tool for the meetings industry, but there is no question that in recent years their rapidly growing use has created significant challenges,” said Shimon Avish, GBTA Meetings Conference Member and Principal of Shimon Avish Consulting LLC. “We were pleased to work with CIC’s APEX Workgroup to create this whitepaper identifying the next steps to making the eRFP process more efficient and effective in an effort to continue to bolster the meetings industry.”

The whitepaper reveals several emerging best practices to reduce the number of eRFPs coming to market and increase satisfaction of all stakeholders involved in the process:

- Education – sourcing professionals must educate buyers on the impacts of over-issuing eRFPs as well as the benefits of both research to ensure appropriate hotel/venues are sourced and the importance of providing complete information.
- Processes – adopting standardized templates and better communications are among the ways to improve processes in dealing with eRFPs.
- Limits – limits can be imposed through policy or technology to keep the number of eRFPs down.
- Technology Solutions – technology can be used to facilitate lead management processes for destination marketing.

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The American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI) has signed an agreement with Knowledge Matters that will provide high school students who complete the Virtual Business Hotel Online simulation with an exemption from the 100-hour internship component of the industry-recognized Certification in Hospitality Tourism and Management (CHTM). Students still need to pass both the Year 1 and Year 2 exams for the Hospitality & Business Management Program (HBM) curriculum.

“AHLEI is thrilled to be partnering with Knowledge Matters to better prepare our high school students for careers in the hospitality industry,” said Shelly Weir, AHLEI’s vice president, Marketplace Education. “Today’s students are tech-driven and tech-savvy. Giving them options to gain critical knowledge through virtual experience makes sense. Students will have the opportunity make decisions in a simulated environment and see the impact of their decisions on both customer satisfaction and the bottom line. We are pleased to work with AHLEI to provide students with the tools they need to succeed – in school and in the workplace,” said Peter Jordan, president and CEO of Knowledge Matters.

Established in 1973 as the nonprofit educational and training arm of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AH&LA), AHLEI’s mission is to drive the hospitality, lodging and related industries by developing and providing quality resources to educate, develop, and certify hospitality professionals worldwide. Knowledge Matters is the leading provider of cloud-based, educational simulations for business and personal finance. The company’s Virtual Business line of simulations have been used in over 16,000 schools in the United States.

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