Tips on presenting

If you're intimidated by giving presentations, you're not alone. Public speaking makes many people feel nervous. But as with most things, the more you do it, the more natural it will feel. With time and practice, you'll become more confident in your public speaking skills. In this reading, you'll learn some tips for leading great presentations that keep your audience engaged.

Tip 1: Speak clearly and slowly

If you're nervous while presenting, you might speak too fast. You'll want your audience to be able to clearly understand everything you say. So, it helps to pace yourself while you speak. You might even consider tapping your toe within your shoe to keep a rhythm while you speak.

Tip 2: Allow for pauses

Pauses display confidence and help set the pace for your presentation. Some ideal times to stop for pauses include when you pose a question to the audience, or when you transition to a new section of your presentation. Adding a meaningful pause is also a great way to make sure that you aren't speaking too quickly!

Tip 3: Make eye contact

As you present, try to make eye contact with different people in the audience. Make eye contact with one person for 3-5 seconds before moving on to the next person. This helps you connect with members of the audience and keeps everyone engaged in your presentation.

If looking someone in the eye makes you uncomfortable, here's another tip you can try: look at a person's forehead instead of directly in their eyes. Or, try to look at each person at eye level, but look directly past at the wall behind them as you scan the audience. This will make it seem like you're making eye contact with the audience without actually doing it.

When presenting virtually, make sure to look directly at your webcam. This will help the audience feel as if you're looking at them, even though you're not in the same room. Try posting your notes to the side of your computer screen so you're not glancing down during the presentation.

Tip 4: Tell a story

If you are using digital tools to create a presentation, like Google Slides or Microsoft PowerPoint, think of your presentation as a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Each slide should push the story you're telling forward, and the story should flow from slide to slide. Part of telling an effective and engaging story is including examples of actual users, such as quotes, photos, or short video clips from interactions with users. Storytelling is more powerful than sharing a list of research insights because your audience can observe the emotions, pain points, and delights of your product from a real user's point of view.

Tip 5: Be concise

While it's great to use stories and data to keep your audience engaged, be sure that everything you share adds value to your presentation. Keep the information you present concise and to the point. A study found that the average human attention span is eight seconds. This means you have a very short amount of time to hook your audience and keep them engaged!

Tip 6: Know your audience

Your tone and the content of your presentation should be appropriate for the audience that you are connecting with. For example, your presentation will be more informal and might use different terminology when you're with a group of colleagues versus external clients. Similarly, let your audience know *you.* Be yourself and let your personality shine. This will help you appear more authentic and can strengthen trust between you and the audience.