

department or the firm of what's being proposed. Find out about what's happening in the field. Read professional journals, newspaper and magazine articles so you always have a rare bit of extra information to contribute. Getting ahead means getting ahead of the pack in how you work and what you know.

Look Confident and Interested

No one knows how nervous you are or how out of a discussion you may feel. You can look as though you're listening and concentrating even though your heart's beating fast. Be careful about fidgeting with your things or in your seat. Doodling isn't helpful. Taking notes is better. If you find yourself getting bored or dozing off, get up and get a cup of coffee or go out of the room for a few minutes. Movement and a change help get you back in gear.

Speak Up

If you have trouble getting the courage to speak up, go back to Chapter 7, *How to Make Memorable Speeches*. On page 00 I spoke about stage fright. Read it again. It'll help you speak up at a meeting, something you must do if anyone's ever going to get to know you and your capabilities.

Since you know what the agenda's going to be, get an idea or two formed in your mind. Do a little research. Some people like to discuss things with a friend or two to get a reaction. Don't come in prepared to make a major speech the first time! But do take a small step till you feel comfortable enough to begin to improvise and think at your seat. The more attentively you listen to others at the meeting, the more you'll find things to add that are uniquely your own.

Footnote: Be careful *not* to talk if you have nothing to say or add! It's not how *often* you talk as much as *what* you say that matters and impresses.

Ask Questions

Another way to be heard is to ask questions. Not off-the-wall but questions for further clarification or information. This makes you sound interested and smart (if you ask *good* questions) and allows you still to participate when you don't have a lot to contribute.