

They are only petitioners, *asking* for your gift. *You'll* decide what and how much to give.

- *Exhilarated*

Not all your feelings are negative. If you're a fighter, a competitor, or a performer who likes public performance, answering questions extemporaneously feels exciting, like a contest. That's great, in a way, because it will provide you with the adrenal surge to rise to the occasion and do a good job. The danger here is seeing it as a personal win/lose contest. This makes it very difficult to listen and think. It shuts down your ability to make choices since you've drawn battle lines—and about something other than enlightenment or resolving disputes.

Response: See the process as benign, not competitive. They're not your adversaries. They don't know as much about your subject, and want more, or they know your subject but not from your unique point of view, and need to know more. So you don't need to compete or fight with them. You've already won, by owning the material. Now you're in the position of helping them climb aboard.

ANSWERING TECHNIQUES

Getting Started

Create an Environment

If you truly mean to invite your audience to ask questions, you have to let them know you really mean for them to do it. A perfunctory "Any questions?" doesn't inspire your audience to make the effort. People are generally shy and need encouragement in order to expose themselves or even to move. Try this:

"Although I think I told you everything I could within the time allowed, there are probably some things I left out. Maybe something I described was not clear. I really want you to understand my subject, so please ask me whatever else you need or want to know."

This gets people moving because you gave them a reason to ask and showed them that you genuinely want a chance to clarify. Here's another approach.

"Much of what I said is very complex, technical, and new. Having