

blankly or asking again or just waiting. Don't badger or cajole. Laughing *with* it shows your strength.

Why People Don't Ask

Understanding how people feel and why they're reluctant to ask will help you know what to say to them:

- "Mine may not be a good question."
- "Why stick my neck out in a crowd—especially this crowd with many of my peers and bosses in it?"
- "I may not be able to articulate my question well."
- "**Td like to** ask but **I** feel a little shy about confronting someone, especially an expert."
- "My question may not interest too many other people. Better not ask it in public."

It's also useful to tell them at the beginning to think of questions or write them down as you go along so you can respond at the end. Giving an assignment in advance gives them time to think about a good question and to formulate it well in their own minds.

How to Get Off If No One Asks

If *no one* asks, even after all my suggestions, save face and bow out gracefully. Don't let the momentum of your good speech die:

"Well, I guess I'm a much better speaker than I thought! I must have explained my subject so well that you got it all! Thank you so much for letting me tell you about it"—and get off, with a smile and a flourish. (Crying and throwing up later.)

Handling Questions

Listen!

Easy to say, hard to do. Because of the melange of all those apprehensive feelings (described earlier) that you probably have, it's very difficult to squash your anxious inner voices and listen to someone else's. To *truly* listen, not just imagine where they're going and sail off on an answer, you need to: