



Quick Presentation Tips

*The formula for **making** people listen*

By Jean Van Rensselar

What you're going to read here are presentation tips you've probably never seen before. In essence, you're going to learn the formula for making people listen. Yes, there is one and yes, it does work. Try it one time and you'll see.

Wouldn't it be nice if people in the room didn't yawn, whisper, text, or play with apps while you're presenting? Wouldn't it be nice if nearly everyone was hanging on your every word and you actually saw several people jotting down notes? Wouldn't it be nice if you had the attention of a quarterback in a goal line huddle?

It happens all the time. But it happens to the same presenters all the time, while others get the texters...all the time. The difference between success and failure really boils down to a formula.

Based on field testing and the advice of Ed Wohlmuth, author of *The Overnight Guide to Public Speaking* – an excellent book that is no longer in print - here are five messages you need to convey to listeners in order to get their rapt attention.

1. I Will Not Waste Your Time

Within the first few seconds of the presentation, you need to let everyone know about how long you'll be speaking and what's so interesting about the topic. Don't make any promises you can't keep. Here's an example:

In the next 20 minutes, you're going to learn everything you need to know about hiring Generation Y employees – from what kinds of benefits and recognition they expect to how many times you can expect their parents to call.

Wouldn't it be nice if you had the attention of a quarterback in a goal line huddle?

I would add, don't open with anything cute. It sends an immediate signal that you are indeed planning to waste their time.

2. I Know what you Know and I Know More than that.

Let everyone know - that you know - how much expertise they have on the topic and that you plan to provide more. Here's an example:

As you know, HR is working overtime to keep new Gen Y hires knee deep in incentives – and by “incentives” I mean not just electronics and iPods, but the soft rewards they really want like days off and tickets to ball games. How do I know this? I've been meeting with our HR department off and on for the last three weeks to discuss this and I attended a two-day seminar on Gen Y hiring practices in November.

3. This is My Main Point

You want everyone to pay attention while you drive home your most important point. So it's a good idea to give some indication as to what it is ahead of time. As you begin your presentation, say something like this:

Hiring and retaining Gen Y employees is easy if you remember that they need to feel special.

Then, later on in your presentation – everyone will really listen when you say:

As I mentioned earlier, the bottom line is this: Gen Y employees need to feel special and here's how to do it.

4. This will be Easy to Follow

Offering some kind of mental outline to participants at the outset keeps them on their toes. Think of adding phrases such as these:

- *There are six things you must promise to Gen Y employees before they will even consider working here.*
- *You're juggling three generations of employees – Boomers, Gen Xers and Gen Ys – I'm going to tell you a little about each of the first two in terms of motivation and then really dive into Gen Ys.*
- *There are four things you thought you knew about hiring Gen Y employees that are just plain wrong.*

5. Listen Up - I'm Just About Finished

Research shows that people perk up when they think the presentation is just about over. So it pays to let the audience know when you're close to the end and then wrap it up in five minutes or less. The worst thing to do is indicate that you're almost finished and then rattle on for another 20 minutes. Say something like this:

Thanks for coming and thanks for listening. Now that you know how to hire and retain new Gen Y employees, I'm going to give you one last bit of advice.

Putting it all Together

Sample opening

In the next 20 minutes, you're going to learn everything you need to know about hiring Generation Y employees – from what kinds of benefits and recognition they expect to how many times you can expect their parents to call.

As you know, HR is working overtime to keep new Gen Y hires knee deep in incentives – and by “incentives” I mean not just electronics and iPods, but the soft rewards they really want like days off and tickets to ball games. How do I know this? I’ve been meeting with our HR department off and on for the last three weeks to discuss this and I attended a two-day seminar on Gen Y hiring practices in November.

Hiring and retaining Gen Y employees is easy if you remember that they need to feel special. I’ll get into that in a couple minutes but first, I’m going to tell you four things you thought you knew about Gen Y employees that are just plain wrong....

Somewhere in the middle

As I mentioned earlier, the bottom line is this: Gen Y employees need to feel special and here’s how to do it....

Toward the end

Thank you for listening. Now that you know how to hire and retain new Gen Y employees, I’m going to give you one last bit of advice....

It’s all pretty simple.

The key to engaging participants is breaking the illusion of separation between you and them. You want each person to feel as if you are speaking directly to him or her. When they leave, you want them to be genuinely better off in some way - you want them to look forward to your next presentation.

About the Author

Jean Van Rensselar is the owner of Chicago-based Smart PR Communications, which specializes in public relations and communications strategy, creation, and implementation for small and mid-sized tech-oriented B2Bs. You can reach her at Jean@SmartPRCommunications.com or 630-363-8081.