Public Speaking... Yes You Can!

From: CSI – Communication and Leadership

Nonverbal and Vocal Skills

- 93% of communication is nonverbal.
- Your message matters, but not if you’re staring at the floor.
- What are nonverbal and vocal skills that we need to consider when giving a presentation?
  - Eye contact
  - Posture
  - Facial expressions
  - Hand gestures
  - Movement
  - Volume/projection
  - Pitch, rate, tone
  - Tone
  - Pausing – no “fillers”
  - Articulation
  - Appearance

Preparing Presentations

- Be Clear about the Purpose of Your Presentation.
  - What is the format/style of the presentation (e.g., discussion or formal talk)?
  - What information does the audience need or expect?
  - Will you be presenting new information or building on previous knowledge of a subject?

- Know your Audience.
  - What is the size of your audience? What are your audience demographics?
  - Is the audience likely to be friendly and/or interactive? Formal or informal?
• **Know Your Time Constraints**
  
  o How long are you expected to speak?
  
  o Long presentations allow you the freedom to explore your topic more in depth and engage the audience.
  
  o Short presentations should be kept to only **essential** points.
  
  o How much time is allotted for Q&A?
  
  o **Speak SLOW** – 100 words per minute (normal conversation occurs at 300 words per minute)

• **Preparation is key to delivering good presentations.**
  
  o Start early and avoid procrastination
  
  o Clarify your topic and identify the main points you wish to address
  
  o Research supporting data for each point
  
  o Create an outline or “idea network” to help you relate and transition between your main points

• **Arrange your main points in a logical sequence.**
  
  o How will you engage the audience at the beginning?
  
  o Provide an overview of your main points (determine the most essential points)
  
  o Arrange from most important to least important
  
  o Determine transition elements (How do the points relate?)
  
  o Conclude with main points... again.

• **Using Visual Aids**
  
  o Use key phrases only
  
  o Layout of slides is important – keep important information near the top
  
  o Limit punctuation and avoid using all capital letters
  
  o **Avoid fancy or hard-to-read fonts**
  
  o Use contrasting colors for text and background
  
  o Consider your audience when choosing a template
  
  o Limit the number of slides you use
  
  o Use photos, charts and graphs
  
  o **Avoid excessive use of transition/animation elements**
• Other Essential Tips
  o An involved audience is an engaged audience
  o Keep your hands out of your pockets and do not chew gum or mints
  o Be prepared enough to allow for spontaneity
  o Avoid highly technical or specialized terms
  o Convey enthusiasm for your topic
  o Prepare for technology difficulties
  o Forecast questions that might be asked and practice responding – the ability to think on your feet is crucial

• Handling Audience Questions
  o Always repeat the question. Or if necessary, ask for the question to be repeated.
  o Take a moment to reflect on the question.
  o If you can’t answer the question, just say so – don’t fake it. You can:
    ▪ Offer to research the answer and get back to them.
    ▪ Suggest resources that would lead to the answer.
    ▪ Ask the audience.
  o After answering, ask the person who asked the question if you answered sufficiently.

• Practice Makes Better
  o Practice in front of others and solicit honest and constructive feedback
  o Videotape yourself and watch for what needs improvement
    ▪ Difficult to do, but very effective!
  o Practice with your visual aids and plan for using more than one method
  o The more you practice, the less nervous you will be before and during your presentation!
    ▪ Try to channel nervous energy into performance energy! Nervousness is normal!