

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Boring Triggers Snoring

Once attended a presentation by an executive who began by saying, “I want to get through the initial slides so we can get to the interesting stuff.” How would you react to this remark if you were in his audience? Think about it.

Maybe you would decide to tune out rather than bothering to listen to material the speaker considers boring. Perhaps you’d conclude that the speaker didn’t think enough of you to want to make the initial slides interesting. If you’re like me, you’d wonder whether the later slides would be any better than the initial slides. As it turned out, they weren’t. Slide after slide was crammed with tedious, eye-straining, color-clashing detail. Even with my spectacle-assisted 20/20 vision, I couldn’t see his slides clearly or grasp the points he was making.

This was right after lunch, mind you, and it was one of those carbo-laden lunches from the cook-book, *How to Eke By on 8000 Calories a Day*. To make matters worse, we were in a room darkened just enough to feel like naptime. And the speaker droned on and on about each successive slide.

Instead of informing, persuading, educating or entertaining his listeners, this executive was making them regret their decision to attend.

When you deliver presentations, think about the impact of your words — whether you’re presenting to customers, prospective customers, senior management, or anyone else. It’s so easy to toss off a comment or make a flip remark and in doing so, convey a message that’s other than what you intended. Such as that listeners will have to sit tight

and endure the first several slides that have been included in the presentation even though they’re boring.

As important as your words are in influencing listeners’ reactions, your energy in delivering the presentation is also important. If you want your audience to feel enthusiastic about what you’re presenting, be enthusiastic in presenting it. This applies especially to your opening remarks, because that’s when listeners draw conclusions about the quality of your entire talk. Get off to a yawn-inducing, put-’em-to-sleep start, and you may have difficulty reversing the negative impression you created,

even if an orator-quality delivery follows.

If you believe part of your talk is dull, tedious, tiresome, obtuse, monotonous, or fatiguing (my thesaurus offers these words as alternatives for “boring”), whatever you do, don’t announce that fact to your audience! Who knows, maybe what you consider

mind-numbing, they’ll find fascinating. Even better,

though, do your audience a favor and eliminate material you feel compelled to

apologize about. And trash all visuals that lead you to say, “I know you can’t see this, but...”. If your audience can’t see it, omit it!

Delivering your presentation with energy, enthusiasm, ebullience, exuberance and exhilaration (my thesaurus is big on presentation Es) will make all the difference between whether your audience enjoys it or spends the time catching up on their Zs.

