

PRESENTATION NULLIFICATION

7 Ways Presenters Mess Up and Solutions So That You Don't

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Every day, there are people in offices and conference rooms presenting “irrefutable” facts, “compelling” ideas, “logical” solutions, and “bullet-proof” success strategies that come across flatter than yesterday’s soda.

Why? Because, like many of us, those presenters inadvertently undercut themselves even as they tried their best to convince their audience to take action. By sabotaging themselves they failed to inspire their listeners. And because they failed to make the connection, they fell victim to what I call **Presentation Nullification**.

“Jury Nullification” in a criminal trial is the result of the jury disapproving of how a prosecuting attorney proved the case against a presumably guilty person, so they decide to reject the state’s arguments and let the accused go free (in spite of the weight of the evidence presented). **Presentation Nullification**, then, is when a prospect or an audience looks at you after you’ve finished eloquently presenting the advantages of your product, services or ideas and says, “you’ve not gripped our hearts and you’ve not seized our emotions—in fact, we don’t feel compelled a bit. For some reason, whether we can label it or not, we just aren’t accepting what you’re saying, and are not going to buy what you’re trying to sell today—for whatever reason, you’ve turned us off.”

Presentation Nullification is when, in spite of a manager’s impressive statistics, the board of directors says, “No.”

Presentation Nullification is when, in spite of a salesperson’s most polished close, their prospect looks at them deadpan, clears the throat, and with those most hated words in any marketer’s vocabulary, “I want to think about it,” drives a dagger into the very heart of the presenter.

How could such a thing happen? Even to professionals who spent the time and expense of hours of preparation and possible thousands of miles of travel only to have a door of opportunity slammed in their faces, with a larger-than-life “*No Sale*” popping up on their cash register?

In truth, it could’ve been that the prospect is in the midst of a crisis at home, or possibly their lunch upset their stomach—could’ve been—maybe. But odds are it was something else—something *fundamental* to presentations and effective persuasion.

My two decades of studying effective presenters, from salespeople to world-renown orators, have led me to conclude that most presentations fail due to their presenter's self-sabotage.

Don't get me wrong—believe me, I know that it's possible to do everything right and still miss a sale. What follows, though, is my personal list of Top 7 things you can do to put the odds of success way against you. In fact, if you will carefully model any one of the errors that follow I *promise* you marketing disaster and professional embarrassment. Follow these errors and you can't fail to fail! *I guarantee it!*

7. Don't start your "close" until the end of your presentation
6. Don't be concerned with maintaining integrity
5. Don't sweat the details
4. Don't ask questions
3. Don't worry about first impressions
2. Don't have set objectives
1. Don't get to know your audience

Now, I would be remiss in my duties here if I didn't provide some immediately usable solutions to avoid the above-mentioned mistakes. Here they are:

#1- MAKE AN EFFORT TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE. No two people are alike; no two companies are alike. With technology today, there is no excuse for not getting just a couple minutes worth of information from the prospect to help you tailor your presentation. In my experience, I have always been met with a positive, if not surprised, response to my desire to really understand who I am going to present to.

#2- SET DEFINITE OBJECTIVES FOR YOUR PRESENTATION. Know exactly what *you* want to achieve, know what *your prospect* wants, and it would be a good idea to know what your boss and your prospect's boss wants. Contrary to popular belief, it's *not* that you and your boss just want a sale and your prospect and his boss want what you have for free. In your efforts to get to know the prospect, look at the big picture from their standpoint—personally and corporately. Do they stand to get a promotion or bonus from the benefits/savings of your product, service or idea? Here's a profound thought, "the more you know, the *more* you know."

#3- REHEARSE YOUR PRESENTATION. ROLE-PLAY IN FRONT OF A MIRROR, AND PRACTICE HANDLING OBJECTIONS WITH ANOTHER PERSON. Most likely the toughest presentation you make will be in a role-play situation. The process of rehearsal and role-play does so many positive things; it would take a lot more space than available here to list. Most importantly, though, is that by rehearsing you put the mechanics of the presentation in your mental background—you know where you're going and how you'll get there so you are

more free to be yourself. Additionally, role-playing with another person will force you to face the hard questions and objections *before* the presentation. Tell me, is it easier to take the test you've studied for or the one for a class you've never been in?

#4- MOMMA WAS RIGHT, FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE LASTING IMPRESSIONS. As is the rule with all presentations, be yourself. The distinction here is to pick the appropriate *you* to present. You'll match your wardrobe to the environment you're going into, do the same with your demeanor within the boundaries of your natural style.

#5- ASK QUESTIONS. Remember, the more you know, the more you know. Ask questions and *listen* to the answers. You've heard about the 80/20 listen to talk ratio...use it!

#6- SWEAT THE DETAILS. It's the little things in life that make it worth living. The same is true for presenting your message. Effective preparation will allow you to manage the environment to maximize the effectiveness of your message. It *does* matter how the room is set up, how and when materials are handed out, and it matters *how* the information is delivered (paper, PowerPoint, verbal, etc.)

#7- INTEGRITY IS ALL YOU'VE GOT. It doesn't matter how good your product is. It doesn't matter how good your price is. It doesn't even matter how good your customer service after the sale is. If you don't have credibility with the prospect, you've got squat. Your reputation for honesty and integrity are the most valuable assets you've got. So valuable, that it is not included on a standard Balance Sheet because it would throw it *way* off balance one way or the other.

#8- TEST CLOSE, TEST CLOSE, and TEST CLOSE. A successful presentation is a series of "small yes's" and agreements leading up to a final "big yes." Additionally, by test closing at various stages of your presentation, you can avoid "talking yourself out of a sale." Keep in mind; you are managing the presentation environment. Be a good manager; ask **THE** question along with other important questions along the way. Plan in periodic summaries and pay special attention to your transitions from point to point. Most people need clarification and closure as you progress through a presentation. These transition points are a good time to take the temperature and test the close.

If you will practice these 7 principles, you will see your closing success rate improve and you will enjoy sales volume you never dared to dream would be possible.

Always remember that an effective presentation involves more than mere words. An effective presentation **ALWAYS** involves connecting with your prospect on a level that shows them that *you understand*. Inspiring any audience

means tapping so completely into a group or prospect's psyche that their emotions—and their intellect—cause them to buy into your message 100%.