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## **A Successful Presentation: Simple, Short and a Value-Added Speaker**

By Art Samansky

You wouldn't take your most important potential client to play golf without knowing how to play.

So, why would you risk making a presentation without fully understanding how to connect with the audience, how to use a microphone, what to do with your hands, how to avoid dry mouth, how to dress, and even how to format your script?

A good speech isn't just standing and presenting. There are three musts to a successful presentation-whether it's a speech or a sales presentation: keep it simple, keep it short, and, as the presenter, add value to the slides and your handouts.

The presentation doesn't have to be complex because of the technology behind the product or service. There always is a way to explain it simply. Look at Einstein's Theory of Relativity. That is explained as energy equals mass times the velocity of light squared. It's important because it's part of the foundation of atomic energy. The rest is detail for a one-on-one discussion.

And, as important as you think your company and its products and services are, President George W. Bush gave his inaugural address in 14 minutes, including applause-time; and one of the most well-known speeches in American history, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, was less than 300 words. Speaking at a modern-day TV newscaster's pace of 150 to 170 words a minute, his speech would have been a mere two minutes or less. Edward Everett also spoke that day in Gettysburg, for two hours. Except perhaps for history buffs, no one remembers what he said.

Surely you can fit your message into 15 minutes or less. That's usually all the time-15-20 minutes maximum-before most or all your audience tunes out. After that you are talking, at best, to only a tiny portion of your audience.

The rules of "simple" and "short," also mean curtailing the number of slides you use and the complexity of those slides. If you can't tell your story (financial results aside) in 10 slides or less, you aren't focused and neither is your audience. Your presentation isn't likely to succeed.

Moreover, slides, like a magician's wand, are only a prop. You are the act. If you are merely reciting the material on the slides, you might as well e-mail your audience a copy and save all precious time and travel expenses. Like your text, your slides should be simple and short.

Each slide should have no more than three to five one-line bulletpoints of key words, which read somewhat like a newspaper headline. Those are the points to which you should speak. And you should do it with flair, excitement, and enthusiasm. Perform.

In that vein, what's the song you want your audience to walk out singing about your product, your service and the benefits?

I call this the "Rule of Three." You must be able to deliver your "song" in three bulletpoints totaling no more than 15 words-not each, but combined. You and your audience will be focused.

My song? Keep it simple, keep it short, add value to the handouts or slides. That's 13 words.

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