

Avoiding surprises can help you out

Have you ever wondered why some people are relaxed and poised at the podium, while others look like deer in headlights?

Giving an effective presentation is a learned skill that begins with avoiding surprises. Maximize a speaking opportunity by knowing what you are getting into and eliminating as many unknowns as possible.

You can use these tips:

1. Know your audience and what will strike a chord with them. Do research in advance to determine the makeup of the audience. Ask questions: How many? Age? Men and women?

Then, decide what it will take to make your message meaningful to your listeners. Ask yourself: What's in it for them?

2. Know what you want to accomplish. This may sound like a simple maxim, but it is the difference between motivating an audience to take action and having them wonder "What was that all about?" Identify a goal and build your presentation's key messages around this goal.

3. Know where you will be speaking and for how long. Know where you are going and what time you are to arrive. Ask for specific directions.

Find out how long you are to speak and if there will be time for questions. Are there others on the agenda? What are their topics?

4. Arrive early. Identify where you will be seated. Walk from your seat to the podium. Stand behind it, test the microphone, look out into the room, pause, stand erect and say the opening lines of your speech aloud.

This will give you confidence, allow you to hear yourself speaking and visualize yourself doing well. Use the remaining time to relax, greet people and learn a few names and faces. You can make eye contact with them during your formal remarks.

McCarthy-Blanchard is an executive training firm specializing in presentation skills and executive presence. Call (517) 339-7447



**PATTY
MCCARTHY/
PAULA
BLANCHARD
STONE**

McCarthy-Blanchard
executive training firm
mccarthyblanchard.com