

Advisor

The Newsletter of Effective Communication

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Ten Steps to More Effective Analyst Presentations

Every publicly traded company knows the valuable role analysts play in helping it become known and understood by investors. That's why regular presentations to analysts are such an important part of a firm's investor relations efforts.

Significant amounts of time, effort and money usually go into preparing these presentations, but the return on that investment is not always what it should be. The Ammerman Experience regularly shows clients how to develop and deliver compelling analyst presentations. Our advice?

1. Start by asking yourself this question: What is the key message about your company that needs to be communicated? In other words, what do you want the analysts to know and remember? Here's an example: Today, more food is prepared outside the home than in the home. More than 20 billion take-out meals are consumed in America each year, and each one requires packaging. Pactiv Corporation is an industry leader in sales of products such as hinged-lid containers and foam plates, and is supplying much of the increasing demand. That message is simple, concise and memorable. Effective ads and commercials communicate a single message. So should your presentations to analysts.

2. Support your message with several key points. Remember when you had to write that term paper back in college? You probably developed an outline first with several Roman numerals – the main points of your paper. Follow that approach; come up with a few key points. Repeat: a few key points! Each one should reinforce your primary message.



Quick Bites

Oops, It Happened Again

No, we're not talking about another Britney Spears moment. What we're referencing are the "off the record" media blunders that continue to plague some interviewees – even the most media savvy! Several recent cases in point:

Back in July, Reverend Jesse Jackson had to apologize for the "regretfully crude" comments he made about Barack Obama during a conversation with a guest on the Fox News Network before a live interview.

And in September, Peggy Noonan, the conservative columnist, was caught using an expletive and making disparaging remarks about Senator John McCain's choice of Sarah Palin as his VP running mate. Noonan's

- 3. Make it interesting.** Many analyst presentations are a mere recitation of facts and figures. Boring! What gets and holds attention are stories, examples, anecdotes and analogies. Incorporate several in every presentation. Stories and analogies are particularly valuable because research shows they have the greatest impact in persuading or changing minds.
- 4. Give special attention to your opening.** You have less than a minute to convince an audience that you have something valuable or interesting to say. Don't squander this important moment by saying something ordinary or mundane.
- 5. Use PowerPoint sparingly.** If your first thoughts when crafting a presentation are of the PowerPoint visuals you'll use, you are placing the cart before the horse. The time to consider PowerPoint is after the content has been developed. Determine what information lends itself to a visual representation. PowerPoint is tailor-made for pie charts, bar graphs, diagrams, photos, numerical data. Avoid or minimize word slides. Think of PowerPoint as you would the headline of a news story. It should arouse interest, but it's not designed to tell the whole story. That's the speaker's job.
- 6. Be brief.** Keep your presentation between 15 and 20 minutes – the attention span of most adults. The more you reduce the amount of information you provide, the more successful your presentation will be.
- 7. Communicate with energy.** The best ideas are no better than ordinary if they aren't well delivered. Communicating is selling, and successful selling involves transferring energy and enthusiasm from speaker to listener. Remember former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger? Much fun was poked at his accent, but it was actually a minor part of his problem as a communicator. The real culprit was his lack of visual and vocal energy. Most businesspeople need to increase their energy level 50% when presenting.
- 8. Make a personal connection with the audience.** When people see and hear someone interesting and personable, they are receptive to what that person says. In general, your local TV stations report the same news, but people usually watch a particular channel because they have connected with the anchors or reporters. In other words, they like them. Many business presenters ignore this emotional component.
- 9. Anticipate questions.** Your preparation should include developing a list of the most likely questions you'll get. Also, make a list of the questions you hope no one asks. Then rehearse answers.
- 10. Practice your delivery.** It should be so fluid that the audience is never aware that you are following a script. Your audience expects you to have complete command of the subject. Practice, but don't sound "canned."

remarks were made during a commercial break on MSNBC.

We've said it before; we'll say it again: An interview begins when you're in the presence of a reporter. It ends when you are no longer in the presence of a reporter. Don't let your guard down before, during or after an interview. Assume anything you say may be recorded or used . . . or appear on YouTube.

Sound, Sound Bites

It's election season . . . and that means sound bites. Have you had your fill of those short, oft-repeated one liners that candidates are so fond of using? Sound bites are a staple in politics for one reason, they work. They are an effective way to deliver what Dave Likhani in his new book, *Subliminal Persuasion*, describes as "a concise, easy-to-understand statement that can be made quickly and with great impact."

According to Likhani, sound bites work because when people are busy and are bombarded with information, they are more likely to pay attention to and remember ideas that are to the point and easy to understand. Sound bites are both. And they require little, if any, interpretation.

When President George W. Bush was pressing Congress for a tax cut, he said, "The American people have been overcharged, and I'm here on their behalf asking for a refund." That sound bite made it into many a news story covering the issue.

Sound bites are typically one or two sentences long –

Third-Party Communications: Are You Ready For Someone Else's Mistake?

A recent crane collapse at an oil refinery in Texas brought to light an important crisis communications issue, and this related question: What should a company do when it faces an incident or issue caused by a third-party contractor? The answer: Be prepared to communicate.

This past July, one of the largest cranes in North America collapsed as it was being set up at the LyondellBasell refinery in LaPorte, Texas. Four people were killed – all of them contract employees of Deep South Crane and Rigging, the crane owner. Seven others at the site were injured.

Because the accident occurred at one of its sites, Lyondell quickly faced a swarm of media attention. The company's VP of Plant Operations, Jim Roecker, held a timely news conference and expressed sympathy for the dead and injured. In contrast, it was several hours before Deep South, based in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, released a written statement about the incident.

Even though it did nothing to cause the accident, Lyondell was immediately sought out by the news media. It was important that someone respond in a timely manner. And Lyondell's quick response undoubtedly played a role in getting these two critical message points delivered and reported: first, that Lyondell felt sympathy and concern for the victims, and second, that it was not directly involved in setting up or operating the crane.

DCP Midstream, one of the nation's largest natural gas gatherers and processors, faced a similar situation. While working at DCP's plant in Jim Wells County, Texas, five contractors from Flint Construction were injured during a flash fire on one of the gas lines. Luckily, no one was killed, but all five were taken to local hospitals. Three of the men received severe burns from the accident.

Early on, Roz Elliott, DCP's Director of Public Affairs, contacted officials with Flint Construction to determine how each company – Flint and DCP – would respond. "I consulted with the spokesperson of the other company and made sure we were clear as to what key messages I owned and what key messages they owned to make sure they were comfortable as to what I could say on their behalf," said Elliott.

Elliott notes that a timely response during a crisis is imperative. "Companies need to be proactive in telling their own story. No one tells your story as well as you do, and you shouldn't let others tell your story for you." And what if you're asked to speak on behalf of the other company? Elliott advises to rely on Crisis Management 101: "I say that I can speak only on behalf of my company, and then I bridge to what I want to reinforce. I tell them that I can provide the name and contact information of someone with the other company, but again that I am not able to speak on their behalf."

Asked if she felt there is a trend for companies being asked to speak for

Sound bites are typically one or two sentences long – about eight seconds. (Back in the 1960s, sound bites on TV or radio were much longer – about 45 seconds – but they've shrunk.) You create them by taking the most interesting, important or unexpected piece of an idea or argument and showcasing it. Your goal is to generate intense interest. And because human beings are programmed to spread messages, sound bites make it easy for them to do so.

The next time you're preparing for that media interview or presentation, make an effort to craft a few powerful sound bites of your own. If they're good, don't be surprised when they make their way into the news story or the memory of your audience.

2009

Ammerman Public Training Dates

Effective Media Communications Training

January 13
February 6
March 10
April 21
June 9
August 11
September 15
November 3

Effective Presentations Training

January 14
March 11
June 10
September 16

Advanced Media Skills for Communications Professionals

April 22-23
November 4-5

The Ammerman Experience
Public workshops are

third-party contractors, Elliott said, “Actually, more people have a thoughtful emergency plan and know that they need to consult with the other party. I see it as being more textbook when you reach out to the other company and share your key messages.”

If your company uses contractors or if your facility is located on property owned by another firm, keep the following in mind:

- Don’t assume the other party is crisis-prepared – in other words, knows how to, or is prepared to, respond in a crisis.
- Don’t allow others to speak for you.
- Have a communications plan and discuss that plan with the other party.
- Test your plan through “tabletop” or other drills to ensure that it works.

And if your facility is part of a joint venture managed by your partner, make sure that partner has a plan and understands the importance of communicating quickly (and perhaps repeatedly) in a crisis.

The Ammerman Experience has decades of experience preparing organizations around the world to communicate effectively in a crisis. We address the training needs of different levels of personnel who could find themselves speaking to the news media. Our First Responder training shows field employees how to give reporters a brief statement while a corporate spokesperson is en route. Our Crisis Communications Spokesperson training offers guidance and practice to a company’s primary spokesperson. And finally, our Crisis Team training involves an in-depth drill designed to challenge a company’s crisis management team. For more information, including a detailed agenda, contact us at 800-866-2026.

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scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, and are available to a limited number of attendees to ensure maximum personalized attention. To register for a course, contact our office at 1.800.866.2026.

The above schedule lists Ammerman individual, public workshops. For available dates for private (buy-out) training dates, please contact The Ammerman Experience at 1.800.866.2026.

Our firm is a pioneer in understanding the link between effective communication and professional success. What we've learned and what we teach can improve your performance . . . and that of others in your organization.

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