

HOW TO...

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# PRESENT WITH STYLE

It's official: people are more scared of presenting than of death!

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A new independent survey has shown that whereas one in two professionals dread giving presentations, only one in three have the same qualms about dying.

But the thing is that, love it or loathe it, half of us have to present as part of our working lives (found in the same survey, commissioned by Promethean AV Distribution and The Confident Club earlier this year\*), and other research (by the Harvard Business School) has shown that the ability to speak powerfully is the single most important attribute that will enable you to get on in your career.

So what can we do about it? Actually a lot. Because unlike the fear of dying, spiders, and heights, the fear of public speaking is not an in-built survival strategy, but something learnt. Before you get on to presentation technique, the most important key to increasing the impact of your presentations is to change the way you think about them.

Master communicators have a set of beliefs that help them. You don't have to be perfect, you just have to be you. And there's no such thing as failure, just the chance to learn.

One of the major reasons people are afraid of standing up in front of other people and talking is that they believe they have to be perfect. No one's perfect. Giving yourself



permission not to be, and even embracing your mistakes is part of understanding what makes a good presentation. It's about being able to project who you are whether you're in a room with one person, 100 people, or for that matter, several hundred people.

And no, that doesn't mean rushing to PowerPoint and boring everyone to death with hundreds of slides crammed with bullet points. It pays to spend less time thinking about the actual content and more time on how you're going to deliver the information. If you don't sound enthusiastic about what you've got to say, don't expect other people to feel excited about it. ■

**McDermott is an award winning business speaker and presentation coach, as well as a broadcaster and best selling author.**

*\*Promethean AV Distribution supplies simple to use interactive PRESENTA technology through a nationwide network of reseller partners.*

## THREE THINGS YOU CAN DO THAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

**>> 1. BIG START, BIG FINISH**  
REMEMBER THAT THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT WORDS YOU SAY ARE YOUR OPENING ONES, AND THE MOST IMPORTANT WORDS ARE YOUR LAST ONES. THESE ARE THE BITS IT PAYS TO PREPARE IF YOU WANT PEOPLE TO SIT UP AND LISTEN WHEN YOU GET ON STAGE, AND REMEMBER WHAT YOU'VE SAID WHEN YOU'RE OFF.

**>> 2. ONCE UPON A TIME**  
PEOPLE LIKE A GOOD STORY. THEY WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, AND IF IT'S GOOD, THEY'LL PASS IT ON. THAT MAKES PERSONAL STORIES A BRILLIANT DEVICE TO BUILD IN WHEN YOU'RE PRESENTING. PLUS, OF COURSE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE GOING TO SAY BECAUSE IT HAPPENED TO YOU.

**>> 3. GET INTERACTIVE**  
IF YOU NEED TO USE TECHNOLOGY, MAKE SURE IT'S THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY. TOOLS WITH INTERACTIVE SOFTWARE (WHETHER WHITEBOARDS OR PORTABLE PANELS AND PADS) ARE BRILLIANT BECAUSE THEY ALLOW YOU TO GET ACROSS YOUR PERSONALITY. IT'S YOUR HANDWRITING, IT'S LIVE, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT'S FUN.

