



Delivering knock-out presentations

A Bladonmore guide to developing clear and persuasive communications skills

Making an impact

When the CEO of a multilateral trading facility wanted to make a big impression with a highly cynical audience at an annual trade conference, he called Bladonmore.

“This must be the best speech at the event,” was his simple brief.

By partnering our client with one of Bladonmore’s top speechwriters, hours of valuable time preparing for the event were saved. Bladonmore wrote the speech, created stunning visuals and developed a boxing theme, which resulted in our client coming on stage wearing a pair of red boxing gloves.

The speech was unlike the usual conference speech and proved to be a huge hit. Attendees were still talking about it a year later.


Our client achieved his objective of ensuring his firm was seen as the leader in its market, and today the business continues to grow.

Making this type of impact in your presentations isn’t easy, but everybody can learn to make their presentations truly memorable.

Bladonmore has extensive experience in coaching senior executives to communicate effectively with their key audiences. We work with CEOs and CFOs from Europe’s largest companies and top financial PR agencies.

This guide focuses on how you can succeed in your presentations. Whether you are preparing for an offsite event, client pitch or conference speech, it aims to provide you with advice and fresh ideas for taking your presentations to the next level.





Tactics for staying off the ropes

Understand your objectives

What's your objective in the communication and what do you want to achieve from it? Ask yourself: "What do I want from my audience?" Do you wish to persuade your listeners or just inform them?

Prepare a clear, compelling proposition

To convey any message, you first need to be clear exactly what the message is. Plan this by working out your objectives for the communication. Present a handful of coherent, concise messages rather than overwhelming your audience with evidence.

Focus on the audience

A clear, audience-focused main message is the best way to capture its attention and engage with it. Do some analysis and put yourself in your audience's shoes. In doing so, ask yourself: "Why am I in the audience?", "What are my main concerns just now?" and "What are my expectations?"

Make the right impression

Practise techniques to mitigate the effects of nerves and appear relaxed and confident. Enthusiasm and eye contact are the best ways to establish a rapport with any audience.

Start and finish strongly

There are only two occasions in a presentation when you can be sure of having the audience's attention – at the start and at the end. Structure your presentation effectively to ensure you engage its interest from the very beginning right through to the final sentence.

Prepare for Q&As

Consider question topics, rather than trying to prepare for every conceivable question, and plan relevant key phrases and examples for your responses.

Practise, practise, practise

Keep practising until you feel very comfortable. If you are presenting in a team, practise as a team. If you are rehearsing for a big pitch, bring in experts to help polish the delivery and content.

When your guard is down

- Using jargon
- Poor handling of questions
- Rushing your talk
- Lack of clarity and engagement
- Over-reliance on PowerPoint
- Trying to convey too much information
- Not enjoying the whole process
- Assuming the audience understands your business, or even knows what you do



Six heavyweight ideas for the coming months

1. Keynote speechwriting and preparation

Using a full script for speeches is reassuring for speakers, but scripts are often poorly written. Seek advice on how to structure and “conversationalise” a script or invest in training your communications team to do this.

2. Simulate an event to improve team skills

By simulating an upcoming or imaginary event – from a big pitch to a corporate crisis – adrenaline will flow and the communications skills of your team can be tested to the extreme.

3. Understand basic body language skills

Invest time in understanding the basics of body language to interpret the unprompted signals provided across a table. It is possible to learn a number of tells unconsciously communicated by the people sitting opposite you. Dedicating three hours to learning some basics will pay dividends over the coming years.

4. Embed film into presentations when you need to connect emotionally

Film remains the most emotive and evocative way of connecting with an audience. Many organisations now produce case studies as a standard way to bring alive a presentation or event.

5. Introduce presentation skill assessments into appraisals

By making personal communication skills quantifiable and a part of career development, you are building useful skills in the organisation. Ideally, you want every employee to be a faithful ambassador and a strong advocate of your firm.

6. Launch your own Pitch Winning Academy

Launch a comprehensive programme to sharpen the pitching skills of your staff. Your company can learn structured techniques to prepare effectively, to win client confidence, to engage and to head off concerns. Win rates will be transformed with the right programme.

Case studies

Rosenblatt Solicitors

The business-winning Rosenblatt Academy

Ian Rosenblatt's mid-sized City law firm is one of the corporate success stories of the last decade.

Two years ago, Ian asked Bladonmore to help reduce the reliance on him personally for winning new business.

Bladonmore solution

Starting with a comprehensive diagnostic review, where every partner and a number of senior associates were interviewed, Bladonmore developed a simple skill-building programme for all fee earners in the firm.

Initially, this Academy consisted of building four core skills: presentations, networking, client management and delegation. By running sessions every Thursday morning at 8am, the Academy quickly became part of Rosenblatt culture and provided a focus for discussing and solving business communications issues.

Results

After one year, Tania MacLeod, managing partner at Rosenblatt, said: "I am certain we have won more business as a result of the training we have done."

Two years on, the Academy has been extended to build and strengthen a range of other skills – including handling press interviews and further business development skills – all of which are supporting the continued growth of the business.

"One of the very few non 'magic circle' to be listed as preferred lawyers to FTSE 250 clients"

Chambers Guide to the UK Legal Profession

"The new company [Nokia Siemens Networks] will have to have an attitude of a challenger – fiercely competitive with an unerring focus on the customer"

Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo, Chairman

Nokia Siemens Networks

Building value in this newly merged technology leader

Soon after the merger of the network divisions of Nokia and Siemens, the new NSN wanted to ensure that there was a common understanding of technologies and products across the group.

Bladonmore solution

Bladonmore was asked to develop an international programme coaching dozens of people from 15 countries to ensure a consistent high-standard NSN way of communicating.

Using techniques developed by Bladonmore, 100 senior product experts then went quickly through an intensive coaching process to build up their presenting skills.

Results

These individuals became internal advocates across the firm to spread understanding and expertise. They were internal evangelists for their individual parts of the business.

Bladonmore was subsequently asked to build on this work to prepare the sales and product experts for NSN's first major mobile telephone conference and exhibition in Barcelona where the experts closed a record amount of business.

The company we keep



FINSBURY



NASDAQ

StatoilHydro



centrica

Linklaters



Tenon audit

ArcelorMittal

Advising the executive management on core communication skills.

Finsbury PR

Director coaching programme for improved pitch winning.

Mubadala

Communications development programme for the upcoming stars.

sjberwin

Advising on messages, structure and performance for a major pitch.

BNP Paribas

Coaching of spokespeople to ensure high-quality communication internally and externally.

Hamworthy

Designing and facilitating a staff conference for this leading oil services business.

Nasdaq

Coaching senior executives to prepare for key events.

StatoilHydro

Coaching of senior management team to prepare for annual capital markets days.

Cable & Wireless

Coaching a regional CEO on his critical communications to employees.

Impetus

CEO coaching for more effective charity fund-raising.

Northern Trust

Developing messages, content and personal performance for a key event.

Teenage Cancer Trust

Helping the fund-raising team win Arsenal as its charity partner.

Centrica

A 24-hour simulated event for the entire corporate communications team.

Linklaters

Speechwriting and coaching for the managing partner.

Orkla

Helping the executive team prepare for a capital markets day.

Tenon audit

Preparing the CEO and CFO for annual results presentations.

About us

Bladonmore is a trusted communications adviser to organisations, their leaders and executives. From offices in London and Abu Dhabi and drawing on a network of international talent, we produce publications, films, online work and training modules that are used to support internal and external communications programmes for leading organisations.

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