



# tipsheet

December 2007

## Coaching the Presenter: Tips for Improving Your Presentation Evaluation Skills

Have friends or colleagues ever asked if they could practice a presentation in front of you and get some feedback? You agree to listen and once they're done, all you can manage to say is "That was great!" In reality, the presentation was mediocre, and you just didn't know what to tell them to help them improve. We've all been in such a situation. Below are tips to help you know what to look for the next time someone asks you for your thoughts on his or her presentation:

### 1. Does she know her stuff?

Make sure the presenter is prepared! Often what a presenter is most nervous about is her understanding of the material. Being prepared will allow her to be more comfortable with the material and thus, deliver a more relaxed and informative presentation.

### 2. Does he know his audience?

Ensure that the presenter identifies his audience. Who is the audience? Colleagues or fellow students? A large group from another organization? The boss? What does the audience already know (or not know) about the subject matter? What are the audience members' expectations about the presentation? A clear understanding of "audience" should help drive the content, organization, and use of visuals in the presentation, as well as the speaker's speaking style, tone, and executive presence.

### 3. Remember, we all make mistakes!

Encourage the presenter to not get bogged down by a minor slip-up – i.e., forgetting to discuss a point or stumbling over words. Tell her to smile and keep moving on. Most of the time, no one notices.

### 4. Only fix one thing at a time.

Don't try to fix every problem area at once. If the presenter is having trouble with a number of style issues, pick one or two to focus on first. Volume and speed are two of the most effective and easiest ones to improve quickly.

### 5. Help him find his style.

Help the presenter be his "best self." Each person has his or her own unique style – let it shine! If we all presented the same way, giving and listening to presentations would become dull very quickly.

### 6. Does the speaker read from the slides?

If the presenter is using PowerPoint slides, make sure the slides are simple and informative. Also, slides should be "audience centered," i.e., designed to help the audience, not the presenter. The presenter should practice engaging with the slides and using them as tools to enhance the presentation. The slides should not be a "crutch" for a presenter who doesn't know the material.

### 7. Is the end in sight?

Make sure the presentation has structure. A clear agenda that is referenced throughout the presentation will help the audience stay engaged and follow along. In addition, an agenda ensures that the presenter gets to her conclusion in a timely fashion.

### 8. Where's the bottom line?

Listen carefully for the bottom line of the presentation. Did the presenter give it early in the presentation? Was it clearly stated? Did the presenter delay the bottom line? If so, was the delay strategic? Or, was the delay the result of a long, slow wind-up? Does the presenter tell the audience what the next steps are?

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