

12 tips for quick but effective rehearsals:

by Cathy C. Bonczek

1. Prior to a meeting or presentation, block out time for 2-3 rehearsals on your calendar. Do this whether you are the only one speaking or not. If you are presenting with a team, make sure you invite them to a dress rehearsal just before the meeting. Commit to spending as much time rehearsing the delivery as you do on writing the content.
2. Research your “audience” whether it is a single client or a room full of people. What do they know about you or your firm? What do they already know about the market or product you are working with? Who will be making the ultimate decision? Who influences the Decision Maker? Do they have a specific corporate culture? Are there things they do or don’t say?
3. Ask yourself: what impression do you want to leave on your audience? How do you want them to think about you – as a person, as a leader, as a resource?
4. Determine the heart of your message. Write your conclusion first. Write it as if you only had 2 minutes to make the entire presentation; what would you say?
5. Think of your message as a story. What needs to be told in the first chapter? In the middle? At the end?
6. Write out a script, if that helps you --not as something that you should read from later, but more as an exercise in understanding the narrative. Capture catchy phrases or analogies that you think will add creativity and comprehension. Gather any evidence – stats, charts, case studies – that support your assertions.
7. Craft your team to suit your audience. Bring your high energy colleagues to the high energy clients, or your quiet, contemplative team members to the more docile meetings. Make sure everyone is in agreement as to who the Presentation leader is, and who will cover which topic. Plan your transitions between speakers and make note of the specific wording you will use to pass the “baton.”
8. Record or video yourself whether you are simply brainstorming or rehearsing a script. It’s good to start seeing yourself in action. You might fix your posture if you saw how others see you.
9. Research the venue: is it a stage? A conference room? A restaurant? A zoom? Will you be standing or seated? What will the lighting be like? What kind of visual aid will suit the environment (powerpoint, deck, flipchart) and keep the focus on you?
10. Prepare a list of anticipated questions and draft one-line answers to all of them. It’s harder to bottom line in the moment, and you can always augment an answer, if necessary.
11. Rehearse the presentation from beginning to end as if you were doing it ‘for real.’ Presentations are always better after you’ve done them a few times, so get as many reps in as you can.
12. Put it all away and get a good night’s sleep before your meeting or presentation. Remind yourself that it’s just a conversation.

