

Presentation Training – What Works, What Doesn't

By Paul LeRoux

There are three factors to consider when selecting a presentation consultant.

- * The difference between improving content and delivery skills.
- * The difference between virtual presentation training and in-person training.
- * Why an attitude adjustment doesn't help.

I'm going to cover those and then give you several questions you can ask potential presentation consultants.

Delivery Skills Versus Content

Content is what you want to explain to a group. Your message must be clear and logical; but, in the scheme of presentation training, it's easy to adjust the sequence of your ideas and revise your wording.

Delivery skills, however, are not so simple to manage and are more critical in getting your message across. Mastering these techniques will enable you to conquer nervousness, project commitment, and feel confident in your ability to speak about any subject to any size group. In short, delivery skills will help give your words the force and effect you want them to have.

In sports, the quickest way to improve is to hire a professional coach. Whether you are a beginner hoping to start on the correct path or an intermediate needing to break bad habits and build new ones, a coach teaches you the physical movements to execute a powerful serve in tennis, a delicate chip in golf, or a daring axel in figure skating. The principle is the same for learning presenting skills.

A good coach can help you understand, and master extended eye contact, pacing, pauses, voice projection, stance, and gestures that support your words and hold the audience's attention.

Why Virtual Training Falls Short for Delivery Skills

Virtual training has its uses for pilots and teenagers learning to drive a plane or car. It can help in learning the physical skill necessary to tennis and golf, too, but only up to a point. People need not only demonstration but also feedback.

To speaking persuasively, you need to learn five physical movements — stance, eye contact, pauses, gestures and voice projection. The best way to do this is to have a hands-on coach, who can demonstrate, observe, and give immediate feedback.

Skype is a possibility for coaching — you can see the trainer, and he or she can listen and see you. However, Skype is not a complete picture. The coach can't see the entire person, can't feel the learner's fear, and, from a distance, can only guess at the best advice. It's a cheap substitute. Therefore, priced cheaply.

What works best is personal, human contact, having the teacher in the same space, like teaching tennis or golf. In one-on-one sessions, the coach feels the person's fear or nervousness and immediately sees the shortcomings.

Virtual training is OK for feedback on your script or oral message. Too often virtual presentation training deludes clients into thinking their fear of speaking will disappear, or their delivery skills will improve. Unfortunately, neither will happen.

Why an Attitude Adjustment Doesn't Help

We're comfortable talking one-on-one with our friends, and even with strangers, but *few* feel confident when talking to a group. We expect perfection in ourselves and are afraid that we'll make mistakes or forget what we're going to say. Consequently, fear kicks in and nervousness consumes us.

However, you must forge ahead, and your nervousness shows in negative behaviors like shifting your feet, clasping palms, hand-wringing, or a cracked

voice. Some consultants claim that presenters need only self-confidence to overcome nervousness. Then all the issues will be resolved.

This isn't true, because in some cases, the body controls the mind. If you're watching an action movie, you can't stop your body's responses. Your attitude — it's just a movie — is irrelevant.

The solution to fear or nervousness is to channel it by using the five delivery skills. Only in this way can you turn negative energy into something positive.

Evaluating Consultants

Presentation consultants offer advice ranging from worthless to priceless, so it's best to find out beforehand what you're signing up for. Consultants who've authored a book or an academic paper give you an easy, legitimate way to judge how useful is their advice. Review their message and evaluate what they know.

Then take advantage of LinkedIn's fifteen-minute free chat, which lets you sound out candidates' ideas and techniques. Pick a low-middle-and high-priced consultant, and ask questions about the following topics:

1. *Experience.* Does the consultant work mainly with students or executives? How many years has the consultant been in business? How many clients has the consultant worked with?
2. *Teaching methods.* What exercises does he or she use to engrain delivery skills or break bad habits? Does the description of the consultant's advices seem practical or vague? Is the focus on content rather than delivery skills?
3. *Results.* Business people want success and improvement in their careers. How have the clients fared after receiving the consultant's help? Did their subsequent speaking engagements bring career promotions, pay raises or new business?

Read about and sound out prospective consultants as much as you can. You should feel confident at the outset that you are working with the right person.

Paul LeRoux's Consulting Approach

My Experience

For thirty-one years, I've continued to train individuals for a wide variety of presentations. I've rehearsed executives, accountants, consultants and engineers for competitive presentations. Through their standup presentations, my clients have won contracts and new business worth millions of dollars.

I have also prepared and rehearsed many startup companies that sought funding. These pitches are given to persuade sophisticated investors, who can quickly spot errors in logic, financial misjudgments, or wishful projections.

My coaching has enabled senior executives to prepare for large-audience gatherings ranging from stockholders' meetings to presenting scientific papers. I help clients achieve their two goals— to persuade the audience and to further the speaker's credibility.

Calculating the Price

My knowledge, experience, and success reflect the price for my services.

I charge by the hour because clients have varying skill levels. Some people have a natural ability to acquire the physical subtleties needed for convincing presentations, while others have to practice longer and harder. Some learn faster than others, and beginners are often easier to coach because they have fewer bad habits to overcome.

However, you alone control the cost. Very quickly you will see and sense the change. Therefore, as we progress, you will decide the number of hours you feel is necessary to reach the level of improvement you want.

Verifying My Knowledge

Because I believe potential clients should be confident in the consultant they select, I encourage you to confirm my knowledge and teaching ability:

1. Film yourself or have a friend shoot the video and upload it to YouTube or Facebook and send me the link. I will respond within a few days with comments on how you can enhance your presentation content and skills.
2. Ask me for a complimentary copy of my commercially published book, *Visual Selling* or obtain it on Amazon.
3. Invest in a two-hour training session at my Chicago office and see how quickly and dramatically you improve.

I look forward to taking you to the next level as a presenter.

Contact: leroux@twainassociates.com or 312-467-2120

Client Quote “Paul also had great insights into my presentation delivery, from what to emphasize verbally to the body language used. His insights and feedback were critical to both the pitch materials and my presentation itself.”

CEO of a fast-growing Chicago medical startup

Paul’s Favorite Quote “There’s a geometric progression in ability: you need to be only 10% better at what you do than most people to go 100% farther.”

Sydney J Harris, syndicated columnist

Summary of My LinkedIn Profile

I hold two patents, own a presentation consulting business and a publishing firm. I am the author of *Visual Selling: Capture the Eye and the Customer Will Follow* (John Wiley), as well as the earlier *Selling to a Group* (McGraw Hill.)

Are you looking for an experienced public speaking coach to

- * Show you how to handle nervousness and master delivery skills?
- * Connect with listeners?
- * Prepare for an important presentation?
- * Turn wordy, boring PowerPoint slides into persuasive visuals?

I can make you a star in these areas!

Services

Training Seminars

For 31 years, I have conducted two-day presentation training seminars. Quarterly, I volunteer-teach a presentation workshop for Chicago.SCORE.org

Rehearsing

Over the years, I have coached hundreds of executives on how to polish their presentations for conferences and national meetings. I have also worked with many entrepreneurs to enhance their funding pitches—slides, content and delivery skills. As a member of Chicago's *Heartland Angels*, I regularly rehearse the entrepreneurs who present to our investor group.

Keynote Speaker

At corporate events, trade shows, and conventions, I speak on how to improve presentations. These topics cover how to connect with listeners using strong delivery skills, how to create pictorial visuals, and how **not** to lose control during the question and answer session.