Module 10

Read Ahead

Facilitation and Presentation Skills
Module 10: Facilitation and Presentation Skills

Objectives

After attending the training in Module 10, participants will be able to:

• recognize the power and potential for influence through verbal and nonverbal communication.
• learn techniques to enhance the effectiveness of meetings they may lead.
• demonstrate keys to effective formal or informal presentations.

Introduction

Communicating face-to-face with others is a critical element of effective communication. This Module explores taking the communication to a group rather than one-on-one. Think about verbal and nonverbal communication as happening when the message is coming from an actual person you can see and hear. That person may or may not be with you in the room, but you can still see or hear them. Perhaps the person is speaking via a conference call, video conference meeting, online, or through other electronic media.

Enjoy it or not, presenting is usually a part of business in some form. Whether you are in front of a formal audience on a regular basis or leading a staff meeting, you are presenting. Module 6 explores best practices and effective application of verbal and nonverbal communication in an organizational setting as you facilitate groups, conduct meetings, or make presentations.

Effective communication happens when the intended audience receives the intended message from a speaker who is present or can otherwise be seen and heard. The verbal and nonverbal skills of the sender lead directly to the effectiveness of this communication. It is said that the believability of communication comes from the following three dimensions within our communication abilities:

• Verbal (spoken words) is 7% of our believability potential.
• Vocalics (e.g., tone, pitch, volume, speed of voice) is 38% of our believability potential.
• Nonverbal (facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact) is 55% of our believability potential.

When people are listening to us speak and watching our movements, there is always the chance we may not reach our intended audience with our intended message as discussed in an earlier Module. As leaders, it is our responsibility to perform well in communicating and engaging in group facilitation. Therefore, it is imperative for us to be mindful of our skill level and be willing to demonstrate change in our abilities.

This Module will cover three specific areas:
1. Conducting Effective Meetings
2. Conducting Effective Presentations
3. Facilitation Skills
Conducting Effective Meetings

Meetings can be one of the best ways to communicate effectively in business when needing to ensure each employee hears the same information consistently. When an email, text, or letter will not suffice, meetings can serve as forums for transferring information, building consensus, building relationships, and keeping an organization on track. Unfortunately, if not done effectively, meetings can also present a huge distraction from the important work of ALDOT.

Planning the Meeting in Advance

Effective meetings are intentionally planned and conducted by a facilitator who has answered the questions of why, what, and how.

1. Why?
   
   The need, purpose, and objectives of the meeting should be clear before the meeting is scheduled, even if it is with just one other person.

2. What?
   
   The type of meeting should be in alignment with the purpose for the meeting and will guide the appropriate venue for the meeting. Different types of meetings include:
   • Meetings to Inform
   • Meetings to Discuss
   • Meetings to Decide
   • Meetings to Solve
   • Meetings to Invent
   • Meetings to Sell
   • Meetings to Meet

   Meetings may include intents such as status updates on projects, information or updates for staff that they otherwise will not receive, vision casting, problem solving or decision making, strategic planning, brainstorming, team building, or motivation. Praise and direction-specific issues can be handled in one-on-one meetings.

3. How?
   
   Once the purpose and the type of meeting have been decided, we can work on the details.
   Who is facilitating the meeting? That person should be invited to help plan.
   • Where will the meeting be held? This location may be physical or virtual.
   • When will the meeting be held? Is it urgent? Should it be tied to other events?
   • How will the meeting be implemented? Do I know the appropriate format for meetings?
   • Am I prepared?
   • Do I know how to meet the meeting goals?
   • Can I hold a respectful and effective meeting?
**Tips for Managing Meetings**

It is imperative to inform, prepare, and pre-wire participants—let them know the purpose of the meeting, give them an agenda, and if needed, gain some buy-in for your idea before the meeting.

Always start on time, whether all attendees are present or not. Waiting on people who are tardy is disrespectful to those who made the effort to be on time. Set an expectation that your meetings begin when you say they will begin. Once people learn your habit, they will start arriving on time.

During the meeting, it is important to:
- Take notes and record minutes.
- Stay on point.
- Always have an agenda, whether the meeting is formal or not. Have an agenda printed for everyone even if the meeting is more general and flexible in nature.
- Use a “parking lot” if necessary (flip chart or white board to record important, but off-topic comments/questions for follow-up later). Many meetings get off task because “tangents” are allowed.
- Be respectful by keeping the meeting orderly (not allowing interruption of others, protecting opposing viewpoints, and seeking input from everyone—including the quieter attendees).
- Record and restate action items and assignments at the end of the meeting.
- Be clear about what should happen next. This should be in alignment with the purpose for the meeting.
- End on time. Set an expectation that your meetings end when you say they will end.

After the meeting, it is important to:
- Follow up.
- Make sure that the effort and time invested in the meeting are not wasted.
- Share the minutes and notes, remind attendees of their action items.
- Restate the purpose and objectives of the meeting and mention whether they were accomplished.

Effectively leading meetings is not something intuitive. Leading meetings does not mean “winging it.” Facilitating or leading meetings is learned knowledge that translates into learned ability.

**Conducting Effective Informal or Formal Presentations**

The main rules and objectives of effective communication do not change with the media type or platform used to share an intended message with an intended audience. The emphasis should always remain on the listener, regardless of how many ears may be in the audience. A shift in focus from ourselves as the presenter to those whom we want to impact could be the key to easing our nervousness and relieving stress associated with public speaking.
Often, when we decide or are asked to “give a presentation,” we automatically assume that a PowerPoint presentation is needed, and we immediately start thinking of slide content and design. “What do we need to tell them?” We must remember that the purpose and goal of the communication determine how the information should be delivered. Sometimes a PowerPoint presentation is in order. Other times, we may need more informal media to deliver our message. The true questions every presenter should start with are “What does the audience need to know?” and “What is the best way to communicate that message to ensure audience understanding?”

We have all been struck at one point or another by a truly brilliant presentation delivered by a truly brilliant presenter. Chances are that the presenter was not simply a natural born presenter. Most likely the presenter had a plan or strategy and took the time to create, practice, and execute the plan flawlessly. Maurice DeCastro has compiled a list of *20 Habits of Truly Brilliant Presenters* for the online meeting platform and company GoToMeeting. The reference is [https://l1.osding.com/online/dam/pdf/en/resources/wp/GoToMeeting-20-Habits-of-Truly-Brilliant-Presenters-White-Paper.pdf](https://l1.osding.com/online/dam/pdf/en/resources/wp/GoToMeeting-20-Habits-of-Truly-Brilliant-Presenters-White-Paper.pdf).

As you will see in the abbreviated listing below, not one of these habits is beyond even the most amateur of presenters. It’s all about dedication to the message and dedication to the audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habit 1</th>
<th>Acknowledge and reframe stage fright or nerves</th>
<th>Habit 11</th>
<th>Use videos and props</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habit 2</td>
<td>Focus on the audience</td>
<td>Habit 12</td>
<td>Use your voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit 3</td>
<td>Don’t try to be perfect</td>
<td>Habit 13</td>
<td>Stay in the present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habit 4</td>
<td>Stick to the point</td>
<td>Habit 14</td>
<td>Make friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit 5</td>
<td>See the opportunity</td>
<td>Habit 15</td>
<td>Know what you’re talking about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit 6</td>
<td>“Anchor” yourself</td>
<td>Habit 16</td>
<td>Be consistent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habit 7</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Habit 17</td>
<td>Be generous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit 8</td>
<td>Tell stories</td>
<td>Habit 18</td>
<td>Help them to see the contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit 9</td>
<td>Use colorful, creative and compelling images</td>
<td>Habit 19</td>
<td>Give them a good reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habit 10</td>
<td>Involve your audience</td>
<td>Habit 20</td>
<td>Give them hope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handling a Tough Crowd

We must often deal with people who disagree with us. This might be particularly difficult if we are presenting. The opportunities for such occurrences increase as we advance in the supervisory or management positions in our organization. A mark of a true leader is having the ability to work through these unpleasant but inevitable situations while maintaining respect for all involved.

Nancy Duarte is a writer, speaker, and business consultant who built a business on helping others present and communicate more effectively. She offers the following advice in a blog post on her company website. Her tips are as follows.

- **Set clear, realistic goals.**
  Presentations can change the world, but they can't do magic. When talking to a crowd with a different set of values or beliefs, no presenter is likely to convert them to their worldview in one meeting. But they can begin the process of changing their minds on specific issues or, at least, creating a common understanding about what drives your differences. Setting clear goals for your presentation will help you decide if they're achievable and figure out what you need to do to get there.

- **Anticipate resistance.**
  The best presenters realize that their success depends on the audience they're addressing and adjust their content accordingly. This strategy is even more important when you're dealing with a hostile group of people, so you need to understand what motivates their resistance and anticipate their objections. Spend some time thinking about what your audience cares about and why they feel the way they do. You can use this insight to craft an appeal for your idea that speaks to their concerns. Consider asking some friends or co-workers to play the role of the audience during a test run of the presentation so you can practice handling the hot button issues before you're in the hot seat.

- **Find some common ground.**
  I've never met anyone with whom I had absolutely nothing in common. Sure, sometimes the overlap is small and a little vague – there's a reason most pageant contestants settle on “world peace” as an answer that appeals to everyone – but it's usually enough to start a conversation. By speaking to shared experiences or appealing to a common value set, you can create a linkage with your audience that makes you more relatable and may even make your ideas seem more familiar. That's an important first step to overcoming any difference.

- **Be honest.**
  Don't pretend to be something you're not. One of the quickest ways to lose an audience is to be fake. Audiences seek authenticity; they want to hear what you really think and understand why you think that way. Many times, what they really crave is to hear you address their concerns directly. In these situations, it's often best to speak openly about your differences and tackle their complaints head-on. Even if you can't change their minds in the short-term, your honesty is likely to establish a better rapport that could help you convince them in the long-term.
• **Stay calm.**
  Have you ever seen a stand-up comedian confronted by a heckler? Most comedians struggle to deal with hostile audiences, and their reactions often become legendary. Don’t let a hostile audience turn you into a hostile speaker. Even if you’re asked provocative questions, stay cool and answer the questions to the best of your ability. If you manage to keep calm even under tough circumstances, the audience will walk away respecting you more than those who couldn’t do the same.

No matter how well you present your ideas, it is tough to convert people who are strongly committed to their own beliefs and values. That is why it is so important to set a realistic goal so you can take the first step toward achieving it.

**Group Facilitation**

One of the most important sets of skills for leaders is facilitation skills. These are the "process" skills we use to guide and direct key parts of our work as supervisors and managers. Our facilitation may be in meetings, planning or planning sessions, seminars, or training of our employees.

- A facilitator is not the seat of all knowledge. A facilitator is a guide to help people move through a process together.
- Group facilitation does not focus just on what gets achieved. It also focuses on how people participate in the process of learning or planning.
- A facilitator does not take sides.

The best leaders see themselves as facilitators. Leaders facilitate work among their employees, growth in individuals, and teamwork. The same is true in meetings. While they need to accomplish an agenda of items, leaders should not feel they have all the answers. Great leaders rely on input from employees. Gaining input and orderly participation is a key. Community Toolbox is a website that discusses various skills for leaders in an open forum. The following are tips suggested to gain input and participation:

- Make sure everyone feels comfortable participating.
- Develop a structure that allows for everyone’s ideas to be heard.
- Make people feel good about their contributions.
- Make sure the group feels the ideas and/or decisions are theirs.
- Support everyone’s ideas. Do not criticize them for what they say.

There are several tips to keep in mind about facilitation which will allow leaders to be successful. As with many skills, it is important to be prepared. Know what is needed as far as purpose and goals. Being prepared also encompasses knowing the participants in the room and considering their expectations or lack of expectations. With any group of people, a structure must be set and kept as the seminar or meeting is conducted. Facilitators know how to handle group settings by providing clear directives.
As the session begins and continues, active listening on the part of the facilitator is necessary on many levels: 1) Facilitators must keep up with the flow of conversations and ideas; 2) Facilitators should make encouraging comments about input as people contribute; 3) Appropriate structure should be maintained throughout the time allotted. Leaders must listen actively to every comment to stay on top of facilitation. Facilitation also takes someone who can be flexible and change directions immediately.

Finally, group facilitation takes a leader who can recognize group dynamics and behavioral styles. In other words, an effective facilitator guides the group through the discussion by staying tuned in to the different personalities, levels of engagement, and behavioral styles in the room. Part of knowing your audience is understanding how to ask probing questions that encourage any type of personality to speak up in front of the group. At times, it may mean the need to settle a verbal conflict between participants. It is easy to see that communication skills and interpersonal relationship skills are needed in almost every capacity of leadership.

**Quotes**

“Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel. It is to bring another out of his bad sense into your good sense.” --Ralph Waldo Emerson

“If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be 'meetings.'” --Dave Barry

“I think there needs to be a meeting to set an agenda for more meetings about meetings.”

--Jonah Goldberg

“Management’s job is to convey leadership’s message in a compelling and inspiring way. Not just in meetings, but also by example.” --Jeffrey Gitomer

Presenting information clearly and effectively is a key skill to get your message or opinion across, and, today, presentation skills are required in almost every field. http://www.skillsyouneed.com/presentation-skills.html#ixzz4VJ3jTvxy

**References**

