

ESSENTIAL TOOLS NEEDED TO GET RESULTS AND THRIVE FROM YOUR NETWORKING

MODULE EIGHT

Module Eight – Presenting You

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Are you clear on what to say now?

Within the last module you had quite a few suggestions to action... how far did you get? Do you have any questions? Are you clear on who you are, what you do and who you want to work with?

Yes! Great! Let's move on.

No... Can I suggest you revisit the last section as it will impact on this next one?

What has become very apparent for many people is how having a niche market really makes a huge difference when it comes to making an impact on what to say.

If you don't have a niche market, then it is advised that you investigate this.

BUT - Don't let not having a niche stop you/your VA business. It took me 18 months before I developed a niche, and actually my niche crept up on me.

Presenting Your Message: Mistakes VAs Make

When it comes giving a presentation, whether at a networking meeting or to an audience at a main event, many VAs are not always clear what to say or how to structure a presentation for effect.

Throughout this module, I want you to imagine that you have the opportunity to give a 10-minute presentation to a local networking group (of which you are a member already). Then once you have done the exercises in that capacity – redo them as if you have been invited to a group where you are not a member.

It is really important when you're presenting that you create a message people understand and also to ensure you have a follow-up plan.

Who is Your Audience?

The tone and content of your presentation will be dependent on the audience. If you're pitching to people you know then it may well be more informal, as opposed to a more formal presentation to a potential client, which will also determine the topic of the presentation. By recognising the audience, you will determine how familiar they are with your industry, at which level you will be presenting, what will be the pitch and the language you use.

Once you know who the audience is you will then be able to develop a better understanding of what motivates and interests the people in the audience.

Action:

Consider your audience. Take a sheet of paper and write the following headings with spaces to fill the answer:

1. Date of the presentation
2. Time
3. Duration
4. Audience size
5. Audience background/industry
6. Topic of speech

Now fill in the information that you already know and find out what's missing by checking with the networking group organiser if it's possible

Getting to Know Your Audience

Imagine a typical member of your audience, perhaps two or three types that might be represented. Start to create a picture of this person or people you are presenting to so that you feel you have become familiar with them. Of course you may be making assumptions but that's OK here.

This may seem bizarre, I know, but when you feel you know your audience, you will present with a different manner and one that connects with them.

Action:

Now take another sheet of paper and write down the following headings with space to write a couple of sentences:

1. Name
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Number of children
5. Expertise

Your Purpose

You have to decide on the aim of your presentation. It could be that as part of your networking membership and as part of the meeting agenda, you get to present for 10 minutes. At the 4Networking, BNI meetings and Athena meetings for example, this is not a 10-minute pitch, this is an opportunity to give your audience some useful information that will have a positive impact on them or the way they work. Of course, if your audience includes people from your niche market, your presentation aim will be different to that of the general mix from your networking group.

Let's look at some ideas for your aim, is it to:

- A. Inform?
- B. Persuade?
- C. Entertain?
- D. Instruct?
- E. Provide a call to action?

Action:

Write down the key aims and any secondary aims you would like for your presentation. Remember it depends on who your audience is and what you are aiming to do.

People love, and are attracted to, your passion for what you do and why. People get completely put off and will switch off when you use this presentation to 'sell' to them.

My advice is that if the group of people you are presenting to are a general mix of business owners, focus on three main areas which you know are challenges for most business owners, and create some solutions you know will be easy for them to implement. Therefore, the aim for your presentation would be to 'inform' them that you know what their challenges are and 'instruct' them on how they can make their business life easier and more productive.

I do believe that being 'entertaining' allows your personality to be seen as remember, people will buy from people they like and will refer to people they like. Avoid suddenly becoming someone else. Just be you.

Many people I have spoken with about the 10-minute presentation stated that what most grabbed people's attention was allowing the personality of you and not your business to shine through.

Objectives

I do believe that there should be desired outcomes to be achieved from your presentation which include:

1. Attitude change – perhaps this can be to change their attitude that using a VA is an expense and not worthwhile, to one that is an important asset to one's business if they are to succeed. Perhaps an attitude towards fees.
2. Better understanding – a better understanding of the benefits of using you as a VA and what services can be offered or even how it all works.
3. Overcoming objections – this too can cover the area of fees and help people to realise how they are wasting their valuable time.
4. Provide action points – possibly to get them to do a simple task of detailing in three days where they are spending their valuable time, what an hour of their time is worth and how they are depleting opportunities from their business!

Action:

Write down clearly your own key objectives.

Where Are You Presenting?

Are you presenting at a networking meeting or at a prospective client's office? Will it be at an industry event or to a possible group of strategic partners?

Wherever you are presenting, ensure you are familiar with the room and the layout. Ensure you have arranged any necessary equipment such as a projector and flip chart.

Is the room large and will it be filled with a large amount of attendees? Therefore, will you require a microphone?

Just ensure you have the logistics organised. I know you are a VA and that's what we do... but check them!

What Does Your Audience Want to Hear?

You should, by now, have a good mental image of your audience, so you want to take this a step further by deciding on what their key interests are.

You already know the topic of your presentation, and if you don't then find out now.

Based on your profiling, what will be the important issues about your chosen topic that will be of most concern to the audience?

For example, if you are discussing how a company is going to develop over the next few years, the main concern to the business owner is how they will manage to focus on the growth activities and have the funds to grow a team. They will be interested in products and services.

Action:

For each of your profiles, or niche market, write down the two to three key points that will be of most concern to them. If you're not addressing their concerns, they won't be listening. Whatever the interests of the audience, think about what will motivate them and importantly to grab their attention what will be of interest.

When you are preparing your presentation, keep the profiles to hand and refer to them.

Presenting to a potential client

If you're presenting to a potential client or niche in the audience, it may be about a new service and how it can be delivered to them for an affordable package as well as how it will positively impact on their business. You will need to cover the following facts:

1. How the service will be provided;
2. The benefits;
3. How you compare to your competitors.

Presenting at the networking meeting

1. Define the outcome – for a well formed outcome have something that you have influence over in terms of what you want to achieve for your business and for your clients.
2. Write it out on paper in long hand to ensure it actually gets programmed into your mind so that you deliver it from within you and not just something you read out as you are more likely to remember it this way.

3. First impressions count, they take a long time to change.
4. Start well and continue well.
5. Tell people about a new offering or a specific area of your VA service and what the key benefits are.
6. Respect your audience.
7. Keep it precise so that people remember the key points so that they can share it with others who may be good contacts for you.

Writing Your Presentation

Detailed preparation and planning is key to the success of your presentation.

Break up the task of preparing it into manageable units. Once you know the length of your presentation, whether it's 10 minutes or an hour, break the time into smaller units and allocate sections of your presentation to each unit. For example, you may want to give one minute as an introduction, six minutes to discuss the main theme, one minute to summarise and two minutes to take questions. If it is a longer presentation, then work to these scales.

Create a logical order of the points you need to mention. This will help you to create the framework of your presentation.

Keep the presentation short and simple so that it's easier to manage as well as to remember.

In addition, it helps your audience to remember key points you want to get across. People don't remember detail! You have to bear in mind your audience and their attention span, especially if you are one of a few presenters. People normally dislike too much information.

Remember that you can always present them with printed information afterwards based on what you think is relevant. Avoid information overload, perhaps focus on a summary sheet or tips that would be useful for them. BUT do not give them that information until after the presentation, as otherwise they'll read it before you've finished presenting and not listen to you.

Keep things simple, aim to keep a few facts and figure if you are using these and perhaps demonstrate them by using a graph or illustrations. There will always be the visual people in the audience that this will appeal to.

Avoid using jargon, you may think this is impressive but it's not. The audience may not understand it and could affect their comprehension. This does depend on your

audience of course. If you do mention any terminology, explain what it means. To the general audience less is more!!

The framework... what next?

You have now built the framework for a successful presentation; make sure that you keep all of the documents to hand while you are preparing exactly what you are going to say.

Practice it over and over and over. Whether you are using a flip chart, a PowerPoint or even hand outs, practice using these aids.

What to avoid

1. Never leave your first practice to the night before because you'll find that you'll start to panic or forget something you want to say. If confidence is an issue, then this will strip your confidence instead of building it.
2. Allow plenty of time for practicing and if you can present to a friend or colleague that would be great so they can give you feedback.
3. Look in the mirror when you present or even video yourself so that you can see the visual you and how you appear. At least with recording a video and watching it back you can identify where you are able to make changes if required.
4. Record yourself as an audio so that you can listen back to how you sound and to have a way of keeping to the time frame you have set yourself.
5. Run it through using the equipment or aids you need.

Visual aids

If it's possible, your presentation can benefit hugely from visual aids such as a PowerPoint, video or a flip chart. As mentioned earlier, some of your audience will be very visual and so this will appeal to them more.

If you are using a PowerPoint, which I do advise, avoid adding every part of your speech in it otherwise people will read this and not listen to you. This is just visual aid and actually a great prompt for you.

Less is more!

Ensure the audience can see the slides well and the wording clearly. Therefore, use bold and large type as it can appear differently on a screen as opposed to on a laptop. Use images to demonstrate key points instead of words. I've seen some PowerPoint slides that contained more images than words and they were still very effective and memorable. If you're using video or music on your presentation, check that you've got sound.

Ensure you have a sound knowledge of how to use the equipment and a backup plan if the system fails so that your presentation isn't affected. People will see you as resourceful if you are calm and prepared. There is nothing less impressive when someone is unprepared with no contingency plan, and being a VA you must be able to demonstrate these skills.

Project your voice and have eye contact with your audience. Your presentation will be a complete waste of time if nobody can hear you. The projection of your voice will be dependent on the size of the group and if you are using a microphone. It is about confidence and what you say to yourself, so you may have to revisit the confidence section if you need to. People need to feel you are addressing them so ensure you have eye contact with everyone in the room. I do this by scanning the room and look at everyone.

Smile!

Unless you are stating a serious point, smile. It makes you look approachable and human, and when you smile make sure you let people see your teeth. It is a known fact that people will find you more trusting and approachable if you both smile and show your teeth. Smile with your eyes as well!!

Use the PowerPoint or prompt cards to guide your presentation. There is nothing worse than seeing someone read their presentation from a set of notes. It doesn't look good and it creates the impression that you've not rehearsed or that you don't really know your business. NEVER say that you're new at this and haven't presented before or even that you've just started out in business and hence not presented before. This doesn't bode well, what does look good is that you have made the effort.

Follow up

There needs to be an 'afterwards' for your presentation. What I mean by that is, get a call to action. It may be that you have prepared a summary sheet which you hand out to everyone after the presentation. This can include questions such as: "Which point in the presentation could you most relate to?" "Which challenges can you now recognise as holding your business productivity back?" "What would be the biggest impact for you by focusing on the key activities that will ensure your business moves forwards?" "Who can you think of now in the xxxx industry who you would be happy to introduce me to?" and so on.

You can include a questionnaire; ask people for their number and a suitable time to have a business call to discuss ways in which you can impact their business. Ask people to complete that and return to you as soon as possible.

Suggest that they connect with you on social media – you can even tell them your preferred platform.

Just like I mentioned in previous sections, ensure people know what help you want.

Follow-up immediately whilst your presentation is still fresh in their minds.

By being proactive you're also demonstrating your level of competency. If you were prepared enough you may have created a free download for the audience to receive based on the challenges you mentioned in your presentation, whilst at the same time adding their details to your newsletter sign up.

Do always ensure you avoid spamming people and give them the opportunity to unsubscribe. Respect the information you have on them.

Many opportunities are lost because people don't follow up. By following up you could be grabbing a new opportunity.

Summary

- Get clear on who your audience is so that you can create profiles on three types of people who will be present, this will ensure you appeal to them more.
- Identify your purpose for the presentation, what do you want to achieve?
- Where are you presenting? Be prepared on the logistics of your presentation.
- What message do you want your audience to hear? Create an idea of the challenges you know they are facing and present the solutions.
- Create a structured framework for your presentation so that you keep to time, you cover the main points you need to cover and so that you come across as proactive and professional.
- Ensure you have a call to action and follow up with people so that you create new long-standing relationships and new business opportunities.