

Build investor confidence with effective business presentations



Insight

■ Melissa Monson

What does courtroom litigation have to do with financial presentations?

More than you'd think.

Research by well-known psychologist Albert Mehrabian shows that 93 percent of the impression you make on an audience is not by the words you say.

It is determined by the speaker's facial expression, body language and the quality, tone and pitch of the speaker's voice.

As one of only two financial presentation coaches in the country eight years ago, I began by working with attorneys on courtroom-delivery skills.

These days, building and rehearsing powerful presentations is nowhere as important as it is in the financial community. A persuasive presentation is critical to securing that all-important next round of funding or successfully completing an initial public offering.

"Companies only have one opportunity to tell their story, so you have to make the best impression and the most impact," says Michael K. Ackrell, founder of Ackrell Capital, LLC, a leading IPO advisory firm.

"It's a very competitive environment."

If you are an executive reporting earnings over a conference call or pitching your story to skeptical investors, try honing your presentation skills with some of these communication tips.

Simplify

You are presenting to busy people, so

focus on what they want to hear and what they need to know to buy. Investors want to know how they will make money, whether through initial funding or continuing to invest in your company.

Your financial presentation should run no more than 20 minutes and should have only three to five main messages. Focus on information that supports great markets, great execution and a great management team.

"Most presentations follow a similar roadmap," says Mr. Ackrell. "Investors are used to seeing certain things in certain places – people should not try to be too creative."

Your company story must be refined and simplified so it can be easily understood. People only buy what they understand.

Use visuals

A financial presentation can be taxing to follow, so included graphics to help tell your story.

A visual should support the spoken word, not compete with it. Good visuals can save time and simplify a complex subject.

Visuals must be simple to look at, easy to understand and pleasing to the eye. Because of color and design, a visual is more powerful than words. For example, think about a movie you've seen. Months later you have a clear visual of a particular scene, but you probably don't remember what was said.

Pay attention to the non-verbal

Words are precise, whereas nonverbal communication is spontaneous and open to interpretation. How you move and use eye contact can often cancel out the words and reflect feelings. Maintaining eye contact is the single-most important aspect of communication with an audience.

Silence or pauses can be effective tools both in-person and over the

phone. Pauses are nonverbal punctuation; without them the listener can't identify what is important.

Being an effective presenter is hard work.

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Michael K. Ackrell
Ackrell Capital, LLC

It requires knowledge of your audience, a clear message, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, and enthusiasm. Invest in your presentation short term so that what you say will be persuasive long term and help you secure the investors you need.

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