

## How to Get the Most out of Staff Presentations

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Presenting new ideas, issues or policies face-to-face can be a great way for small business owners to strengthen relationships with employees (see: [Keys to Delivering a Great Speech or Presentation](#)). But an owner who gives an ineffective, redundant or confusing presentation is doing more harm than good. Here are some tips to ensure you don't waste an opportunity to manage the direction of your business:

### **Be Transparent**

"Explain your rationale," says Michael Rosenthal, CEO of Consensus Group, a New York City-based negotiation and conflict-resolution consulting firm. If you used specific information or data to make a decision, be sure to refer to that information. Explaining your process starts everyone off on the same page and defuses potential confusion or conflict. Plus, it may reveal complications or alternate solutions you hadn't considered. "Your employees might have a different set of data that would inform your decision," says Rosenthal.

### **Interact**

Even when using technology, a presenter should capitalize on human interaction—a presentation that doesn't take advantage of this is weak, no matter how strong the ideas or research behind it. "Maintaining eye contact lets you engage the audience at an emotional level and hold their interest," says John Paul Engel, director of Project Be the Change, a career and academic advisory in Sioux City, Iowa. When people feel like you're talking to them individually, not just as a group, they're more inclined to pay attention.

Illustrating concepts or breaking down numbers using slides also helps, as long as each slide has a purpose. "The slides should support your talk. The narrative should not all be on the slides," say Engel.

### **Involve Your Audience**

The best way to make sure your message gets across is to engage your audience. Again, eye contact is invaluable: "If you find someone who you know is not paying attention, if you focus on them while you're speaking, you can bring them back in," says Engel.

Acknowledging audience members by name also reinforces the impact your presentation will have on them. Small business owners have an even greater advantage if they know enough about their employees to predict their behavior or reactions to a presentation. "If there's someone in the audience who is typically disruptive or [confrontational], you should address them by name as early as you can," says Engel.

### **Solicit Feedback**

Involving the audience isn't just important during the presentation itself. Employees are an easy and valuable resource to consult, especially for ideas that might affect them. "Have them contribute to the policy development by doing research and generating ideas," says Rosenthal. Feedback sessions after the presentation can be similarly useful, for you and your employees.