



How to Relax When Making A Sales Presentation

By Brian Jud

Making a professional sales presentation to one or more prospective buyers is integral to making a large-quantity sale of your books. Yet, some authors fear doing that and let nervousness get in the way of delivering their message successfully.

Depending on your level of experience, there are three things could happen once you are introduced (and you might experience all three at different times). First, you will be so “on” that you conduct yourself with aplomb and the words flow out of you with astonishing precision. Your body language exudes confidence, you make all your points persuasively, and you deal with all questions and objections with alacrity and wit. In short, you are on a roll and everyone can sense it.

Or, you might feel nervous, wondering if you are saying and doing the right things. Your body language may be stiff and your vocal projection lacking. You wonder why you ever let yourself get into this position and you cannot wait for it to be over. Getting the order becomes less important than just getting out.

Most likely you will perform somewhere between the two extremes. You may feel a little anxious at first, but as soon as your confidence and practice kick in you relax and perform professionally. You make all your points, your audio/visual aids work as practiced and you close the sale with a win/win agreement. The more presentations you make, the more your performances tend toward this positive end of the continuum. But in any of these situations, there are things you can do to improve your performance. Here are a few of them.

- Perhaps the best way to reduce your anxiety is through adequate preparation. It is said that practice makes perfect, but practice makes permanent. So, make sure you are practicing the right things. And don't just practice until you get it right, practice until you can't get it wrong.
- Do not apologize for being nervous. The audience is less aware of your nervousness than you are. Do not call attention to it.
- Have two people on your team. If your mind goes blank your colleague can step in and save you. There is a feeling that together you can handle any questions or objections that arise.
- Use audio/visual aids to complement your words, not to hide your nervousness. It is painfully obvious when speakers look at the Power Point slides or flip chart page or bury their heads in a handout instead of making eye contact with people in the audience.

- Use your body language to help you calm down. Move with smooth, practiced motions. Relax your jaw and shoulders. When nervousness begins to overcome, you may forget what you can do to regain control of your emotions. So, write a reminder on your notes to relax your muscles and breathe deeply.
- Look at everyone in the audience. Some nervous speakers lock onto the eyes of one person and deliver the presentation only to him or her. Not only will you lose the other people, but you will make your target uncomfortable, too.
- If you perspire, keep a handkerchief with you. A speaker dripping sweat does not make a confident impression. But those with the self-assurance to continue confidently while wiping their brow can still sway the prospects. Under these conditions, wear dark clothes that do not show perspiration. And during your pre-presentation set-up of the room, see if you can adjust the temperature to a lower, but comfortable level.
- Do not tell jokes. Your prospects are not there to be entertained, but to find out how you can help them reach their objectives. A joke may receive a polite chuckle but will not help enhance your professional stature. And your anxiety will multiply if your joke is received with blank faces. Brief, light comments that show you have a sense of humor are welcome, but resist telling stories or jokes that build to a punch line.
- Drink warm water, but do so while someone else is speaking or asking a question. Do not try to quickly gulp the water between your sentences, or you might begin choking and coughing. That will further increase your unease.
- An antagonistic prospect can fuel your discomfort. Maintain your poise and listen to the person. Remind yourself that while you cannot control the question, you can control the answer. That does not mean that you discount the question and go off on a different topic. Instead, say that you *understand* where the person is coming from (that does not mean that you *agree*). Do not let it rattle you, but take it as a challenge to maintain your composure. Stick to the facts and say, “In my experience, this is what happened.” People cannot argue with your experience.
- Smile, though your heart is quaking. Most of the time the audience will not realize the extent of your anxiety. Practice smiling naturally in front of a mirror, so you get a sense of what it feels like. You may be surprised to know that sometimes when you think you are smiling your face does not show it.

Relax and enjoy yourself, but do not get too comfortable and make flippant remarks. Maintain your professionalism and think about what you are going to say beforehand. If you are unsure if a comment will be suitable, do not say it. As the saying goes, “If in doubt, leave it out.” In the end you will have some fun, sell more books, and understand that making a professional sales presentation is not as bad as going to the dentist.

Brian Jud is the Executive Director of the Association of Publishers for Special Sales (APSS – www.bookapss.org), and the administrator of Book Selling University (www.booksellinguniversity.com) Contact Brian at brianjud@bookmarketing.com or www.premiumbookcompany.com