



Are There Any Questions?

By Greg Barrette

You've been asked to make a presentation. The topic is one you know completely – your business, industry, product or service or maybe your personal story. If you're like most people, you put off preparing your presentation. When you finally start, you brainstorm ideas, write an outline, find facts and examples, create visual aids and possibly prepare a handout. Then you practice, practice, practice.

Did you notice that you've put all your focus into your presentation and given no thought to the question and answer session? The Q&A period may actually be *more* important than the presentation itself because it's what the audience hears last. Consider these tips so that you and your audience can get the most out of a question and answer session.

- Choose the Q&A format that will support your presentation best. Questions at the end of the program won't get you off the subject. During the presentation they make your tone more conversational. No Q&A at all means you can avoid hostile questions.
- Have a goal for your question and answer session.
- Prepare for the session. Write a list of all the questions you might be asked and practice, practice, practice.
- Know your audience. You prepare your speech for the demographics of your audience, do the same when you prepare your answers to their questions.

- Use verbal and non-verbal clues to let your audience know the Q&A is coming. Summarize your presentation, turn off audiovisual equipment, pause, then ask for questions.
- Learn to recognize different types of questions and respond appropriately.
- Be sure to actually answer the question. A good response is the question plus the answer plus one piece of supporting information such as a fact, statistic, or example.
- Control your emotions. A sarcastic or argumentative answer will make you look unprofessional and could lead to a greater confrontation.
- Pause before you answer – it gives you “think time” to organize your thoughts into a coherent response. It also keeps you from experiencing the “I wish I hadn't said that” dilemma.
- Beware of hypothetical questions. They are usually meant to trip you up or embarrass you.

Greg Barrette, a business owner, consultant and professional speaker, speaks on the topics of inter-personal communication, sales and motivation. His presentation “Are There Any Questions?” addresses how to handle question and answer sessions. He can be reached by phone at 414/781-6161 or e-mail at gbarrette@netscape.net.