

# Public Speaking Best Practices

Public speaking is an essential communication skill. The better you articulate your message, the more likely your audience will listen and understand. Whether you are updating colleagues in a meeting or giving a formal presentation, there are some basic skills that will ensure your message is delivered effectively. Below are some best practices to consider when you are preparing and delivering your message.

## Preparing Your Message

- **Consider your audience.** Find out from your audience what they feel is relevant and be sure to include that in your message.
- **Keep the message simple.** People are more apt to remember a simple concise message. Center your message around three bits of information that you want the audience to take away.
- **Be aware of your time frame.** If your time frame is five minutes or an hour, adjust your message to the time frame and leave time for question and answer.

## Delivering Your Message

- **Make and maintain eye contact.** Speakers who make and maintain eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth, and credibility.
- **Use appropriate facial expressions.** Determine what type of tone your message contains. Is the information upbeat and uplifting? If yes, smiling will enhance your communication. Is your message about big changes or difficult news? A neutral facial expression coupled with a firm tone will exhibit the seriousness of your message.
- **Use appropriate gestures.** Speaking lively will make the material more interesting, engage your audience and will facilitate understanding.
- **Stand up straight and face your audience.** Standing erect and leaning forward communicates that you are confident, approachable, receptive and friendly. Facing your audience communicates interest.
- **Consider your proximity to your audience.** If you are speaking in a large room, you can move around to increase interaction with the audience. To ensure your audience can hear and see you, stand and if available, use a microphone. When presenting in a smaller room, look for signs of discomfort such as rocking, leg swinging, tapping, and gaze aversion. Adjust the room if necessary.
- **Speak clearly and loudly.** One of the major criticisms of speakers is that they speak in a monotone voice. Listeners perceive this type of speaker as boring and dull. People report that they learn less and lose interest quickly when listening to those who have not learned to modulate their voices.