

Tips for Giving Persuasive Sales Presentations

(by Judie Knoerle)

Aristotle Had it Right!

You don't have to be in sales to participate in persuasive behavior. We use persuasion all day long, in every walk of life. We encourage someone to go to lunch with us, to marry us or to buy our products and services. In its simplest form, persuasion is the art of convincing someone to believe or act in a certain way. Why then, are we persuasive in selling our ideas in some situations and not in others? Aristotle had some thoughts about this.

Aristotle defined persuasion in four words: Logos, Ethos, Pathos and Agora. The purpose of this summary is to integrate those four words into any sales situation and offer some tips to achieve greater success through persuasive sales presentations.

Logos – The Words and the Logic of the Argument

Albert Mehrabian, a psychologist at UCLA, speaks of three components of Communication: body language, tone of voice and the spoken word. He contends that, of the three, words are the least impactful when the other two components are not in alignment. For example, if you cross your arms and say, "I'm open to that idea", people will hear your body language, not the words. If the body language is open and the tone appropriate, the words, (hence the message), will be heard.

TIPS:

- Know what is important to your customer
- Clarify your purpose around your customer's needs
- Know what points you want the audience to remember and speak to those
- Build a presentation with a strong open, body and close
- Include benefit statements that answer the question, "So what?"
- Connect your ideas with strong transitions
- Be concise in your wording by avoiding repetitive filler words ("um's, uh's, o.k's")

Ethos – Personality and Character

No one wants to sit through a presentation given in a dry and boring manner. The energy and confidence a presenter brings to the presentation conveys the degree of confidence he or she has in the products or services. People buy from those they like and with whom they feel comfortable. A customer can quickly make a judgment about the character of a presenter from the opening handshake or introductory comments.

TIPS:

- Smile
- Stand tall and move intentionally
- Broaden the gestures – keep them varied
- Project the voice without yelling
- Make strong, random eye contact around the room

Pathos – Sincerity and Passion

We find we are easily passionate about that new boat we just purchased but not as passionate about the annual report we must present. Passion in a sales presentation is a two-way street. The presenter must be sincere, authentic and excited about the topic and he or she must know what emotions and concerns might motivate the customer to action.

TIPS:

- Anticipate questions on the minds of the customer and address them
- Use emotionally laden words (*feel, embolden, challenging, extravagant, lurid, etc.*)
- Involve the audience by inviting comments and feelings
- Use your body language to convey emotions
- Modulate your voice to emphasize specific words

Agora – The Gathering Place for the Discussion

In Aristotle's time Agora was the ancient Greek marketplace. In sales, we must be aware of our marketplace – the context of our topic, the actual environment in which the information is delivered and its timing.

TIPS:

- Whenever possible, know the room set up prior to the presentation
- Ensure everyone can clearly see you and the screen when showing slides
- Know who's in attendance
- Make the environment as comfortable as possible to encourage the easy exchange information

In Conclusion

Aristotle added one more word to the above four mentioned: Syzygy, which is the rare alignment of celestial bodies, such as the sun, moon, and earth during an eclipse, influencing the earth's gravitational system. In sales terms, Syzygy is the delicate balance of each of the four areas of Logos, Ethos, Pathos and Agora that can ultimately conclude in a sale. Sales presenters must learn to balance information with passion, head with heart, and features with benefits to convince a customer to behave or act in a certain way.