

**JOHN PARKER STEWART**  
**DON FULOP**

**MASTERING THE  
ART OF**

**ORAL**

**PRESENTATIONS**



**WINNING ORALS, SPEECHES, AND  
STAND-UP PRESENTATIONS**

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“Time to discard the small do’s and don’ts notes you’ve been carrying around for years...finally a book that captures the art of how to ‘sell’ with the art of how to ‘tell’ in a succinct and straightforward guide; complete with key tips that provide all you need to know about giving oral presentations to effectively communicate the value of your organization to a potential client. Having led captures and organizations from \$5 M to \$5B over 34 years, this is a must-read for capture leaders, capture teams, and business leaders alike.”

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Former Lockheed Martin Executive

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“Presenting a cogent oral argument—be it to an auditorium full of strangers, a classroom of distracted teenagers, a gathering of superiors and peers, a courtroom with a judge and jury, a job interview, or a selection board of potential clients—is equal parts art, science, and, at its best, pure, unforgettable magic. The stakes are usually high and you get only a single shot at persuading the target audience. How to make the most of that one opportunity is what this book is all about. Don Fulop and John Parker Stewart truly stand up and deliver. They lift the veil and reveal what magicians rarely, if ever, share: their real secrets. Anchored in decades of highly successful experience at the pinnacle of business development—itself a mercurial combo of art, science, and magic—at such top-tier companies as Lockheed Martin and CACI, Don Fulop’s perspective offers the invaluable insight, realism, and grit of the skilled practitioner. He has been there and done that—skillfully, gracefully, and seemingly effortlessly—delivering uncommon results. He has led, educated, inspired, pushed, cajoled, delighted, and amazed even in the face of doubts, vacillations, and the inevitable resistance to change. He is an experienced guide who knows both the path to success and the obstacles along the way. With Don at the helm, the sky is no limit. John Parker Stewart, the indomitable executive coach and supreme motivator, always brings out the best in individuals and teams. Together, Fulop and Stewart are an unbeatable combination. They deliver a readable, relevant and compelling book. *Mastering the Art of Oral Presentations* isn’t ‘Public Speaking for Dummies’ or yet another generic ‘how to’ book. Listen to their voices of experience, learn their keys to success, and you too might be able to make magic happen.”

Dr. Lani Kass

Senior Vice President and Corporate Strategic Advisor, CACI International Inc.

Former Senior Policy Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Former Special Assistant to the Chief, USAF

Former Professor of Military Strategy at the National War College

“The business leader must never forget that a customer’s request for orals is an open invitation to differentiate their offering from all others. Stewart’s experience and practical tools, when combined with hard work and preparation, provide everything you need for successful orals with high impact and solid substance.”

Dan Olson  
VP/GM, Northrop Grumman, Armament Systems Division

“Don Fulop is uniquely qualified to coauthor this book. His skill as an accomplished engineer, coupled with a special talent for visualizing the winning elements of a difficult proposal and understanding of the added value of a properly developed oral presentation, have resulted in a highly respected reputation in the technical business development community.”

Jay Honeycutt  
Former Director, NASA Kennedy Space Center  
President, Lockheed Martin Space Operations

“It is fantastic that John has shared his vast knowledge and experience in oral presentations through this comprehensive and compelling book enabling the reader to win more often.”

Ray Kiley, CEO, Intelledox

“Facing an oral presentation is much feared and all too often deferred, but is an increasingly critical aspect of winning proposals. How to succeed is put squarely under the microscope by John Parker Stewart and Don Fulop. Rest assured the winning organization will have thoroughly studied this invaluable resource.”

Colonel James C. Adamson, US Army, Ret.  
NASA Astronaut  
Former President, Lockheed Martin  
Former CEO, Allied Signal/Honeywell

“This book is packed with world-class tips on speaking and presenting by a world-class coach. John is the *best!*”

Tarek Robbiati  
Former CFO, Sprint  
Former CEO, CSL-Hong Kong

“If you are a professional who has to win a proposal or impress a prospective client, this book should be a must-read for you and your team. I had the opportunity to work with Don Fulop in the highly competitive federal services contracting world and he is one of the real winners in this space. His focus on the strategy for what it takes to win, his clarity of offer, and mostly to the preparation for the presentations that are increasingly a part of large, must-win, proposals, Don is a proven leader. As we competed to grow from our base of a successful \$2.5 billion company, leaving a presentation to chance was not an option. Don’s proven techniques, and ability to teach these to a broad group of colleagues, really sets him apart and made his “Will to Win” a key differentiator. I would strongly endorse this as a must-read for anyone who wants to increase their probability of win.”

Mike Thomas  
Former President, Lockheed Martin IS&GS Security Group

“John is on the extremely short list of orals coaches who have an uncanny ability to instantaneously connect with key leaders and orals teams in a credible way. He enables them to communicate effectively, serving not only their own best interests, but the best interests of the organizations that they seek to serve in a superior way.”

Brian Dalton  
Vice President, Human Resources, KBRwyle  
Former CHRO, Orbital ATK

“John’s ability to find and articulate the essentials of a successful orals team is masterfully explained in a way that is understandable and executable by all levels. This is a must-read for anyone involved in oral presentations.”

David J. Dacquino  
Chairman and CEO, Serco Inc.  
Former Senior VP & GM, Raytheon Technical Services Co.

“Oral presentation success is a vital part of the implementation of marketing strategies. This in turn leads to sales and market growth. This compilation of methods, communication strategies, and presentation planning can be used by nearly any company or organization to produce excellent oral presenters. John’s insight and leadership methods have

proven over the years to be consistently successful. I have used many of these methods to improve sales, marketing, and customer interface for over 20 years. I fully endorse this book and the methods described therein to produce excellent oral presenters, the backbone of sales and market share growth.”

Brian K. Hovik  
Market Manager, Aerospace – BASF Corporation  
Former Senior Engineer – Boeing Research & Development

“How to prepare, practice, and present for an oral’s presentation ... this book is written by the experts and has the secrets for your team’s success.”

Carey Smith  
President, Parsons Corporation Federal Business Unit

“When your business growth depends on the ability to articulate why potential clients should choose your company over the competition, John Parker Stewart’s oral coaching methods and strategies provide the definitive approach to success. This invaluable tool is also 100% applicable to businesses outside the government sector, and to anyone wanting to hone their presentation and analytical skills.”

Richard B. Evans  
President and CEO, Health Care Solutions International

“Persuasion is the name of the game! John Parker Stewart and Don Fulop have crafted a masterful book to successfully take the reader to that goal.”

Dr. Cynthia Z.F. Clark  
Former Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA

“John Parker Stewart’s unique ability to combine both the business and human aspects into a presentation is second to none. This book provides the needed guidance for all competing oral teams to deliver persuasive and credible presentations. It is a must to capture targeted contracts.”

Daniel Cox  
CEO, GCR Inc., New Orleans

“I fully endorse *Mastering the Art of Oral Presentations*! John Parker Stewart and Don Fulop have captured all the essentials of a successful orals that will help any competing team win their targeted contract!”

David Clark  
COO, SC3

“Nobody in the world better understands the art and science of delivering a government oral presentation than John Parker Stewart and Don Fulop. They have worked with thousands of presenters over the decades, resulting in countless wins. They truly understand how to make you victorious! *Mastering the Art of Oral Presentations* provides you with the essential ingredients to make a winning presentation. Fulop and Stewart have crafted a masterpiece. This book is a staple for any executive who plans on doing business with the government, as well as all professionals who need to polish their presentation skills.”

Holton Yost  
General Manager, General Dynamics Information Technology

*Mastering the Art of Oral Presentations* is undoubtedly the most comprehensive book available to prepare effective presentations that deliver results in any business situation ... with its time-tested and practical coaching advice spread throughout, you will find it indispensable.”

Michael Millane  
Principal Program Manager, Intel Corporation

“To master an orals presentation and gain a competitive advantage, this is a kick-ass, must-read book! Stewart and Fulop have written the essential primer for anyone venturing into the perilous world of orals presentations. To overcome your insecurity and desperation in making that big presentation, read this book again and again, and learn from the best!”

J. Willian Koegel, Jr.  
Executive Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary, CACI  
Former Partner, Steptoe & Johnson  
Former Member, DC Legal Ethics Committee—Washington, DC

“John Parker Stewart successfully blends the art and science of oral presentations, and shares a piece of his magic in *Mastering the Art of Oral Presentations*. I have worked with John, and experienced his magic first-hand. Having worked with many orals coaches, there is no other coach in his league, and no process that comes close! I highly recommend his approach to individuals and teams facing any type of orals. His process and tools create confident teams and compelling presentations!”

Sue Shaffer  
VP-Business Development, SGT

“Composing an interesting story and telling it in a compelling way are the keys to *any* successful presentation. John Parker Stewart and Don Fulop offer their performance-proven methods to guide you in delivering your next winning presentation.”

Rear Admiral Mark A. Hugel, US Navy (ret.)

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We would also like to thank Pat and Kevin Sullivan of Sullivan & Associates for their photographic assistance and support. Of course, we also extend our thanks to the employees of this fine organization who were drafted into posing for the photos!

# About the Authors



John Parker Stewart

John has worked with proposals and proposal teams for over 35 years. He began his career as a Lockheed executive in the 1970s. In 1980 he started his own consulting firm where he has coached and trained Fortune 500 companies in capturing multimillion and billion dollar government contracts and then delivering effective performance by leveraging successful management and leadership practices. He specializes in providing orals coaching to proposal teams of all sizes and levels of experience.

John was selected as the Association for Talent Development's national Trainer of the Year for two consecutive years. He has coached and trained thousands of CEOs, presidents, executives, professionals, astronauts, and military leaders in communication, presentation, and team leadership skills. His clients work with DOD, DOE, NASA, all military branches, other government agencies, and commercial firms.

His publications include “Orals Coaching: The Secret Weapon for Winning Contracts” in the Association for Proposal Management Professionals’ journal *Proposal Management*. He is a three-time speaker on Orals Coaching and Contract Capture at APMP’s National Conference. He has published several award winning leadership books. Among his primary clients are Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, BAE Systems, CACI, the US Air Force, Kennedy Space Center, and Johnson Space Center.

John lives with his wife, Debra, near Portland, Oregon.



Donald Fulop

Born in Wisconsin and blessed to be raised in a home on the shore of Okauchee Lake, Don went on to enjoy a 40-year career equally divided between engineering, program management, and business development. Starting at Rockwell-Collins in avionics engineering, followed by a decade of productive years in program management at Harris Corporation, Don then joined Lockheed Martin. After 25 years of service at Lockheed in programs and business development, he retired as a VP in their National Intelligence business area.

He then rode his Harley around our great country for the better part of two years before joining CACI as executive vice president of business development following gentle but persistent coaxing from their CEO, Ken Asbury. He remained with CACI for three years where he built up their business development expertise; successfully championed continued growth in existing markets; and penetrated new, unserved markets. He was also key in closing several M&A actions valued in excess of \$1 billion.

Over Don’s career in business development, he led teams that secured over \$16 billion in new business and did so with a win/capture rate that was consistently 20–25% above industry average. He has worked with foreign and domestic commercial customers, foreign governments, the U.S. National Intelligence Community, the Department of Defense (DOD),

Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Department of State (DOS), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Department of Justice (DOJ), and many federal civilian agencies such as National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Veterans Administration (VA), and the National Science Foundation (NSF).

He has worked virtually every aspect of ground and space-based advanced communications and IT systems including design, development, production, and postdeployment product support. Don credits his success to strategic thinking, carefully listening to the thoughts and opinions of others, and application of processes proven and honed over decades, many aspects of which are shared in this book.

Don earned a BS degree at the University of Wisconsin and MS and MBA degrees from the Florida Institute of Technology. He is a DoD Program Management graduate of the Defense Systems Management College at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and he is a US patent holder.

Don lives with his beautiful wife Maryann in Colorado Springs, where he continues to ride his Harley and occasionally wets a line in a few of the many rivers and lakes that grace the State of Colorado.

# Foreword

**I**n the pursuit of large government contracts, it is common that each competitor be required to make a face-to-face or video presentation to a source selection board. These oral presentations usually require that the key personnel of each competitor's team explain how they will meet or exceed the customer's expectations as the winning contractor.

Oral presentations are one of the most nerve-wracking experiences any professional must endure! Every word spoken carries the same weight as a written proposal. In addition to leveraging technical content, your presenters must impress and convince the source selection board that your team is the one that will best meet all of their requirements and the one they want to work with for years to come.

Having worked in the government contracting industry for over 40 years, I have learned that oral presentations require a completely different set of skills from the ones needed for producing a written proposal. Knowing that "you never get a second chance at a first impression," it is imperative to seek the best advice and coaching to make the most of the opportunity for presenting your ideas to your prospective customers.

Two of my favorite people, John Parker Stewart and Don Fulop, have now collaborated on *Mastering the Art of Oral Presentations*, a clear and comprehensive guide that covers every facet of preparing your oral presentation team to make the absolute most of their time in front of the customer.

John Parker Stewart, an internationally renowned author and executive skills development coach, adapted all his learning about what works and what doesn't for highly effective communication to provide key steps for preparing and delivering remarkable oral presentations.

John joined forces with Don Fulop, who is one of the finest, most successful business development executives who has ever pursued and won federal government contracts. The fruit of their collaboration is a complete game plan for preparing, practicing with, and delivering successful oral presentations for federal government contracts. In fact, the principals and practices detailed in this book are equally applicable to any oral presentation, speech, or stand-up presentation.

Within the covers of this invaluable guide, you will find all the support, tips, and advice you will need for developing an oral presentation from start to finish. The process that Don and John outline will help you understand, implement, and satisfy the orals requirements for your team and for yourself.

Consider this book an orals coach in one comprehensive volume. Use this guide to learn each phase of the orals requirements. You will find a thorough explanation accompanied by examples of what an orals experience entails, and how to apply it to your specific needs in meeting the requirements you face.

Good luck learning all the ins and outs of an orals experience. You will not receive a more complete and practical guide anywhere than this book will give you! Follow these orals tips from two masters of the trade, and you will be several steps ahead of your competition.

Good luck in winning your next contract! I wish you all the best!

Ken Asbury  
CEO and President, CACI

# Introduction

## *An Absolute Will to Win Is Essential for Success*

**F**ormal oral presentations communicate a message in a way that is unlike any other method of delivery. Nothing is more influential than a dynamic, face-to-face presentation followed by a lively discussion among the various stakeholders.

A powerful presentation will endure in the minds of the audience and ultimately become a motivating force that positively influences their decision making. To make your presentation memorable, you must understand what makes people receptive to what you have to say, deliver a credible and convincing message, and stay focused on your topic.

This involves a great deal of deliberate, thorough preparation. It must not be treated as an impromptu event. To ensure the success of your targeted outcome, your presentation must be thoughtfully planned, it must be insightful, and it must be compelling.

This book describes the essential elements, processes, and behaviors needed for preparing and delivering an impactful,

enduring formal oral presentation. Its focus is on selling products and services of all types, in both commercial and government buying/procurement applications.

It provides you with sound guidance based on decades of successful, real-world experience and lessons learned. Templates are provided to help you sharpen your presentation. All material covered is applicable to both individual and team presentations. And, when considering winning approaches and strategies, it applies to your professional life and your personal life as well!

Expert tips and instructions are included to help you learn how to win the hearts and minds of your audience. The book describes in detail how to develop and deliver your message to win potential customers, influence people, and ultimately obtain an enthusiastic and reassuring nod from decision makers.

In a selling environment, oral presentations are fundamentally very different from written proposals. Winning oral presentations require much more than merely demonstrating compliance with the customer's requirements or entertaining the audience.

From the perspective of your customer or the people you're attempting to influence, formal oral presentations exist only to help them decide how to best satisfy their goals and objectives. This is a critical part of their decision-making process.

Through interaction with you, your key personnel, and your team, an oral presentation offers a singular opportunity for you to convince the customer that you are uniquely qualified to satisfy their needs. To rise above the competition, your presentation must demonstrate distinctive value that addresses all their requirements, it must be brilliantly easy to understand, and it must be memorable.

There are many common misconceptions about oral presentations. If any one of them influences your presentation planning and preparation process, it can contribute to a less than successful outcome. Potentially toxic assumptions include the following:

- Orals are simply a briefing.
- Orals are a verbal summary of a written proposal or document.

- An orals coach or speech coach isn't required.
- Orals only minimally affect decisions or influence the customer/audience.

Don't allow any of these misconceptions to negatively impact your presentation. Orals are truly unique and present you with an opportunity to shine. Don't fail to capitalize on this opportunity! Understand the principles and processes that winners use to deliver an oral presentation as a powerful differentiator in the eyes of the customer.

Formal oral presentations are not unique to a particular market segment or industry. Just think about how important an oral presentation can be for any purpose. Think about how it ultimately impacts the selection process in the mind of any decision maker.

Most people use a variety of inputs to make decisions, but nothing can influence and connect you with your audience like a successful face-to-face meeting followed by an honest and open discussion. Important facts that could easily be missed via the written word are emphasized, graphics and illustrations are thoroughly described and discussed, questions are answered on the spot, and most importantly, the decision maker experiences first-hand what it's like to work with you.

As you prepare yourself and your team for an oral presentation, remember one thing: an absolute will to win is essential for success. This commitment will energize your proposals and presentations, and it must dominate and drive everything that you do.

## **Government Orals—What They Are, How They Originated, Why They Are So Important, and the Requirements the Government Must Follow When They Are Used**

### ***Understanding Why Orals Became a Part of the Government Procurement Process and How They Are Used Is a Key to Success***

The orals process originated in the 1990s when the government determined that orals offered an efficient way to streamline the

procurement process, minimize and clarify outstanding issues associated with the procurement, and improve the overall quality and end products of the acquisitions. The orals process also allows the government to evaluate the competence of key personnel, understand how key personnel (including teammates, subcontractors, and vendors) work together, and although not a formalized requirement, assess how well the government team feels it can work with the contractor's team. For these reasons, and others discussed in this book, orals are an exceptionally important part of procurement when they are called for by the government.

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 15.102 states that oral presentations may substitute for or augment, written information provided by the bidder. Taken to the extreme, this means that the government may not require a written technical proposal and can base their entire selection on an oral proposal supplemented by certifications, representations, and a signed offer sheet (cost/pricing). Winning the contract can depend entirely upon the responsiveness and quality of your presentation.

Think of an oral proposal in the same way you would a written proposal. The contracting officer must establish the ground rules for the presentation in writing, may record the presentation, and will score the orally presented information according to the criteria stated in the solicitation document.

On this point, FAR 15.102(d) states: "When oral presentations are required, the solicitation shall provide offerors with sufficient information to prepare them." Accordingly, the government solicitation may describe the following items:

1. The types of information to be presented orally and the associated evaluation factors that will be used for scoring.
2. The qualifications for personnel that will be required to provide the oral presentation.
3. The requirements for, and any limitations and/or prohibitions on, the use of written material or other media to supplement the oral presentation.

4. The location, date, and time for the oral presentation.
5. The restrictions governing the time permitted for each oral presentation.
6. The scope and content of exchanges that may occur between the Government's participants and the offeror's representatives as part of the oral presentations, including whether or not discussions (see 15.306(d)) will be permitted during oral presentations.

The Appendix of this book includes the FAR language associated with oral presentations (FAR 15.102). Although there have been few changes to the criteria for orals over the years, it's always a good idea to check the latest release of the FAR to review and understand all current requirements.

## **Customer's Objectives**

### ***Understand the Customer's Direct/Indirect Goals and Objectives***

Customers use oral presentations to evaluate any number of formal and informal buying criteria and assist them in their decision-making process. Their goals and expectations include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Understand proposal content and individual/team competency.
- Assess face-to-face interaction and compatibility with the presentation/implementation team.
- Observe how key personnel
  - Present themselves.
  - Work together.
  - Interact with the customer.
  - Communicate information.
  - Address and answer questions.
- Interview the account manager, program or project manager, and key personnel.
- Test the ability of the team's leadership in a variety of ways.
- Reduce their supplier selection time and cost.

To win, you must be well prepared to address these criteria as carefully and diligently as you would in a written proposal. Complexity arises from the fact that orals are a stage show that must be believable, persuasive, memorable, and engaging. The presenters are the performers, and the audience and evaluators are the customers—the people who will ultimately make or greatly influence the final buying decision. Designing compelling team presentations that meet your customer's complex needs is much more challenging than preparing and delivering individual presentations. Generally, team presentations require many people, more material is presented, there are more opportunities for errors and inconsistencies across the presentation, and timing can become an issue. For this reason, we will concentrate on team presentations even though every principle and technique described in this book is equally applicable to individual presenters.

## **Your Team and Your Team's Objectives**

### ***Carefully Select Your Team Members Based on Individual Qualifications, Not on Pure Sales or Speaking Skills Alone***

An effective presentation team will use orals as an opportunity to:

- Address all your customer's requirements.
- Show that your team understands your customer's needs and desires.
- Demonstrate knowledge, competency, and capabilities.
- Articulate win themes and discriminators.
- Stress strengths.
- Mitigate weaknesses.
- Counter or exceed the competition's strengths.
- Subtly call attention to your competition's weaknesses; also known as "ghosting."
- Demonstrate that your team's leadership, product, or service is the best for your customer.
- Connect with your customer.

Select presenters based on their qualifications, not on their presentation skills. Carefully examine the qualifications that your customer is looking for: the skills needed to perform the work following a contract award combined with demonstrated successful past performance in like environments or situations. There is no substitute for experience when measured against other key qualifications. An orals or speech coach can help you develop winning presentation techniques in days, but there is no way to credibly insert years of valuable experience into an empty resume.

### **Master's Tip: Build a Winning Team**

Team composition, experience, and qualifications are of paramount importance. You must ensure that all key customer-specified qualifications are met and that the people you select have the experience needed to perform on-contract. Without an optimized team, your probability of a win will be greatly diminished.

As the leader of an orals presentation, it's your responsibility to ensure that you have a winning team. If you don't have the right people or if you have people who do not align themselves completely with the overall win strategy, replace them immediately. Don't wait! Don't fool yourself into thinking you can convince the disruptor to "see it your way." The sooner you have a cohesive team with a winning attitude, the better. Your team must work closely together from day one and they must embrace and believe in every aspect of the win strategy. If you sense that a problem exists or is developing, address it immediately.

As you assemble your team, remember that your customer, audience, and evaluators will be looking at, and listening for, key attributes of your team and its approach. Specific questions exist in the

customer's mind, and it's your job to ensure they are answered and fully satisfied. Here are just a few of those questions:

- Do the individuals making the presentation work well together as a well-rounded team?
- Is the prime contractor really in charge here? Do their subcontractors and vendors integrate well into this team? Do they complement each other or do they conflict with each other?
- Does the entire team have a clear understanding of what I'm looking for as their customer?
- Can I work well with this team?
- Will this team work with me as issues arise in the future?
- Is this team committed to our mutual success?

## **Orals Coach or Speech Coach?**

### *When Learning a New Skill or Enhancing an Existing Skill, Use a Professional*

A professional orals or speech coach can help to prepare each presenter to deal with the unfamiliar psychological environment that contributes to orals complexity and the angst that most people feel when required to stand up and formally address an audience. A major source of anxiety in every speaker facing a new presentation environment is a fear of "the unknown." Indeed, there are many unknowns to worry about! An experienced orals coach can help to eliminate this fear and put speakers at ease.

There is an important distinction between an orals coach and a speech coach. A speech coach will hone your presentation skills but will not necessarily work the presentation content or your ability to address your customer's needs. An orals coach will not only provide advice and guidance on presentation skills but will also help to ensure your presentation content addresses your customer's needs and specific requirements.

An orals coach will also assist you in understanding how to deal with post-presentation question-and-answer sessions (Q&As). How

you respond during a Q&A can easily determine if you will win or lose, regardless of the quality and overall effectiveness of your formal oral presentation or written proposal. Never underestimate the importance of the Q&A, and always ensure that your team is well prepared to deal with it.

In short, an orals coach not only polishes every aspect of your presentation but also addresses compliance with all the customer's needs, including how to respond during the Q&A. In an environment in which the customer is using orals to help reach a decision, these two elements of the presentation—compliance and Q&A responsiveness—are crucial and can make the difference between winning and losing.

The orals coach will guide each presenter to project the following:

- Confidence—the single most important thing that each member of the team must have.
- Expertise in their respective areas.
- Detailed and specific knowledge of the customer's needs and requirements.
- Passion for both the subject and their desire to serve the customer.
- Commitment to the customer's mission.
- Energy, honesty, and sincerity.
- Reliability, responsibility, dependability, and motivation.
- Compatibility with their team and with the customer.
- Soft skills that are designed to engage to the customer include the following:
  - Being convincing, enthusiastic, thorough, and positive.
  - Aligning your thinking and delivery to support and reinforce the messages being articulated.
  - Addressing your appearance, gestures, posture, and ability to clearly project the message.
  - Bringing out your most likable personality traits (and candidly squelching the ones that are detractors).

An effective orals coach will guide you through the proven process described in this book to ensure you address all customer needs and team objectives thoroughly, competently, and in a compelling way that your customer will remember. Your coach will ensure that you are exceptionally well prepared to function professionally, capably, and impressively in a formal orals environment.

## Chapter 2

# Secrets of Successful Presenters

*An Audience Quickly Forgets the Ordinary—Don't Be Ordinary!*

**S**uccessful presenters do indeed have secrets that they use very effectively. They are powerful concepts that should be considered, re-considered, reviewed, and re-reviewed as you prepare your presentation.

The customer will attend as many presentations as there are companies competing for the work. Typical presentations with typical graphics and traditional presenters secure at best an “average” or “mediocre” position. This is not good enough to win! You must do something different to make the customer remember your team, while still meeting all of the requirements.

The following techniques will help make your presentation memorable. They are easy to understand and hard to implement, so keep them in front of you from the first moment you begin planning your presentation until the day of delivery to your customer.

## Let Your “Self” Shine Through

### *Your Strength as a Speaker Comes from Within*

Great speakers connect with their audience. The connection comes not only from a shared interest in the subject matter, but also from the speaker’s personal interest and passion for the topic. You cannot inspire or persuade anyone to do something unless you are inspired and convinced yourself. You must believe in what you are presenting and you must show the customer how dedicated you are to the solution you are offering.

A wise person once said that the most important thing in life is to enjoy your work, to find your passion and pursue it with vigor. Think about that. You pursued your job for a reason, and you go back each day for a reason. Recall and build on your original enthusiasm for your job and translate that into enthusiasm for the subject matter you are presenting.

Sincere passion is contagious and inspiring. Great leaders are passionate about their goals and their teams. They express that passion in a way that other people can identify with, and as a result, people follow. Successful companies have passionate leaders who grab investors’ attention, attract top talent, and perform with excellence in every way.

Your passion and enthusiasm infect the customer with positive feelings toward you, and by extension, your team and your offering. Find your passion and let it shine through. Your strength as a speaker comes from within.

Document your passion for this opportunity. Ask yourself and your team the following questions:

1. What are you passionate about?
2. Why were you first interested in pursuing this opportunity?
3. Which portions of your topic and our overall approach are you most passionate about? Why?

## The Power of Personal Stories

### *Personal Stories Enhance Credibility and Demonstrate That You Truly Understand What the Real Issues Are*

Stories create a connection with the audience. They add tremendous credibility to your presentation when they are genuine, applicable to your subject, and evoke an emotional response. Stories illustrate, clarify, and inspire. They bring real-world experience for which we all know there is no substitute.

For example, while preparing an oral presentation to perform quality assurance work for NASA, each speaker was asked to include a personal story in their presentation that demonstrated their passion for the work. The proposed deputy program manager included the following paraphrased story.

As a young adult I lived in Florida in the 1980s, and got as much of a thrill from watching a launch as I did from walking on the beach at sunrise. One morning in early 1986 as I was walking along the beach marveling at the sunrise, I happened to look down, and my mood changed instantly. I bent over and picked up a debris fragment from the Space Shuttle *Challenger* disaster. At that moment I swore I would do anything I could to prevent such a disaster from ever happening again—and now I have my chance.

What was said in the rest of this person's presentation didn't matter. The customers were already convinced that this individual was someone they wanted to work with. In the debriefing from the customer after this team won the job, the customer stated that most of the competing teams gave good presentations, but this team's presentation was exceptional and memorable. They were selected because they connected with their audience.

**Master's Tip: Personal Stories That the Customer Identifies with Are Powerful and Greatly Enhance Your Credibility**

Personal stories can be very powerful, but be absolutely certain that your story relates solidly with the customer and the issue they are facing. When a connection is made via a relevant story, a special relationship is made with the customer.

“This person really gets it” is the desired effect you want to have on your audience. Conversely, not relating to the customer with a personal story can have a detrimental effect and result in a negative “so what” reaction.

To ensure that stories are relevant, test them on your team early in the preparation process and insist on brutally candid feedback. If the story is powerful and works well—great, use it! If it's weak or not totally relevant, scrap it. Don't try to twist the story, puff it up, or sugarcoat it. It's better to omit a personal story altogether than to use one that can potentially alienate your audience or negatively impact your credibility.

There are three types of stories that may have a significant impact on your presentation:

1. Personal stories.
2. Stories about other people's experiences.
3. Stories that illustrate how your solution is perfectly suited to meet the customer's needs.

Stories humanize you, your team, and your company. They go a long way toward addressing one of the customer's goals for requiring presentations: to determine whether they want to work with your team. Passionate people, an optimal solution, and real stories related to the customer's needs are a winning combination.

Document your potential stories and screen them by asking the following questions.

1. What personal experience shows your passion for this opportunity and this customer?
2. What experience of someone else demonstrates the passion you share for this opportunity and this customer?
3. How does this story demonstrate why your solution is exceptional?

## **Converse Rather Than Lecture**

### ***No One Wants to Be Lectured at; Converse with Your Audience to Hold Their Attention***

Practice until you internalize your content and can deliver it as comfortably as having a conversation with a friend. Your goal is not to lecture your audience, but rather to converse with the audience in a natural conversational tone at a normal rate of speech. An authentic presentation requires hours of work to: (a) choose the exact words that best represent your passion for your subject and (b) hone your ability to deliver those words with maximum impact.

Maximum impact is achieved when both your verbal and nonverbal communication skills are optimized. Practice out loud in front of a mirror using hand gestures that come naturally to you. Early in the planning process, video record yourself delivering your presentation and use it to determine how to make your presentation better. Video record yourself again close to the formal presentation date to see how much you've improved.

Practice in front of your team, watch for their reaction, and get their feedback. Practice in front of people who haven't been a part of the preparation process to see how they react. Passion for your topic combined with practice creates the presence you need to deliver your best performance.

**Master's Tip: Bring in Wise Trusted Outsiders to Critique Your Approach and Your Presentation**

When you feel you have your presentation close to being finalized, bring in trusted outsiders to critique it. Be careful whom you select for your reviewers. Make sure that your reviewers read all of the solicitation requirements and have received a thorough briefing about the customer and the competition. Ideally those selected will know, or will have worked with, the customer in the past. Optimally they will have actually been the customer in the past and have professionally moved on by joining your organization or becoming a consultant. They should be people who are exceptionally insightful, thoughtful, and smart.

Ultimately, formal dress rehearsals will be conducted to polish the final product, but getting an early start and constructive, meaningful feedback will save you valuable time by reducing rework and a significant amount of stress!

**Teach the Customer Something They Don't Already Know*****Prevent Audience Boredom—Present New and Exciting Information That Creatively Addresses Your Customer's Needs***

The customer will probably watch several presentations on the same subject matter. Your job is to present information about your offering that is completely new, packaged differently, or offers a new way to solve a problem or challenge in their environment. Find a way to present new and exciting information.

Most college professors are passionate about their subject matter, yet some students fall asleep during lectures. Thought-provoking professors recognize that their topic may not be as exciting to their students as it is to them and use techniques to create images, thoughts, and facts that stick in students' minds. You may know the basics of the subject, but presenting it from a different perspective, or in a different way, makes it fresh and new.

Your job is to present information, with which the customer may be painstakingly familiar, in a way that makes your team memorable. Apple Inc. does this well. They sell computers and smartphones, as do many other manufacturers, yet Apple stirs public curiosity and interest year after year, with products designed to excite us and make us look forward to their next-generation offerings. Apple advertising doesn't emphasize technical features such as RAM/ROM or pixels in their screen technology. They show you how their products will change your life, and indeed, Apple and others like them have changed our lives. The technology itself is life changing, not solely because of the technical details behind their products, but because of what it can do for you.

Your customer is looking for new ways to solve their problems too. You have interesting anecdotes and experiences that are valuable for presenting your material from a different and memorable perspective. Identify and bring out these features; use them to your advantage.

If you didn't believe in the unique value of your offering, you wouldn't be competing for the work. Explore the original passion that resulted in the decision to pursue this opportunity. Explore your own unique passion for your subject. Present something new and novel to the customer, or show them your solution from a different perspective. Give them a new and different way to solve their problems and paint a mental picture of how much better everything will be for them when they select you. Most speakers are more creative than they give themselves credit for. Tap into that creativity, and harness it to produce a winning presentation.

Document what the customer doesn't already know about your solution.

1. What is truly unique about your solution, that is, what are your discriminators?
2. Why are you passionate about your solution?
3. Describe your solution with enthusiasm.
4. Paint a mental picture for the customer of how your solution will make their lives better.

JOHN PARKER STEWART  
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