



**"I'VE SEEN SPEAKERS CHEWING GUM AS THEY SPEAK. THIS SHOWS YOU DO NOT HAVE GOOD MANNERS AND DO NOT UNDERSTAND PROPER ETIQUETTE IN A BUSINESS CONTEXT."**

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# TOSS THE GUM BEFORE YOU SPEAK

## AND OTHER TIPS FOR PRESENTING TO A POTENTIAL PRINCIPAL

EDITORIAL | STEPHEN D. BOYD, PH.D., CSP



## STEPHEN D. BOYD, PH.D., CSP

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When you prepare to present to a principal whose lines you want to represent, you are going to learn as much about the company as you can. *This is common sense.* **And often what makes a presentation successful is not a specific skill, but rather simple common sense.**

I've seen speakers do some very inappropriate things during a speech — things that have little to do with content or delivery but which affect their credibility and the quality of their speech.

For example, telling an audience as you start that you did not have much time for preparation is unfortunately very common. That statement is an insult to the audience. You are saying, "I did not think enough of you to prepare adequately." Don't tell us about your lack of preparation; we'll find that out soon enough. And if the audience cannot tell, then you're that much better off.

I've seen speakers chewing gum as they speak. This shows you do not have good manners and do not understand proper etiquette in a business context.

I've seen speakers completely unfamiliar with how to handle a simple slide presentation as they speak. Common sense says that if you do not know how to develop and use a PowerPoint slide presentation, then don't use one.

Here are some suggestions for incorporating the common sense factor to insure your success when speaking:

**Anticipate the speaking situation.** Visualize the speaking room, the location in relation to where you are, and the audience you anticipate. Visualizing your audience can help you make reasonable decisions about dress and the choice of materials to include in your presentation. Think through the experience of speaking to that specific organization. Doing this has motivated me to look up ancillary groups and businesses on the Internet to give me more background and context for my speech. The more you know about the group, the better your decision-making will be in regard to what you say and when to say it.

**Ask your contact person in advance for a program of the events which occur around your speech.** You need to know any events before or after your presentation

that might affect the way the audience responds. Thus you can think about ways to connect your speech to something else that is happening in the speaking setting. For example, knowing the theme or motto for the meeting or conference will help you understand what is important to the group that day. You can include the theme in your remarks and avoid saying inappropriate statements that might contradict some aspect of the theme. If you see the name of another similar speaker who is speaking ahead of you, you might call him or her to discuss your approaches to the subject in order not to be repetitive.

**Check pronunciation of proper nouns connected with your speaking situation.** Does the group have an acronym connected with some part of their organization? You want to use and pronounce it correctly. Are there any unusual names on the program that you might need to pronounce correctly? Call a person who is in the organization to ask about correct pronunciation. You might also ask this question, "Are there things about the group that I should know that would not be obvious to me?" Another question that can increase your common sense quotient is, "What advice can you give me to have a great program?"

**Accept the notion that not everyone may be as excited about your topic as you are.** Watch the group carefully for signs that you may be pushing your topic too hard. Make sure they understand the importance of your topic without pressuring the group to accept your position. For example, Alan Alda in his autobiography tells the story of speaking to the Illinois State Legislature. He was asked to say a few words and did not consider the fact that many in his audience did not support his position on the Equal Rights Amendment. Even the consultant he was working with told him not to talk about the ERA. He got carried away with his topic and thus did not read his audience well. They began heckling him so much that the consultant crawled on her hands and knees to a place behind the podium to pull on his pant leg to get his attention and say, "Let's get out of

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here.” He was not using common sense; his passion for his topic blinded him to the reality of the speaking situation.

**Take the time to practice your material in front of a friend or colleague.** When you finish, ask if there is anything that would be offensive to the audience. Ask that person for advice on how to handle any delicate matter so that you can insure good judgment about how to cover certain issues or to leave them out altogether. If it is a speech you have delivered several times before but you are adding new material, practice the new material in front of someone to get feedback on it.

If there is travel time involved, give yourself extra time so you will not be rushed. If it is a new location, map out a route on

your GPS or MapQuest before you leave for the presentation. Consider highway construction and traffic jams as you consider when to leave. I try to give myself a cushion of an hour when traveling to an engagement. If you fly, avoid the last flight out for the day to anticipate any possible delays and cancellations. Common sense says the unexpected can happen, so give yourself ample time.

**Finally, don't try to be perfect;** this puts too much pressure on you and skews your good judgment under the pressure of the moment. Accept the reality that you will make mistakes and that this is just a part of being human. Common sense is simply a part of successfully relating to your audience to speak and act in a way that will not distract from the content of the message you are delivering. 📌



## The Power-Motion Technology Representatives Association

**PTRA** was incorporated in Texas in 1972. In 1998, the association's leadership developed and adopted a new Mission Statement with supporting goals and objectives. They are the genesis of all association activities.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The **Power-Motion Technology Representatives Association (PTRA)** is an association of manufacturers and independent manufacturers' representatives dedicated to promoting the sales representation function within the power transmission and motion control industries. PTRA strives to offer all members opportunities for education, information exchange, networking with other manufacturers and representatives, plus an array of quality services designed to improve career performance and professional stature.

### GOALS

- To optimize the value of independent sales representatives
- To optimize the value of the rep-principal relationship
- To safeguard the integrity of the independent manufacturers' rep profession within the power transmission and motion control industries
- To enhance the professionalism of members
- To operate a stable association

**“MANA members in the motion control industry would be well served by joining PTRA.”**

### POWER-MOTION TECHNOLOGY REPRESENTATIVES ASSOCIATION

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