Skill 2:
POWER OPENING: Starting a Presentation

How to create a power opener

The power opener is the initial element that develops the early attention required from the audience. Acting in tandem with the *speaker's introductory comments,* it also sets the stage for informing the audience of the *top of the talk,* the *length of time* for presentation, the *purpose of the talk*, the *benefit*, the *structure* and *the time when audience could ask questions.*

Regardless the topic selected, an effective opener should consists of several *connecting* sentences (or thoughts) which have been designed to spotlight the purpose of the talk, and correspondingly, to develop attention for the topic being delivered. While there is not set formula that covers all situations, a power opener should generally contain the following elements:

♦ An attention-getting statement early in the talk
♦ Key points highlight of your talk
♦ Selected words and gestures to help establish initial rapport with the audience
♦ Use WIFM that the audience will easily relate to
♦ A buildup of anticipation and a sense of excitement for the balance of the talk.

Sample Power Opening Techniques

1. Common power opener

"Hello, I am John William-the Human Recourses Development Manager, and I'd like to talk to you today about the new Appraisal System that will be implementing later this year. The reason is of course, you'll be responsible for making the system work."
"I'll take about 15 minutes of your time and I'll be showing you some diagrams and some other information on the flipchart over there. Some information is rather complex, so I would be grateful if you'll hold your questions until the end of my talk when I try to deal with them."

I've divided the information into four main parts. Firstly, why a new appraisal system when you've already had the old one. Secondly, who is responsible for the different stages of the operation. Thirdly, what happens in the interviews; in other words, content. And finally, how are the interviews reported back to your managers."

"O.K. So, that's why, who, what, and how. First of all then the way-why the new appraisal system……."

2. Power opener based on a real-world situation

"Good morning, everyone. I appreciate the fact that 100 percent of our surprising members is present as requested, and that most of you even arrived a few minutes early. That's a good sign, since it shows your commitment to this organization …… a faith in our common future that is now in serious jeopardy unless we all pull together for the next few months."

"Well, as most of you have realized that our annual budget for education has been decreasing due to the fact that many students have come to us for aids. So, this presentation will be focusing on fund raising activities, and will be divided into how, who, and when to put them into reality. I might take fifteen minutes or so to present to you, and I would really appreciate if you could hold your questions till I finish my presentation."

"O.K. then, let's works together to make them happen……."

3. Power opener based on shock value

"Good morning, I'm here today as a representative of the Inter-city Blood Bank, whom most of you know, supplies over 70 percent of needed fresh blood supplies to the major hospitals within the country.

"What you may not know is that, due to vacations and holidays, many of our regular donors have not distributed recently, and the result is that our supplies are now 80 percent below normal. What does the mean to do? Well, for one thing, our blood fulfills the needs of over 120 percents a day who would be in critical danger without this supply. Going a bit further, statistics show that based on the number of people in the audience

today at least 30 percent of you will have one member of your household requiring a transfusion of some type within the next three to four weeks."

"By way of example, since there are fifteen people in the first row, at least five of you will be affected by this. Hopefully, your family will have this life-saving blood when it's needed ……(pause) but there's a good chance that some people will now die, due to the lack of it!"

Five tips for using traditional phrases

Remember that the primary purpose of a connector is to maintain and build on audience interest, so that upo approaching the main body of your talk, strong communication bridges have already been built. To do this effectively, here are a few key tips:

1. **Always try to keep the connector short**

   The best connectors are never more than a brief paragraph of three or four sentences.

2. **Use of humor or shock value is ideal as a connector, provided what you say is a appropriate to the situation**

   Do not use humor in a talk based around an academic or a grave business situation, tough.

3. **Statistical connectors are usually very desirable**

   Remember that the purpose of a connector is to build on audience interest; and it will aid in developing further interest by starting that *"65 percent of a new research findings will be ....."* for example.

4. **Use attention-getting connectors wherever possible**

   Some examples that are sure to "do the trick" are

- ♦ "So, in the next five minutes, I intend to show each of you……."
- ♦ "Yes, this product will become an industry leader, and I intend to do so by ……."
- ♦ "By the way, you have every right to doubt my word, but……."
- ♦ "It sounds a bit promising, isn't it? Wait until you hear the rest ……."

5. Use nonverbal gestures when employing connectors

You can heighten emphasis even further, by:

♦ Pausing for effect in middle of connector

♦ Using your hands to make a point

♦ Bringing body language into play; shifting your position from one side to another, taking off your glasses (if you wear them) and carefully placing them on a table in front of you.

♦ Raising or lowering your voice for a few seconds