

Pre-game Jitters When Presenting to the Boss

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Presenting to the boss is a double edged sword. On the one hand, it is an opportunity to show what you know, to be the next MVP. On the other hand, if the boss thinks poorly of you or hates what you say, you may be forever sitting on the sidelines or worse yet, sent home. This conundrum may jar every muscle in your body, leaving you unable to play at your best.

So what's a body to do? There are four keystones that will support you in stressful times. Embrace all four and you will feel composed and raring to go. Embrace only some and you won't.

1 Prepare

The most reliable stress-reducing tonic available to quiet your uneasiness is thorough preparation. The more you have researched your opponent, built a solid game plan, anticipated their tough maneuvers and gathered the right support, the more confident you will feel that you are ready. The more shortcuts you take, the more insecure you will feel. The rougher the opposition, the more preparation you need.

#2 Practice

A professional athlete would never walk on a playing field without practicing. It would be unthinkable. To be a superstar, you need to practice hard. While you can't rehearse every move, due to the fluidity of a conversation, you can be flawless on the execution of your opening and closing remarks and whatever else you might stumble on.

A speaker gets booed by the audience when he or she reads from notes or slides. The same is true when the person explains a complex idea in a convoluted manner. By rehearsing difficult explanations or multifaceted plans out loud, you can make any necessary adjustments to verbiage and also identify critical spots for an analogy or example. By rehearsing with your slides, your transitions

from one point to another will become smoother. Lastly, hard-ball questions are the downfall of even the best players if they don't see them coming. Practice your responses to the questions you have anticipated until your answers are succinct and your voice sounds confident.

#3 Picture

Many of us tend to devote our energy to what we fear instead of what we want. Take for instance Mary who was asked to do a quarterly review of her quality team's performance for the VP of Operations, the VP of Sales and five other members of the executive team. Although knowledgeable and well prepared, she had a bad attitude and hardly got any sleep the night before her Monday morning meeting. All her self messages were things like, "Don't flub this up." "Don't lose it." "Don't sound stupid." Her negative self talk resulted in poor performance and distracting mannerisms. In fact, one of the VP's commented to her immediate manager that he hoped she was never in front of customers.

Instead of hoping that you don't screw things up, have a positive attitude. Keep your focus on sharing your all-important news. It is amazing what positive self talk and visualization can do to quiet the hurricane brewing inside you. See yourself as a dragon slayer and you will be one. Worry that you will be perceived as a blithering fool and you will surely falter.

#4 Pause

In stressful times, pausing is a lifeline. If you pause and take a breath, you can clear your head and think on your feet. You can remember where you want to go next or how best to respond to an objection. You can also eliminate those pesky filler words, "um, ah and you know," that chip away at credibility.

Pausing is also helpful to Decision Makers. By giving them some breaks, they can think about what you just said and formulate their questions or concerns. They can also absorb what is on your slides or print-outs. It can be your winning play.

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Speaking to the boss can be scary. It can leave you whirling like a dervish. To be a peak performer, stay limber by committing to **P**repare, **P**actice, and **P**icture and **P**ause. The cheers of the fans will be ringing in your ears.

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