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Your Presentation Playbook:

Overarching Note:

- People only remember 7% of the words you say.
- 38% of your impact comes from *how* you say it.
- 55% of your impact from what your body is doing *while* you are saying it.

(UCLA Study)

The Words You Say:

- Yale University did a study of the 12 most persuasive words in the English language. The most persuasive word in the English language is "you." (Yale Univ. Study) Including phrases such as, "When I was thinking about speaking to you today," "As I'm sure you know," "As I'm sure you've heard," etc is a guaranteed way to ensure your audience's attention. (For the record, the remaining 11 words, in order, are: money, save, new, results, health, easy, safety, love, discovery, proven, guarantee.)
- Social psychologist Ellen Langer did a study that showed that giving people the "because" behind why you are making a request increases the possibility of cooperation from 60 to 94%
- When you want others' participation-- regardless of the situation-- remember the Duncan Hines Cake Mix Marketing Theory: letting people add their egg helps invest them in the success of the cake. In other words, ask yourself, "Where does what I want intersect with what my audience needs?" and/or "What can my audience contribute?" Giving them a chance to add their 'egg'—by asking questions, offering opinions, etc.—makes them more likely to take ownership of the information or situation.
- Avoid the 'useless modifier'. Words like "*Great*, *amazing*, *incredible*," tell your listener nothing. Something is only great, amazing or incredible if you tell me *why* it is.
- When structuring a talk, begin with a story, a statistic, or a question, as this draws your audience in from the outset.
- People remember stories longer, trust them more, and repeat them more accurately. With this in mind, try to illustrate every fact you present with a (very short!) story.
- Remember the Rule of Three, and stick to three points/3 stories/3 bullet points on a slide. This is because at point four our brains shut down-- which is why there are 3 Stooges, 3 blind mice, 3 little pigs, 3 bears, 3 wishes granted in every fairy story…

How You Say It:

- Once you arrive at the front of the room, *pause*, before you begin to speak, make eye contact with your audience, and smile. This gives them time to take you in and process their thoughts about you. Think of it as not leaving the driveway before everybody has their seat belt on.

- If you are going to say you are happy about something, you need to sound happy. Similarly, if you are going to say you're sorry about something you need to sound sorry. For example, when your voice mail greeting states, "I'm sorry I missed your call," you actually need to sound sorry about it.
- Unless, of course, you in a situation where you need to channel your inner NY restaurant hostess because you are not actually sorry—you just want the conversation to stop. In this case, your "sorry" needs to be quite upbeat.

What Your Body is Doing While You're Saying It:

- Standing in 'neutral'—with your hands by your sides and your feet side by side—projects confidence and authority.
- When sitting at the table, sit up and forward in your seat. Don't fall into a "too cool for school" posture—with one arm slung over the back of the chair, your hands folded behind your head, etc.-- or make yourself unnecessarily small.
- Keep both your feet on the floor while sitting. This will ensure your shoulders are level and you don't end up swinging one foot.
- People trust you more when they can see your hands; they don't trust you when they can't. Keep your hands on the table in meetings, and out of pockets when standing. Try not to close yourself off to others by clasping your hands in front of you.

Make Power Point Powerful:

- As you begin to choose the points you want to make ask yourself, "Does this point *need* a visual?" If not, don't include it.
- Don't confuse creating slides with practicing your presentation. Practice out loud-- a lot. I find practicing while I'm walking helps me both figure out my transitions, and embeds the information in my body so it's easier to remember when I'm speaking.
- Have stories to accompany each talking point and/or a story to accompany each visual. Don't read bullet points to your audience.
- Because we read from left to right, your in-person audience will like you better if you enter from stage left.
- Props can be even more valuable than pictures. Consider how and when 'show and tell' might serve you.
- Consider stopping every 3-5 minutes to ask if your audience has any questions. This is a great way to get them to add their 'egg'.

Maximizing Meetings—in Groups and One-on-One:

- Before every meeting consider—and work through the answers to—the worst three questions you might get.
- If you are going in with team members, it can be helpful to assign the roles of "Ally" and "Observer." Allies only look at you while you are presenting as if you are the most fascinating person on earth. Observers watch faces so that they can say, "There seemed to be some confusion when you talked about X. Maybe we can run through that one more time?" Doing this is a great way for those you are meeting with to feel like you are already on the same team.
- "Tell me more," and 'Let me think about that" are useful phrases to use when a questioner needs to blow off steam and/or you don't necessarily agree with their point but it's not appropriate to disagree with them.

- "I'm going to interrupt you," is a handy phrase when someone seems to want to take over a meeting. NOTE: it's important to say this with a smile on your face and in your voice so that the person you are interrupting is not offended. Follow this phrase up with, "What you're saying is important—and I want to hear it—but I think it would be a better use of everyone's time if we continued this conversation offline."
- Referencing the importance of people's time and asking clarifying questions at the outset of the meeting is a great way to avoid losing control of the end of the meeting. For example, beginning with, "Because I know your time is valuable, I want to make sure we are all on the same page. My understanding is that you came in this morning to talk about X—is that correct? Are there any other issues you are going to want to cover? I ask because I want to be sure we address all your issues/concerns in the time we have."
- Consider having a "safe word" or phrase within your team that means, essentially, "Let's talk about this back at the office."

Feels Like Team Spirit: Running an Effective Virtual Team

- **Gather 'round and go around**
  We all know a picture is worth a thousand words so sharing pictures of team members is critical. Still more valuable is posting them on a one-sheet that's a diagram of a clock face so members can say, "This is Ellen at 9 o'clock" thereby saving team members from having to scroll frantically through members' pictures to remind themselves who's speaking. This method counteracts disembodied voices on conference calls, and helps prevent "hiding" by participants.
- **One may be lonely, but it's also the most effective number**
  On conference calls, if even one member of the team is in an office by his or herself, the remainder of the team needs to be separated from one another—even if they are in the same offices. This can seem like a pain to arrange, but anything else leaves the person working solo feeling still more isolated.
- **Sort through the holidays and ho-downs**
  If your team is international, building trust is about more than the time zone in which they're located. Many countries celebrate different holidays, start work later, stay longer, etc. Additionally, some Asian countries have a policy of working on Saturdays that needs to be acknowledged and factored in at the outset. If you work this out in advance, you can even gain efficiency by working out the ideal schedule for "handover" of work.
- **Establish your "note-passing" policy**
  The same way it is distracting to a teacher and fellow students to have two people passing notes in class, it is distracting for two people to be IM'ing or emailing during a call. (And please don't think others don't notice. They do.) My recommendation is that the only use of IM or email during a call would be to alert others to a technical breakdown.
- **Version 2.WHAT?**
  Few things are more maddening than scrolling through six versions of a document—each with a very slightly different draft name-- trying to figure out who touched it last. My suggestion is begin with V.01, for version 1, and move on from there. This will, at least, take you through V.99 before you need to recalibrate. A great add-on is to adopt the protocol that "whole numbered versions" (e.g. V2.0) are "client-ready", whereas fractional numbers (e.g. V0.23) are still works in progress.
- **Show Your Work**
  Should you make any change in a document that has the potential to be misconstrued (i.e. anything beyond fixing typos/grammar/clarity) include a note explaining the rationale behind the change. This will either mollifymteam members or give you a jumping off place for discussion—rather than dissension-- at your next meeting.

- **Standardize Your Team Turnaround Time or State Your "By When"**
  People wait far more patiently if they know by when something is going to happen—this is the reason most mass transit has begun incorporating announcements regarding where the next bus/train is, and when it can be expected. Have a stated turnaround time for your team. If that deadline is going to be missed, state by when you will be in touch.
- **Silence is not (necessarily) golden**
  Too often a question is asked and falls into silence, leaving the questioner wondering, "Are they quiet because they agree with me, disagree with me, are not paying attention to me?" Establish your silence policy—i.e. silence signals disagreement/disagreement; or each question must be met with a round of polling – explicit yes's or no's from all participants..
- **"Don't you put that sheep on my head"**
  Different countries have different idiomatic expressions—the above was a striking reinterpretation of "Don't try to pull the wool over my eyes." Alternatively, ideas we "run up the flagpole" or consider "a home run," may be similarly misconstrued by listeners in different countries. Clarify and/or (for fun) keep a running list everyone can learn from. (nb: Poland uses "I wouldn't bet my head on that" for "I wouldn't bet my life"; and one of my favorites is the Italian equivalent of "You can't have your cake and eat it, too ": "You can't have a full bottle of wine and a drunk wife.")
- **Mix it Up**
  With far-flung teams, there is no opportunity to blow off steam together after work—yet the interpersonal connections forged during these get-togethers is vital to creating camaraderie. What to do? Arrange a weekly test-drive (and subsequent commentary on) the "libation of your nation"-- beer, chai, sake, double espresso, or create a signature drink peculiar to your team alone.

Avoiding an Avoidable Virtual-Meeting Blunder

- **Clean up:**
  This goes beyond "Don't Skype, Facetime, or Hang Out in front of your overstuffed bookcase or unmade bed" to seemingly small things such as make sure pictures/art behind you aren't hanging crookedly; that there are no half dead ficus trees or overflowing wastebaskets in the shot; that your pet hasn't chosen that moment to begin an intensive grooming session on the rug behind you, etc.
- **Look up:**
  As with any picture-taking opportunity, we all look better when the camera's lens is slightly above us rather than facing us head-on (If you weren't aware of this, welcome to far better family/vacation/free-time photos) This is easily done by placing the computer edge furthest away from you on one or two books, while keeping the edge closest to you on the desk.

  While it should go without saying, it's important to be thorough: please ensure this set up is not precarious. You don't want your computer to thump down off the books mid-meeting.
- **Work out a lighting design:**
  Try to have a light source on both sides of you, rather than having one behind you (leaving your face in shadow and potentially hitting your audience in the eyes) or one on just one side of you (leaving half your face in shadow– no doubt very artsy, but not appropriate in this context.)

  Needless to say, don't have it so dim you look like you're in the witness protection program or so bright you look like you've spent the last few months growing mushrooms in the basement.
- **Consider Your Costume:**
  Just because the person you're speaking with is only likely to see you from the waist up does not mean you

can slack off. Now is not the time to wear a coat and tie on top and Bermuda shorts and flip-flops on the bottom. You will feel far more psychologically prepared if you make the effort to dress as you would for an in-person meeting.

As you choose your clothing consider that blue is the color we trust the most and it photographs best. Within the spectrum of possible shades of blue choose a cornflower or "French" blue. It reads better than navy.

- **Sit on it:**
  When you sit down, be sure to pull your jacket tightly underneath you and then sit on it. This ensures the shoulder line of your coat is smooth and even.
- **Take a "Selfie":**
  These days it's easy enough to photograph yourself via an application on your computer. (For example, using Mac's Photo Booth) Do this ahead of time. This is when you may notice that your scoop-neck blouse photographs like a leotard, (not confidence-inspiring, unless you're applying for a dance position) that you really do need to iron your jacket/that your lighting set up does make you look somewhat Picasso-esque/ that you really should scrub the wall behind you with Comet….
- **Get happy:**
  Now is also the time to videotape yourself. Despite the fact that the most frequent complaint about seeing oneself on camera is that it adds ten pounds, the more pressing problem is that it flattens the personality: in order to demonstrate your interest/commitment/enthusiasm you will need to be far more animated than would be appropriate if you were meeting in person.
- **Look Into the Light:**
  While Poltergeist warned us 'don't go into the light', now is the time to look into the light. As seductive as it is to watch the little picture of yourself in the corner of the screen, you need to maintain eye contact with the light at the top of your screen. Looking down at the video of you 'reads' as shifty.
- **Pause:**
  As there is frequently a nanosecond of lag time in between what you say and your contact's receipt of it, plan to pause more frequently than you might during a real- time conversation.
- **Shut it down:**
  Once the meeting has ended, do not stand up/begin to discuss what occurred/put your head in your hands and bellow with joy or horror until your computer is firmly closed because while you may think you hit the "call ended" icon, it's possible you didn't and you don't want your post-mortem inadvertently broadcast.

Tools for Customer Service:

- You never have a "crisis" or a "problem". You only have a "situation" or a "dilemma".
- If a client/customer is upset it's important to "wallow" with them before moving along to problem solving. This ensures they feel heard and seen.
- Then, move them gently along to two other choices, "I know it's not the same, but would you consider X or Y instead?" Doing this allows them to say, "Well I don't want X!" So you can say, "So Y sounds like a good option?" Giving them a chance to say "No" to one, returns their illusion of control, which makes it more likely they will say "Yes" to the other.
- If someone is upset about something and it simply isn't possible to grant their request, I would go with the following script, "I'm afraid that's not a choice." The beauty of "It's not a choice" is that there is no "I" or "you" in the phrase, which keeps the conversation impersonal. After which you could say, ""What I can offer you instead is X or Y. Can you tell me which you might prefer?"