Presenting face-to-face vs. presenting online: How to utilise body language and voice

The importance of body language in communication

We all know that body language is an important aspect of communication. Many people think that what we communicate is expressed more through body language and facial expressions than the actual words we use. This belief largely stems from a study carried out by Albert Mehrabian in the 1960s. Mehrabian examined three critical tools people use to communicate and came the conclusion that words, tone of voice, and body language respectively account for 7%, 38%, and 55% of personal communication. Whether or not these percentages are true for all situations, the tone of voice you use and the posture, facial expressions, and gestures you choose to employ affects how the listeners interpret your message.

Use of eye contact, body language and voice in virtual presentations

In public speaking situations, we are often told that establishing eye contact is crucial when it comes to connecting with one's audience. This is true, but we have to keep in mind that for virtual presentations, establishing eye contact actually means looking into the lens of the web camera. This may require some practice.

Body language is another important aspect of public speaking. Again, there is a marked difference between virtual and face-to-face presentations. When you are presenting face to face, the audience is seeing all of you – your body language, your gestures, your voice, and the words you choose to use to communicate your message. Online, the audience sees a much smaller version of you. Most presentations are delivered sitting down, the shot is usually of your top half, the focus is mainly on the face, and your eyes, which means the audience may not even notice gestures.

What this means is that in virtual presentations, voice may become even more important than body language. You should aim to use a lively voice, with a well-adjusted speaking tempo and use pauses deliberately for effect. Keep in mind that the key to vocal impact is variety. Try to vary your voice to convey meaning (e.g., speaking more slowly when explaining complicated and important information, or using a tone of voice that is assertive, confident, and passionate when aiming to persuade the audience to take action).

To learn more, read the blog post and watch the video in the links below.

6 Body Language Tips Every Virtual Presenter Should Know

https://www.secondnature.com.au/blog/body-language-tips-for-virtual-presenters/

Hand Gestures and Body Language for Persuasive (Virtual) Presentations

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoHdevrq3IQ