

9. of the Biggest Mistakes Coaches Can Make in Their Presentations

Like Hollywood actors, coaches put themselves on the line with every word—taking a risk in the hope of a favorable outcome. Just like actors, even the best, most experienced coaches benefit from script review, rehearsal and coaching.

Here are the nine most common mistakes seen on the sales stage, and ways coaches can avoid them:

- **Unclear thinking.** Imagine that a busy executive says, “You have exactly 10 minutes to tell me what I need to know about your coaching.” You should know in advance what your prospect is really asking. The real question is, “What do I need to know about how your services can improve our company? Will your services solve a problem, create new opportunities, increase savings, maximize earnings, simplify our processes, develop our human capital, or increase market share?” Accomplish this, and you can present your options more formally.
- **Talking too much.** The key to connecting with a client is conversation and asking questions. The quality of information received depends on the quality of your questions and waiting for and listening to the answers! A successful encounter early in the relationship process should be mostly open-ended questions—the kind that require essay answers rather than just yes and no. Never rush on with pre-programmed questions that ignore the answer you’ve just received!
- **Wrong structure.** Do not build your talking points and presentation structure around your coaching process. Structure them around your prospect’s interests, challenges or opportunities. Put their words into your presentation. Yes, you will be talking about your satisfied clients, and your uniqueness to prove that you can appeal to their interests, solve their challenges, and maximize their opportunities.
- **No memorable stories.** People rarely remember your exact words. They remember the mental images your words create. Support your key points with vivid, relevant client success stories. Create a movie in their minds by using satisfied clients as memorable characters. What was their starting situation? Their problem that your prospect can relate to? What are their results since you worked with them?
- **No emotional connection.** Your client justifies working with you for analytical reasons. What gives you the edge—what I call *the unfair advantage*—is an emotional connection. Build an emotional connection by incorporating stories with characters they can relate to, by using the word *you* as often as possible, and by talking from their point of view. Congratulate them on their success. Thank them, not for their time, but for the opportunity to present your solution.
- **No pauses.** Good music and good communication both contain changes of pace and pauses. As counterintuitive as it may seem, you actually connect in the silence. This is when your audience digests what they have heard. If you rush to squeeze in as much information as possible, your prospects will

remember less. Remember the rule: “Say less, say it well.” Give your clients enough time to ask a question or reflect.

- **Weak opening.** Engage your audience with a powerful, relevant opening that includes them. For example, “You have an awesome responsibility,” or “Congratulations on your company’s recent success.” Then, focus on their needs: increasing sales, reducing errors, cutting overhead, developing their human capital.
- **Weak closing.** After reviewing your key ideas, answering their questions, making suggestions for the next logical step, and thanking them for the opportunity, make your last words linger. Conclude with a strong, positive sentence that will be embedded in their minds.
- **Lack of specificity.** Specificity builds credibility and helps position you above your competition. *Tons* and *bunches*? Can you really get a *ton* of ideas? Do you leave the trade show with *bunches* of business cards? Don’t say, “With our program, you will really grow your business.” Instead, “There are no guarantees; however, our last three clients increased sales at an average of 32 percent in seven months.”

Avoid these nine mistakes, and you’re on your way to being a sales star, delivering a dazzling performance every time.