



Great Speech! Professional Presentations Bring Better Patient Care and More Referrals

“Great speech!” is what you hope to hear when you speak to general dentists, pediatricians, nurses and other groups about pediatric dentistry. Professional presentations are an ideal way to inform your colleagues of the latest developments in pediatric dentistry and the importance of an age one dental visit, thus helping to enhance the quality of dental care for children.

An excellent presentation can also bring you professional visibility and patient referrals. In view of these benefits, this issue of *PPM News* focuses on practical communication tips for presenting your pediatric dental messages with the power they truly deserve.

Stage Fright: Convince the Butterflies to Fly in Formation

According to the Book of Lists, public speaking is our most prevalent fear, mentioned by more Americans than a fear of death. However, the adrenalin from speech anxiety can give you the energy to project your ideas to every member of the audience. As University of Nebraska professor Vincent Di Salvo suggests, “Your goal is not to get rid of the butterflies in your stomach, but to convince them to fly in formation.” The following tips will help you manage speech anxiety effectively:

SPEECH TOPIC IDEAS

- *A Smile for Everyone: Dental Care Considerations for Special Needs Patients.*
- *Prevention of Early Childhood Caries: How to Slow Down the Increase in Toddler Tooth Decay.*
- *The Dental Home: What Happens in the First Visit and Why.*
- *Practical Behavior Management: Helping Anxious Kids Enjoy Dentistry.*
- *How White is Right? Dental Bleaching for Child and Adolescent Patients.*
- *Oral Sedation: Keeping it Safe for Child Patients.*
- *Why a Pediatric Dentist? Guidelines for Which Patients to Refer and When.*
- *Early Oral Development: What is Normal, What is Not.*
- *Dental Emergencies: How to Respond to Oral Traumatic Injuries.*

Prepare carefully. Terror strikes when you try to wing it. Since nervousness normally recedes after the first 30 seconds of your speech, pay special attention to your opener when practicing. You can rehearse the beginning of your speech five times in five minutes, and it will be one of the best investments of time possible for a strong presentation.

Speak from an outline of key points. If you use a word-for-word script, you are more likely to read than speak, which will weaken your presentation style.

Arrive early and circulate. If you “work the room” before you speak, you will feel more comfortable with the audience members, and they will perceive you as concerned, confident and approachable.

Remember your expertise. You would not have been invited to speak if your ideas were not of value.

Contact the speaking site in advance to confirm audiovisual equipment, room layout and program specifics to prevent the possibility of unpleasant surprises right before your presentation.

Strong Content: Answer the Audience’s Central Question

The secret of strong speech content is to constantly relate your subject to the particular interests of the people in the room. Why should your audience care



about the specialty of pediatric dentistry? How will your information help them provide quality health care? In essence, each audience member is thinking, “What’s in this for me?” If you can answer that question, you will be interesting! Here are some additional ideas for strong speech content:

A quick lead-in. Let parents tell the story of their discontent without interruption. Listen attentively while the parent blows off steam and then winds down. The best step in anger management—and in successful negotiation—is to let the other side know you have carefully considered their point of view. Frankly, many parents will not listen to anything you have to say until their opinions have been aired first.

PERFECT POWERPOINT can add impact to your presentation, but you are your own most important visual. Therefore, although you will talk your audience through your slides, the bulk of your attention must remain on your listeners, not your equipment. Never use a visual without rehearsing with it, and always be prepared to speak without the benefit of your visuals. An ideal PowerPoint slide:

1. Covers one coherent idea, not several unrelated points.
2. Has one headline and no more than six lines of type.
3. Follows a consistent, non-distracting format.
4. Uses upper-and-lower-case type (in stead of all capital letters) for better readability.
5. Has sound or animation not just because it’s cool but because it supports speech content.
6. Is on the screen for less than three minutes.

Well-chosen statistics. When presenting numerical information, simplify the figures in the spoken lecture and on your visuals. If necessary, provide more specific data in written handouts.

Examples. Use lots of examples – about one every five minutes. Research shows that examples are not only as persuasive as facts, but are more memorable.

Participation. A proven way to keep audience members’ attention is to involve them. Ask the audience questions, request a show of hands, generate discussion, or invite the audience to share ideas.

Good timing. Carefully time your speech. No one will be upset if you run short. If you run long, just about everyone will be upset.

Effective Delivery: Get Off to a Winning Start

Most speakers agree that if the first couple of minutes of a presentation goes well, the rest is relatively easy. The following tips will help the beginning of your speech run smoothly.

Be sure you are well-introduced. Provide the program chairperson with a brief introductory paragraph about your background and credentials.

Request a lavalier microphone instead of the standard lectern microphone for greater freedom of movement.

Organize your props. Personally check out all speaking equipment – including the sound level of the microphone – before the audience enters the room.

Decide in advance how you can shorten your speech. Your allocated time could be cut with very little warning.

Don’t rush the beginning of your presentation. Walk slowly and confidently to the lectern, arrange your notes, look out at the audience, smile . . . then begin your speech.

Choose a strong position. Place both feet squarely on the floor to prevent pacing or rocking back and forth. Let your arms hang loosely by your sides or rest lightly on the lectern. Don’t grip the lectern or put both hands in your pockets.

Skilled Speaking: Show Your Enthusiasm for Pediatric Dentistry

Once you are off to a winning start, your goal is to talk with your audience in a way that will demonstrate your natural enthusiasm and commitment to pediatric dental patients. Consider the ideas below to fine-tune your personal delivery style.

Energy. Let your nervous energy work for you. Project your ideas to the person at the back of the room. Think of professional speaking as being a “bigger version” of yourself.

Eye contact. Your goal for eye contact should be 100 percent of the first and last 30 seconds, and 80 percent of the rest of the speech. Don’t try to



FOUR MORE WAYS TO INCREASE PROFESSIONAL REFERRALS

- One:** Mail (or e-mail) articles or brochures to health professionals in your area on pediatric dental topics relevant to their practices. Along with pediatricians and general dentists, you could contact pharmacists, plastic surgeons, optometrists, family practice physicians and osteopathic physicians.
- Two:** When you invite a referring health care colleague to lunch, consider holding it in your office using a local caterer and including team members from both practices. (A great deal of office-to-office communication is managed by team members, and if they get a chance to know each other, referrals will go more smoothly.)
- Three:** Hold an open house to show off your new office, introduce new staff or celebrate your practice anniversary.
- Four:** Ask your team to take copies of parent education brochures (stamped with your practice name, address and phone number) when they visit their physicians, pediatricians, optometrists and pharmacists.

look at everyone at once. Focus on one person for a few seconds, then look at another person in a different part of the room, and so on throughout your speech.

Gestures. Try to keep your gestures above the top of the lectern so they can be seen. Touch your notes only when you have to move them to see them. If you want to refer directly to your audience, don't point. Instead, gesture toward them with an open hand.

Facial expression. Smile more than you think you have to. It will not detract from the seriousness of your message.

Pratfalls. If you flub, stumble or lose your train of thought, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. Simply pause, smile and go on to your next point. If you freeze or profusely apologize, you will draw unneeded attention to your error.

Final moments. For a positive, forceful conclusion, memorize the last sentence of your speech and pause for a few seconds, looking at your audience, after you have finished speaking.

Questions and Answers: End with a Bang, Not a Whimper

When you ask for questions, stand calmly at the lectern or walk toward the audience. (Do not gather up your notes, fold your arms, or back away from the group.) If you are speaking to more than 50 people, repeat the question for all to hear. Begin your answer looking at the questioner. Then, look around the room, bringing the rest of the audience into the discussion. End your answer looking at someone other than the questioner; he or she may intend to monopolize your time. For help with hecklers, review the following strong starts for tough questions.

Interruptions. Pause until the questioner finishes the interruption. Then say, "I'll be happy to address that in a moment. As I was saying in response to the previous question..."

New data. If an audience member presents new information in conflict with your knowledge of the subject, respond with "Thank you for providing that information. However, the latest research with which I am familiar clearly shows..."

Bald statements. If a person makes a statement instead of asking a question, respond as though you have been asked for your views on the issue. For example, say, "That's an interesting point. The way I see it is..."

Paraphrasing. If a heckler tries to put words in your mouth, say, "That's not what I meant. I apologize if I wasn't clear. What I meant to say was ..." and rephrase your original statement.

Nathaniel Webster said, *"If all my powers and possessions were to be taken from me with one exception, I would choose the power of speech, for with it, I could recover all else."* Through careful analysis of your audience, selection of strong messages, and a practice session with your visuals, your next professional presentation will be both powerful and persuasive. It will bring the advantages of increased referrals and improved quality of dental care for children. It will be one that prompts your colleagues to say, "Great speech!" Here's one last piece of advice for speakers from Will Rogers: *"Be sincere, be brief and be seated."*



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