



5 Ways To Create More Value in Your Presentations

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In challenging economic times, buyers look for value. The more you provide, the more likely you are to become the provider of choice. Presentations offer you excellent opportunities to provide that value at different stages of the business development cycle. Here are five ways to create more value in your presentations.

1. **Solve a problem instead of peddling programs.** People know when they're being sold to and it makes them uncomfortable. Prospects invest their time in attending or listening to a presentation because they believe it will benefit them in some way. They don't attend to hear a thinly veiled sales presentation. Violating those expectations by promising one thing and delivering another constitutes a "bait and switch" that quickly turns prospects off. Prove to them they've made a wise investment by making your focus education instead, and you'll find a more receptive audience. When you can solve a problem or remove some pain, you're positioned as a resource instead of a vendor. The problem you address should resonate with the audience's experience. That means some analysis as you prepare the presentation. What are some of the questions your target market asks most often? What are the three biggest challenges they regularly face in their businesses? What are the top mistakes people in similar situations make?
2. **Provide value-based marketing materials.** The typical presenter hands out colorful brochures, slick flyers and glossy postcards about himself and the services he offers. These provide no value to the audience. Even when taken, out of courtesy, they're usually quickly disposed of. Instead, distribute white papers, special reports, checklists and tips booklets. These serve as resources the audience will use and keep. They also provide top of mind awareness after the presentation. One of the pieces I circulate includes a four-page resource guide on creating and using visuals. It contains a step-by-step guide to creating effective visuals, examples of different types of charts and an article on how to avoid the most common errors with PowerPoint presentations. I've seen it in client's offices five years after they received it.
3. **Get your presentation accredited to count for continuing education units.** Many professional organizations require continuing education to maintain professional designations. Partner with one of them to develop a presentation or course that meets these requirements. It provides value to the members of the organization and increases your demand as a speaker. Conduct some research to determine which courses are mandatory and which are electives. Focus on the former so your course development

efforts provide information people must have. Since most organizations require a certain number of professional education hours annually, you can develop ongoing repeat business.

4. **Offer a complimentary initial consultation for attendees.** If people aren't quite willing you hire you yet, but will take the next step, an initial consultation can serve several useful purposes. First, it's an added benefit from attending the presentation. You'll be giving audience members another reason to see they're getting a good return on their investment of time. Second, it provides an opportunity for each of you to explore the other's approach, working style and personality. You can probably determine in that initial conversation whether you can work together productively. Third, it gives prospects the opportunity to "try before they buy." It can increase their comfort level in hiring you and move them further along the sales process. Limit the offer to the first ten to respond. That way you can set boundaries for yourself and increase the sense of urgency. Don't worry about "giving too much away." Prospects will recognize your generosity and you'll build a relationship of trust.
5. **Partner with non-competing professionals that serve your target market to create an educational seminar.** For example, an attorney and an accountant might co-produce a seminar for small business owners on "10 Strategies To Collect Accounts Receivable in Tough Economic Times." A business broker and a banker might organize a seminar on "5 Essentials You Must Know Before You Buy a Business." Such cooperation allows you to share expenses, combine the power of your individual lists and leverage different perspectives on the same topic. You'll need to agree on the desired outcomes and make sure the project is mutually beneficial.

You'll have to invest some time to incorporate these benefits into your presentations. It will require some thoughtful audience analysis, creativity in designing materials and determined follow-through with accrediting agencies and partners. But the return on that investment can be significant. When you add value to your presentations, you pull business in, rather than pushing it on, prospects.



Joe Sommerville shows professional services firms how to increase visibility, enhance credibility and close more business. Download the first chapter of RainMaking Presentations: How to Grow Your Business by Leveraging Your Expertise at www.RainMakingPresentations.com.