METHODS FOR PERFECTING PRESENTATION SKILLS

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Abstract
Presentation skills are crucial for the nowadays managers and business people. This article aims to examine different traditional and unconventional methods for enhancing and perfecting presentation skills. It provides suggestions on how to structure a presentation, what type of verbal language to include, and pays significant attention to body language during presentations, as well as to the relation between the presenter and the audience. The paper highlights a variety of instruments and techniques applicable to every individual in search for presentation perfection.

Key words: *communication, business communication, Neuro-linguistic programming, presentations, presentation skills, perfecting presentation skills*

The issue of presentation skills perfection has been a question of interest since ancient times until nowadays. It not only features timeliness and timelessness, but is becoming more popular in the context of management for continuous improvement. In the opinion of specialists and experts in the field of presentations, clarity and correct transmission and interpretation of facts and arguments in today's digital economy can be the most valuable skill of all the skills that the individuals possess.

Thus, these skills are an integral part of the "real capital" of the economy. This statement is in line with the view of P. Romer, namely that human capital with its knowledge, skills, abilities, determines the extent of growth and success in economic development .

So improving presentation skills can be seen on one hand as a target, and on the other - as a tool to assist management in achieving organizational excellence .This article presents three methods for perfecting presentation skills. They are presented in a very systematic way and aim to show the usefulness of each method itself.

1. THE 4 MAT SYSTEM

4MAT system stems from research on learning styles conducted by Bernice McCarthy. She noticed that when teaching to children in school, they learn in different ways. In particular, the learning process is by asking specific questions – “what”, “why”, “how” and “what if”. The initial work of Bernice McCarthy is in the 70s of the twentieth century. It is associated with the psychological types of Jung and reappears in the learning styles of Kalb, and the work of Honey and Mumford. McCarthy realizes that most of the material that is given to children at school, falls in only one of these questions: “What?”, providing facts, information, and data. The majority of formal trainings and education provide information about “what” - the people and the world. This gives good results with children who have this learning style but not so good for the children in the other three categories.

The first term of Bernice McCarthy was to detect learning styles of each child when they started school, then to divide them in four separate streams, so that every child can be taught in his/her preferred learning style.

- Children of “why” require many reasons and explanations.

- Children of “what” require a lot of data and information.

- Children of the category “how” learn through practice, through direct experience while doing the things.

- Children of “what if” have more discovery learning style through group discussions.

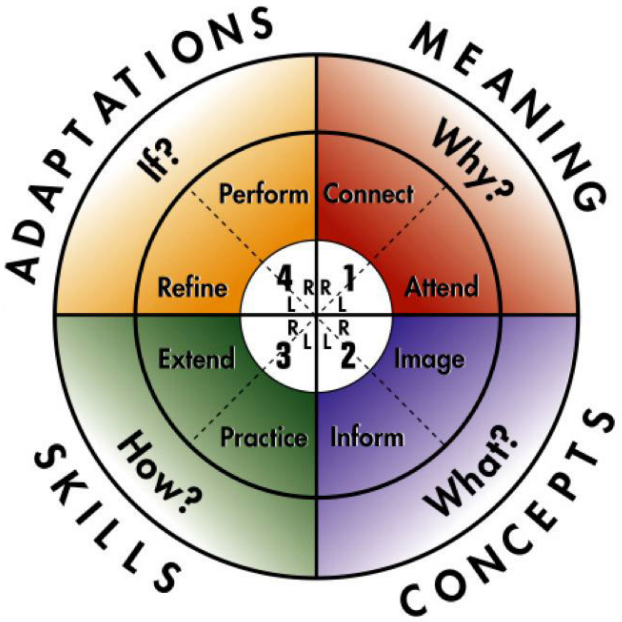

Figure 1. The 4MAT System[1]

In business any homogenous group, such as managers, sales personnel, accountants, scientists, athletes and others belongs to a specific category according to the style of learning. Whole cultures follow a certain style, adopting information messages. For example, if a training or presentation is done to a German audience, the expectation is that they will want to build a huge mass of data and will not be satisfied until they get. Specific learning style of a group is a determinant of the ability of the communicator.

Assuming that the presenter is also a trainer, he/she should be prepared that during a presentation or training, in the audience will attend people of the four categories. If we start with a presentation focused on all the many "what", soon we will find that people of "why" do not assimilate the information because they have no reason to do so. If we do not give them reasons they may remain expecting during the entire presentation.

Every single person in the audience will ask one of these questions, and that is why each presenter wants to think about their answers when preparing their presentation. Structuring the presentation in such a way that it can meet the four questions, the presenter will be able to satisfy all the expectations of the group. The key issue of the preliminary stage of preparing a successful presentation is what structure to use, so to answer these four questions before they are asked.[2]

[1] N.A., User Generated Education, Accessible at: https://usergeneratededucation.wordpress.com/tag/web-2-0/, Accessed on May 10, 2014
[2] James, T., Shepard, D., „Presenting Magically", NLP Bulgaria, 2010

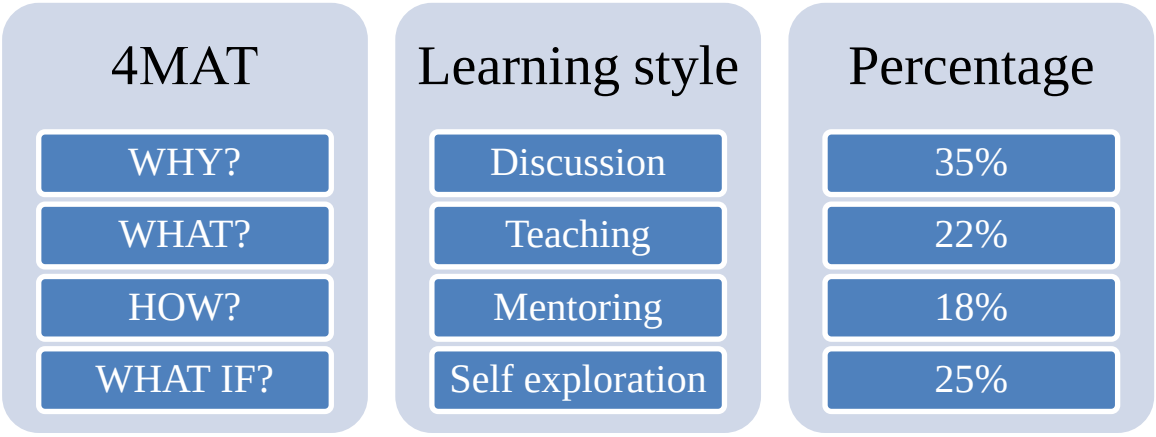

Figure 2. The 4 MAT System in percentage[3]

Advantages and disadvantages of the 4MAT system

The advantages of the 4 MAT system are expressed in the fact that it supports the systematization of the presentation, the layout of the content and structure of the presentation. The disadvantages of 4MAT derive from the fact that the system itself is not sufficient to improve all aspects of the presentation and it cannot be used as a sole method for improvement.

2. BALANCED PHISIOLOGY

People constantly communicate through their physiology. It is necessary to know what is the non-verbal message that the presenter sends to his/her audience. If a person is not balanced, if he is tilted to one side or bends, the posture may be contrary to the words spoken. It is undeniable that the nonverbal behavior of the presenter is very important and each presenter should strive improvement.

Balanced and symmetrical posture is called „balanced physiology“. It conveys strength and stability, business approach, and demonstration: „This is how things are. Such are the facts.”

Often there are speakers with extremely confusing behavior style or body language style. They walk up and down the stage with nervous tics, jingling coins in their pockets, or using strange gestures. Probably the speaker is puzzling and making his/her message incomprehensible to the audience. Often, when this happens, the audience does not even pay attention to the content of the utterance and eventually gets confused or distorted to picture the words. If intonation and body language are not in line with the presentation, then the message is unlikely to be heard.

When first making presentations or conduct training, people often wonder where to place their hands. The hands seem to have their own existence and dissipate the presenter and the audience.

The five non-verbal communication patterns of Virginia Satir provide solutions to these problems and to other issues related to non-verbal communication. Her communication styles represent specific postures and gestures that involve the whole body, including the hands.

Originally Satir described four dysfunctional ways in which people communicate. The fifth category, balanced, was added later.

Each category has its cultural associations, so the perception of a specific physiology causes not only a particular state, but also creates a certain state in the audience. The tables below provide a brief description of these models of non-verbal communication:

[3] Harvey, S., Strong, R., Perini, M., “Integrating learning styles and multiple intelligences”, September, 1997

Model for non-verbal communication	Physiology	Non-verbal communication	Application
The Leveller	Symmetric physiology, straight, moving hands with palms facing down, which descend and dissolve; „That‘s the way it is” „That is true.“	The weight of the body is balanced, arms are horizontal, inverted palms are down and move symmetrically from mid chest down and out. Voice is with downward intonation, speech slows movement. Fits the authoritarian and calms people, pause at the end of each sentence.	If the presenter is intended to create an impression of balance the communication style can be „embodied“ in this model for non-verbal communication.

Table 1. Virginia Satir’s Model for Non-verbal Communication – The Laveller

Model for non-verbal communication	Physiology	Non-verbal communication	Application
The Placater	Symmetric open physiology, palms facing upwards and move up; „Help me“ „I‘m open“ „I want to please you“ „I‘m listening and I agree“ Please help me. I want to do the right thing.”	Palms upturned in an open gesture, open hands rise up and head slightly tilted. Conveys openness and vulnerability agrees with everything said conductive and is always trying to please everyone. Usually with low self-esteem and lives his life, relying on the approval of others.	There are situations during a presentation in which the presenter can deliberately aim to „incarnate“ in the role of comforting physiology. Physiology that can be used to create a better connection with the audience and to find common parameters.

Table 2. Virginia Satir’s Model for Non-verbal Communication – The Placater

Model for non-verbal communication	Physiology	Non-verbal communication	Application
The Blamer	Asymmetrical: the body tilts forward and hands with pointing fingers; „It‘s your fault“ „Because of you happen,“ „I‘m the boss here. Became what I say. „	Leaning forward with his hands raised and outstretched finger accusingly. Starts from a position of superiority and the goal is to stress that all others are wrong. Accusing breathes life into the presentation and increases energy level. Effective, but unusual, use of this position is to empower certain person: pointing a finger at him saying ‚You can do it.”	This type of physiology can be used in order to emphasize a part of the presentation as very important or to create a special confrontation in order to increase interest in the presentation.

Table 3. Virginia Satir’s Model for Non-verbal Communication – The Blamer

Model for non-verbal communication	Physiology	Non-verbal communication	Application
The Computer	Asymmetrical posture: hand touching chin or arms are flexed in posture „great thinkers“, behavior of an academic lecturer; „I am the authority“ „I am sensible, logical thinking“ „Such are the facts,“ „I ponder, think about what you said“	More thoughtful and passive, very reasonable and shall not uncover their feelings. One arm is bent across his chest, the other is propped on his chin in pose of a thinker. The voice is monotonous, abstract words. Calculating a teacher, college professor, impartial scientist – cool, calm and controlled.	This type of nonverbal behavior can be used to enhance the prestige of the presenter, as well as to enhance the scientific weight of the presentation.

Table 4. Virginia Satir's Model for Non-verbal Communication – The Computer

Model for non-verbal communication	Physiology	Non-verbal communication	Application
The Distracter	Asymmetric Physiology, stiff, clumsy, contradictory; „I do not know“ „Not my fault“ „I mean … what do I do about it? Do you understand? „	In stark asymmetry, the spine is curved, but the hands are spread at different angles. Each asymmetric posture is distracting. It is accompanied by variable intonation – sometimes higher, sometimes lower, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. Sometimes the voice is solid and sincere, sometimes breathless and charming. Often with meaningless words because words themselves do not matter. In the presence of kidnapping man unmanageable – nothing direct to the point.	The deliberate use of this type of physiology might be in order to dissipate the audience prior to the relevant information.

Table 5. Virginia Satir's Model for Non-verbal Communication – The Distracter[4]

Advantages and disadvantages of the balanced physiology communication model

The advantages of this model could be found in Virginia Satir‘s proven experience as a psychotherapist, a specialist in family therapy, and founder of the non-verbal communication patterns. Virginia Satir is an academically recognized author and her five of nonverbal communication are applicable to all aspects of public communication.

The disadvantages of the model may be sought in skepticism of some authors on the importance of non-verbal communication.

[4] James, T., Shepard, D., „Presenting Magically“, NLP Bulgaria, 2010

3. MODELLING

Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP)[5] is based on a methodology called modelling. Modelling means to detect and describe the basic elements and processes through which people do something. The process begins with the identification and study of a human model. This is an individual who does something in a particular, usually highly skilled manner. This is a very good method for the study of people and how they do things. For example, if someone wants to know how to be very successful in presentations, he has to find a proven expert who knows how to present extremely well. Then he asks a lot of questions about what the presenter does, what is he doing that works and what does not, etc. At the same time as the object of modelling is observed, this often leads to new and more relevant questions to be asked in the process of operation. The addition of NLP techniques makes it possible to determine much of what makes this human model an expert as he/she is not even aware that.

When the whole process is done properly, using the time and technology and applying sensible logic, the result is a new business model. This new model is actually a set of instructions.[6] If it is good, it can be used by anyone who wants to duplicate the skills and abilities of the human model used as an initial subject. In other words, anyone can be as good and professional in presentations as is the model. Of course, this requires effort and practice, but they are much less than if the training is applied on more traditional ways.[7]

Modelling involves a process of observation:

1) Monitoring the physiology of the model.

2) Study the language used (words, structure of their speaking and performance).

3) Study the thinking of the model.

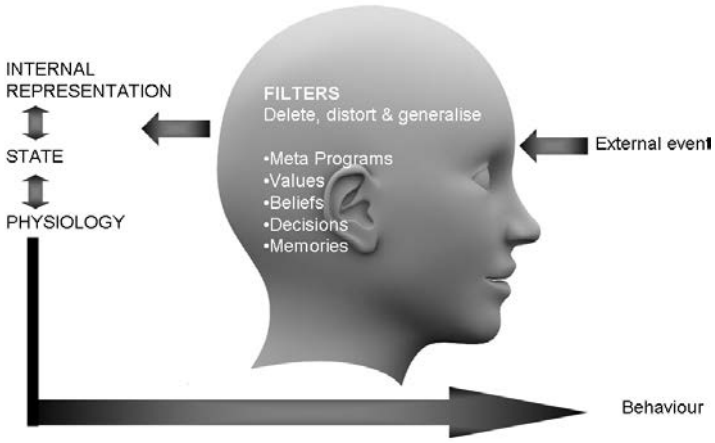

Figure 2. The NLP Modelling Process[8]

A notable element of the modelling is that if the modelling physiology is accepted, the language is used in the same way and the thinking is structured in the same way, the modeler will get very similar

[5] NLP was invented in the 1970s by Richard Bandler and John Grinder
[6] Гальцова, Н., Основные принципы эфективной презентации учебного материала с позиций нейролингвистического програмирования, Вестник Томского государственного университета 282, 2004
[7] Richardson, J., „Introduction to NLP", NLP Bulgaria, 2010
[8] Oborn, M., What is Neuro-linguistic Programming, accessible at http://mysuccessfullife.co.uk/techniques/what-is-nlp/, accessed on May 26, 2014

results as the model of example. Anyone who wants to achieve great results can do what has been found to work well sustained.

Modelling is an approach that is similar to the four - model for success. It involves the use of sensory acuity and flexibility in terms of change. Moreover, the approach is based on the differences - what is the thing that makes a man different and that affects his behavior, his success or failure. In other words, what is the difference that makes the difference? This model does not attempt to answer the question why, but rather the question of how.

The modelling process requires firstly putting oneself at another place – the position of the model. NLP jargon calls to "perceptually switch to a second person" – i.e. to think as the other person, to receive and to give information in response to an event or circumstance by following the scheme of behavior and action.

When modelling a very good presenter we should keep in mind that very often the model is not aware of the exact specific presenting process, because perfection requires possession of unconscious competence. After achieving approximately the same results as the man used as a model, the next phase for the modeler is to start making changes until he finds the best strategy for achieving results and presentation skills. If removing an element affects performance, it may be the key to achieving better results and to build on the strategy. Thus, the idea is for a constant refinement of the internal performance.

The process of modelling presentation skills goes through several stages:

1) First we need an excellent presenter who will serve as a model. It is not important whether the model is good in another skill, it is only important to be a good presenter. The next requirement is to have access to this model – to have the possibility of careful observation, possibly without the model feeling watched. If there is an opportunity to chat with the model, the values and beliefs that support particular presentation skill could be revealed.

2) The following element of the modelling is to observe how the model applies their skill by "absorbing" the sequence.

3) Then, the modeler must take the role of the model, but dissociated - as if seen from aside.

4) The next step is the modeler to repeat the sequence of steps of the model, and this time looking through his/her own eyes and feeling what it would be until the modelled skill is applied. This is the stage in which the modeler becomes one with the model and his/her sensations.

One can never achieve complete perfection. But nothing can go wrong when we imitate because we just learn.

Advantages and disadvantages of the modelling process

The modeling process has undeniable advantages, namely the ability to draw a perfect model for each action. In the context of improving the presentation skills, modelling promotes improvements and development in many key presentation skills.

The disadvantages of the method stem from the subjectivity of the overall approach, as each individual has a perception of what is happening in the surrounding environment. Even with a perfect role model, the modeler always brings his/her own experience and the model undergoes changes.[9]

4. CONCLUSIONS

The dynamic business environment and the ongoing development of modern technology are forcing managers and leaders to constantly change and improve their personal skills and competencies in order

[9] Alder, H., „NLP for Managers“, 2008

to be competitive in the coming changes. This in turn requires a focus on the key presentation skills required of the successful manager and leader.

Owning key presentation skills is not always set in the nature of the individual, but can be developed with effort in a particular direction. Communication skills and their effects are one of the most important factors for success in today's business world. The ability to make intriguing presentations of products and services, to conduct business negotiations and mundane conversations, to deliver public presentations and to have the skills to present oneself in a job interview, are crucial for the success in society and professional environments.

Broadly speaking, presentation skills are the skills to succeed to present a certain idea or knowledge in the most effective manner to the audience. The meaning of each presentation is expressed in this audience to understand and remember what they communicated via this specific type of communication. The requirements to the communicator - presenter are many - to win the audience, to keep its attention, to show emotional intelligence, to manage his/her emotions and to recognize and manage the emotions of his audience. The development of methods to improve presentation skills are necessary for coping with the challenges facing the modern manager, and the requirements for him to be a successful presenter.

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