

7 Essential Abilities of Effective Presenters

The most effective leaders, presenters, facilitators, and teachers all have something significant in common...

- **Establish credibility.** This lays the foundation for the group to attribute intelligence, competence, confidence and expertise to the presenter. Credibility is a presenter characteristic perceived and assigned by the group. A few of the specific skills associated with credibility include choosing voice tone, use of the frozen gesture, credible stance, and abdominal breathing patterns.
- **Build and sustain rapport.** This involves strategies and moves that create a short-term psychological state in which the lines of communication are wide open. When rapport is high, participants are cognitively receptive and therefore open to considering new understandings that challenge their current models of knowing. Knowing how to establish rapport, break rapport, and re-establish rapport are critical skills in the learning environment to support participant thinking and problem solving.
- **Read the group.** This entails recognizing, processing and responding to the group's nonverbal patterns. The presenter reads the group to anticipate their learning needs as well as their psychological and physiological needs. Reading the group involves the skills related to group dynamics through the observable behaviors of audience members. By reading the nonverbal behaviors of participants, an effective presenter can anticipate resistance, recognize receptivity, and choreograph facilitation moves that support positive group dynamics.
- **Balance task, process and group development.** This is an interaction between outcomes (task), protocols (process), and relationship (group development). Effectively balancing the three ensures acquiring a tangible outcome while promoting maximum learning and optimal participation in the time available.
- **Listen to and acknowledge participants.** This involves deliberate steps in a delicate dance. Adults offer several challenges in learning environments. One of these challenges is the willingness to reveal what they know and don't know as well as what they are learning. Effective listening requires Ability 2, *Rapport*, as well as specific voice, eye, gesture, and stance patterns to give the participant the sincere perception of being listened to and acknowledged. Participant engagement and learning depends on being understood and having the sense of feeling safe enough to expose their thinking to the group.
- **Respond appropriately.** This is dependent on the effective implementation of skills from Essential Ability 5, "Listen to..." When a person feels listened to and acknowledged, the effective presenter can then deliver an appropriate response. Responding appropriately requires evaluating, synthesizing and delivering a congruent verbal and nonverbal message. It is about making the person and the group right. By right we mean establishing a learning environment where it is safe to be wrong, to reveal learning, and to reveal what you do not know.
- **Recover with grace.** This involves the ability to recognize when the group stops thinking and you have lost group rapport or group attention, or perhaps even just lost your place. Graceful nonverbal moves ensure the group will stay present, focused, and engaged. This intriguing ability includes the nonverbal moves associated with changing location, pausing, gestures of location and stance.

