

How To Boost Your Likability As A Presenter



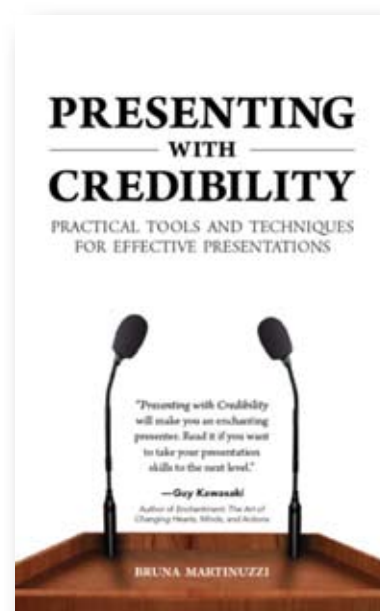
There is a growing body of research on the link between likability and authenticity and trustworthiness. Even expert witnesses, providing court testimony, are viewed as more credible if — in addition to appearing trustworthy, knowledgeable, and confident — they are also likable. The same applies to a presenter who seeks to establish credibility in the eyes of the audience. Likeability, coupled with authenticity, is one of the cornerstones of credibility as a speaker.

During presentations, we often unwittingly behave in ways that make us unlikable. Some presenters subtly manifest annoyance if someone asks an adversarial question; others slip into veiled sarcasm with an audience member they may not like; a few may inadvertently seem to ridicule someone who makes what they consider to be a vacuous point. Those on the receiving end perceive these emotional signals we are transmitting even if they are subtle. The messages clearly announce to the audience members involved that we don't like them and they become receptors of our negativity towards them. A presenter who is [emotionally intelligent](#) learns to control this emotional leakage.

While this is the decent thing to do, it is also a smart thing to do: In an interview on Management Consulting News, Robert Cialdini, author of [Influence: Science and Practice](#), states that "People can tell when you like them. And everything changes in the hands of somebody who likes me. Maybe I believe an insurance agent or a stockbroker is a real expert. Well, expertise may not be enough.

I want an expert who likes me and then I've got both sides covered." We are more likely to protect the interests of those we like, which boosts our trustworthiness and credibility.

As a presenter, then, being likable is as important as being knowledgeable about your topic. Keep in mind the 15/85 percent rule of presentations: 15 percent of your presentation's success is based on your formal education, background, and knowledge. The other 85 percent is based on who you are rather than what you know. As Keld Widinberg Jensen (nominated best speaker in Scandinavia) put it: "The main reason you will be successful is whether people will trust you and believe in you...whether they will find you credible and likable."



How can you boost your likeability as a presenter? Here are 12 pointers:

- **Respect the listeners' intelligence by not lecturing to them.**
- **Use "WE" or "US" when referring to groups.**
- **Show genuine friendliness to the audience. The simplest way to do this is to smile and to use people's names.**
- **Disclose some personal information. This makes you approachable and more familiar and natural to the audience.**
- **Be confident without being arrogant. A little humility is attractive and makes us likable.**
- **Allow people to save face, that is, to maintain their dignity. Even if you don't agree with an audience member, don't use defiant contradiction.**
- **Be authentic. If you don't know something, admit it. Readily acknowledge a potential error or an uncertainty.**
- **Practice small courtesies such as thanking an audience member for asking a question or making an observation.**
- **Use a conversational tone and less technical jargon.**
- **Don't take up all the oxygen in the room. Listen attentively and give audience contributors their moment — turn the limelight on them.**
- **Take a likeability test to discover the positive and negative feelings that you produce in others. Self-awareness precedes self-management.**
- **Observe someone you consider likeable and try to dissect what makes them likeable, whether online or in person.**

In the words of Roger Ailes, president of Fox News Channel, "If you could master one element of personal communications that is more powerful than anything... it is the quality of being likable.... If your audience likes you, they'll forgive just about everything else you do wrong."

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This article is adapted from Bruna Martinuzzi's book: *Presenting with Credibility: Practical Tools and Techniques for Effective Presentations*, available for purchase in the Six Seconds EQ Store.

Bruna Martinuzzi is the author of *Presenting with Credibility: Practical Tools and Techniques for Effective Presentations* (2012.) She is also the author of *Leader as a Mensch: Become the Kind of Person Others Want to Follow* (2009) - both published by Six Seconds. She is the founder of Clarion Enterprises Ltd., which specializes in leadership, emotional intelligence and presentation skills training and development. Fluent in six languages, she has helped individuals and teams in North America, China, Europe and The Middle East become better leaders and more effective communicators.

Posted by: Six Seconds "How To Boost Your Likability As A Presenter" 4 April 2012.
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