

SPEAKER

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WORK. PLAY. GIVE.
SHARE YOUR TALENTS
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Maintain the MOMENTUM

7 STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS AFTER YOUR PRESENTATION ENDS

BY MARILYN SUTTLE

You give the perfect presentation. Evaluations are glowing and attendees leave excited. Yet, employers hesitate to send their people to your next presentation. Why? Because they just aren't seeing any changes after the event. With never-ending to-do lists, attendees go back to their hectic routines. New strategies get put on hold. Handouts get misplaced. And in the end... the event's value is lost.

It doesn't have to be that way. There are things you can do to create breakthrough success long after your presentation ends. The following seven strategies will help extend the value of your presentation. Of course, not every strategy will apply to every presentation. But if you choose the ones that best fit the type of event, and find creative ways to modify each to fit your needs—you can ensure your presentation makes a lasting impact.



Marilyn Suttle says speakers can ensure their presentations have a lasting impact by applying simple strategies.

STRATEGY 1:

MEET, TEACH, REPEAT

When possible, replace the typical one-day training event with a series of presentations that take place regularly over time. Between meetings, attendees “do their homework” by practicing in real-world situations. By bringing their challenges back to the meeting, solutions are discovered. And with the ongoing learning from regular meetings, a stronger foundation for lasting change is created.

No matter how much value you offer, some participants simply don’t want to be there. They’re required to attend, and sometimes rebel. For example, a woman in my six-week series on communication, sat silent, with her arms crossed, during the first four sessions. During the fifth session, she raised her hand and said, *“I love my daughter, but we argue all the time. After hearing some of you share your struggles and successes, I tried some of this at home.”* She paused, tearing up. *“Last night, my daughter hugged me and said, ‘Mommy this was the best day . . . you didn’t yell even once.’”* A one-time presentation wouldn’t have produced a result like that. Multiple meetings allow messages to be reinforced and, without even realizing it, attendees can learn things to apply every day in the office . . . and at home.

STRATEGY 2:

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

Break down barriers. Perceived obstacles are the biggest reason attendees fail to implement presentation objectives. Each participant has their own concerns that act as a barrier, such as *“I don’t have time.”* *“My budget’s stretched.”* Or, *“My staff won’t do this.”* To help change this perception



“Refrain from passing out the summary sheet until after the session.”

and help attendees put what they’ve learned to use in the real world, include an activity that helps them overcome these obstacles.

Try this: Tell participants to identify one potential obstacle that might stop them from being successful at putting the value of this meeting into action back at work. Once they’ve identified their obstacle, ask them to stand and partner up with someone long enough to ask each other for one suggestion that could help overcome their obstacle. Repeat with as many partners as they can until you say stop.

The activity helps attendees become solution-focused, and work together as a team. Not only are they looking for solutions to their own obstacles, but helping others with theirs. This working together could result in new and different ways of approaching their problems.

STRATEGY 3:

UNPACK THE MEETING

Have you ever found an old event bag packed with handouts, business cards, and tchotchkes? By the time you unpack it, most of the content has lost its usefulness, and ends up in the trash. Much like that event bag, attendees minds are packed during an event. We don’t want the learnings to get tucked away and forgotten about—so start the unpacking process before your session ends.

One way to unpack is to allow time for the group to brainstorm ways they would apply new concepts. Then, invite them to fill out an action plan page.

Many speakers include an action plan sheet to help attendees create next steps. The problem is, little to no time is built into presentations to properly use it. When participants are told to “Fill out your action plan,” with only a few minutes left in a session, the odds are, it won’t happen.

For lasting value, offer less content and more time to unpack what they’ve learned. Include time to write their plan and share it before they leave. On the action plan page, ask questions like:

- What are three actions you plan to take after this meeting?
- What’s the timeline for completing each?
- How will these actions benefit you, your company or association?
- What would be the consequences of not following through?

STRATEGY 4:

SUM IT UP

To maximize meeting value, give attendees a summary with key points that they can take with them. This could help in several ways:

- Use for sharing knowledge with colleagues
- Serve as a checklist for implementation
- Offer an at-a-glance refresher to show employers the value gained.

Refrain from passing out the summary sheet until *after* the session. We speakers use learning techniques to create curiosity, discovery, and emotional connection to material. The fastest way to kill the impact of a presentation is to pass out summary sheets at the beginning of your talk. People read ahead and instantly become disengaged. Clarify to your client that it will be distributed after your presentation, and not before or during. You could even offer the information online afterwards—via an email or private web page.

Another option is to let the group create the summary. Ask attendees to put key learnings on sticky notes and add them to a summary board. At the end of the meeting, compile them all into a summary, and send it out as a value-added bonus.

STRATEGY 5:
PLAY MATCHMAKER

Invite participants to pair up and share the goals they commit to implement after the meeting. This buddy system will increase accountability and encourage people to put learnings into action. Give them time to coordinate a specific day and time to contact each other and celebrate the completion of their goals. This system works well for a variety of personality styles. Some will focus on having a success to report because they're competitive, others because they're collaborative. Some do it to avoid looking bad, while others enjoy the camaraderie. Regardless of the

motivation, having the support of a buddy creates an added level of commitment and follow-through.

STRATEGY 6:
CONFER WITH YOUR CLIENT

Keep momentum going after the event by partnering with your client before it even begins. Like a coaching staff before a big game, it's all about planning and strategizing to make your presentation a winner. Develop questions to help prepare an outstanding customized presentation. Plus, remind your client how your presentation is designed to create post-event value. Your clients may ask you questions, like:

- How do you prepare participants to put meeting objectives into action back at work?
- How will key points be practiced and reinforced?
- Will attendees create plans for implementing what they've learned?
- How will you build in metrics, commitment, and accountability to take action?
- Will you supply a summary with key points covered?
- Can you provide examples of participant successes from your previous presentations?

STRATEGY 7:
GET SOCIAL

After the meeting, harness the power of social networking, and create a community that encourages post-event collaboration. From private Facebook pages to one of the many online platforms available— you can keep attendees focused and engaged long after the presentation. For example, Moodle, is a free

learning management system with chat, forums, and the ability to share documents. Attendees can post questions, take assessments, and collaborate with others. Extending the engagement gives attendees a resource to draw on during challenging times, and gives them a place to contribute their knowledge to support others.

BONUS TIP:
COACH YOUR CLIENTS TO CELEBRATE WINS

Sometimes it helps to coach clients who sent their staff to your presentation. Leaders don't always realize that a small action on their part can produce breakthrough successes. Give your client a summary so they know what was covered, and encourage them to schedule three or more regularly scheduled reinforcement calls to focus on their people's success with specific skills or objectives from your presentation. You can even offer to co-host the calls for an added fee.

You can't force your audience to take action after an event. What you can do is create an environment filled with the elements that make it easy for attendees to grab the objectives and go with it. When your agenda is designed with post-meeting value in mind, it becomes more feasible for attendees to take action after the meeting, and keep the momentum going long after the event is over.

Marilyn Suttle specializes in customer service and relationship-strengthening communication. Her keynotes, training, and latest book, Taming Gladys! The Busy Leader's Guide to Creating Fierce Customer Loyalty, support leadership teams and front-line staff. Suttle is a past NSA Chapter president based in Metro-Detroit. Visit www.MarilynSuttle.com.