

## Presenting in the 21st Century

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Presentation Skills training. Oh, how this conjures up being trained in “eye contact”, “voice modulation”, and “gestures” – great phone and PDF file presentation applications are they not?

Or worse yet, remember being informed you were going to “charm school”, the product of the 70’s and 80’s presentation training out of New York? I am ashamed to admit I was part of the group - fortunately not for long - that was awarded this dubious accolade.

And how about the trainer who sits in the back of the classroom and counts the number of “ums” inexplicably escaping your jaws. Yes, and this as late as 2004. Can you believe it?

How agencies sell to clients is now so dramatically different to as recently as 5 years ago.

Power Point has been replaced by PDF files. In person is replaced by teleconference. Boards replaced by streaming video and e-mail attachments.

So where does that leave the individual presenter and their persuasive skills in presenting agency recommendations and getting them sold in?

It’s what happened to mechanics with the advent of fuel injection. Carburetor training became antiquated. Those who survived went back to school.

And so do those who’ve been trained “the old way” in presentation skills. Reschooling, reteaching and re practicing with contemporary tools have become paramount to survival.

In the past 10 years, the average age profile of the thousands of students Louws has trained has dramatically changed:

40+ in 1995,  
30+ in 1998,  
20+ in 2000, and  
35+ in 2003 onwards.

We are finally seeing the advent of the re-training of those initially trained back in the '90s.

In 1998 Louws started the arduous but vitally necessary task of completely overhauling its approach to presentation skills training.

By 2003, it had a prototype well on its way to completion.

It's now 2005 and it's finally done.

A "Stellar Meeting Presentation Performance™" training program that is customized to meet the demands of today's presentations, today's businesses, selling in today's environments, in today's formats and styles.

Following is an introduction to each of the critical elements taught, drilled and coached to practical on-the-job application.

### **Persuasive Communication Skills:**

Fortunately, communication is still communication. Its delivery systems are the only real changes.

Louws addresses how to efficiently and clearly deliver a communication that is both understood and bought by the intended audience.

Lessons are taken from the theatre, the humanities, contemporary communication modeling, salesmanship, formats and styles of today's most watched and highest rated shows and today's "time starved" audiences.

### **Persuasive Organization Skills:**

This component has had dramatic changes made to it.

The premise:

- tell 'em whatcha gonna tell 'em,
- tell 'em, and
- tell 'em whatcha jus' t'ol 'em"

and the eternal agenda are no longer workable formulas.

*The Issues:*

Audiences have no time to listen to anything other than the immediate answers to the questions they had walking into the meeting presentation.

Groups in organizations listen to information differently (as do individuals within those groups); and if you can't persuade, but only inform (the tell 'em format) your contemporary audience quickly gets a case of the "I've no time for this drivel" syndrome.

For any of you reading this, you know today that you must poignantly and efficiently prove your point or go home.

### *The Solutions:*

Learn how people listen and evaluate data;  
Learn how to structure an argument (not to mean being argumentative) in such a fashion that it becomes "obvious" that the presenter's POV and recommendations are well evidenced and stand up to scrutiny.

To wit: the advent of the legal profession's "Winning a Case" approach to organizing presentations has now been introduced for broad publication and use.

Always knew those lawyers were good for something. After all, who's more skilled at taking a group of people and convincing them that someone other than their client did the dastardly deed.

### **Presentation Aids:**

For this, we started from scratch and discovered that going back as far as rolled cellophane overheads and slide projectors, the same mistakes were as relevant then as they are today. Albeit the mediums have made dramatic advances, messages are still messages.

Hollywood, Disney and Broadcast became our new teachers. After all, it's what they do better than any "pundit" of the famous Power Point™.

Reinvented, restructured and repurposed, this training now addresses two major components.

The real purpose and use of aids in selling one's point.  
Where and how are they more powerful than the speaker?  
When does the speaker really need them?  
When does the speaker do a better job than an aid would?  
How do you integrate a variety of aids in a seamless and powerful rendition of your points?  
How to think outside the traditional confines of Power Point™, boards and video.

A simple illustration of this is Power Point™ where really the "point" is the power, not Power Point™.

Tools for selling digitally, remotely, telephonically, telepathically (only kidding) are explored with specific and tactical tools provided for next day use.

And yes, we do teach how to better use Power Point™, but not only in person, remotely, by CD or even conjointly through the web.

### **Handling Objections and Tough Questions:**

Fortunately, we've previously had much of this subject well researched, explored and conquered.

However, today "consensus" is what drives decision and action, unlike the McCarthy era of orders and commands.

We also have the issue of manners. Yes manners!

Remember when an audience stoically waited for you to finish speaking and then kindly requested permission to ask gentle yet pointed questions?

If you don't, then you're under 40.

Therefore we have liberated "negotiating skills" and "group moderation/facilitation skills" from the confines of their individual and compartmented training programs and liberally sprinkled their tenets, principles, and techniques into the skills necessary to handling difficult people, objections and questions.

### **The new format – Presentation Meetings™:**

The final adjustments to the training were made based on a collection of over two decades of observations on both the agency (marketing - sales) and client (manufacturing - delivery) sides of the business.

Formal, group, stand-up and staged presentations have dramatically given way to informal, sit down, unstaged group meetings.

However, the classic business purpose of both has remained the same. Inform for the purposes of persuasion to a POV or action.

Again, function remains, form has changed.

On the other hand they are quicker, livelier, less structured and most importantly, more critical in terms of what they must accomplish today.

Unfortunately, without the necessary skills, those used to a more controlled presentation environment are now faced with constant interruptions, cell calls,

blackberry emails, and wireless memo writing in a tense, unstructured, busy and often loud and cramped environment.

Unequipped with the necessary meeting management skills, persuasive abilities and required “presence” enhancement, the uninitiated remain flummoxed and can’t wait to get back to their own computer terminals and, “in quiet and seclusion” restate their case through e-mail and the obligatory PDF and Jpeg file attachments.

### *The Solution:*

Manage this chaos by:

1. Managing the message. Poignancy versus blah! blah! – trying to make the audience submit through the sheer volume of content we can shower on them.
2. Managing priorities of message. Building one’s case is only as practical as one has the audience’s attention while doing so – therefore seek to reprioritize “critical content” in order to maintain group attention and interest.
3. Managing inattentiveness. Speaking louder has been a favorite fall back technique. Nothing could be further from practical in today’s meeting room. Instead, manage a) beneficial relevance of content and b) how interesting you are making your delivery.

The art of content and presence management are critical success factors in both remote and live meeting and presentations.

### **Epilogue:**

So, no, presentation skills training is no longer making sure you don’t jiggle change in your pocket or mercilessly stare at your audience.

Today, presenting is the subtle, highly technical and persuasive skill of working through live and remote electronic mediums and a cacophony of interruptions to ensure your message, as intended, is heard, understood, consensually agreed to and signed off on.

These are the new presentation skills, for a new decade of business men and women who have little to no patience for the skill sets of the antiquated.

Louws has been there, has left there and emerged as the leader in today’s new era of live and remote Meeting Presentations.<sup>TM</sup>