



## **Show and Tell**

by Leo Bottary

09/19/2006

Last week in my post **Yikes! The Client Presentation**, I made a reference to the many lessons that show and tell can teach us. Ten years ago, I wrote an article on the subject that Paul Holmes was kind enough to publish in Inside PR, the predecessor to the Holmes Report. I found it over the weekend and thought I'd share it with you today.

### **Are There Lessons For PR in Show and Tell?**

Next time you're thinking about attending one of those expensive, out-of-town presentation training seminars, consider an alternative. There's a no cost, less time consuming, wonderfully entertaining and highly educational way to relearn some valuable communications lessons – lessons that will sharpen your new business and client counseling skills.

Find out the day and time the first graders at your local school take part in Show and Tell, and place it on your calendar.

Show and Tell should be familiar to just about everyone. It's when a kid gets up in front of the class with a photograph, toy, stuffed animal, tennis racket, etc., and tells the class all about it. The "tell" is fun, but the "show" is sheer brilliance. It represents a terrific refresher course for all of us public relations professional.

*Let's look at how children use visuals:*

1. Children use them to make their presentation more interesting to the class. The visual is everything. Without it, every member of the class would be bored to tears within the first 90 seconds of the activity.
2. They use visuals to promote interaction and involvement. Classmates can actually feel the softness of the stuffed toy or ask questions about what happens when the ball hits the strings of a tennis racket. It's clear that the kids are actually retaining the information.
3. Children "show" as a way to make their point. The class doesn't have to believe the child's description of whether Disney World is a beautiful place because the pictures are there to prove it. The workings of a toy are not a matter of description, but demonstration.
4. The visual keeps the child and the class on track. The message is simple and straightforward. As a result, kids rarely tell one story and show something else.
5. Their ability to "show" makes it unnecessary for them to try to persuade based on their self-proclaimed experience and expertise.

The observations listed above are not only vital lessons which can make us more successful in winning new business, but also keys for helping our clients communicate more effectively to their target audiences.

When was the last time you reviewed an RFP (maybe one of your own) in which the agency made the claim that it communicates clearly and concisely (tell) yet as you read the document, you found lengthy, garbled answers to simple questions (show)?

Think of the last new business presentation you witnessed when the agency president explained to the prospect that account executive X will be the key person on the account (tell), only to have account executive X spend seven minutes of a two-hour presentation actively involved (show).

Just remember the last time you ran into someone who claimed to be a good listener and exciting presenter, only to have him monopolize the conversation and bore you to no end.

As for counseling clients, we all know the focus should be on action and visuals, not on words. I attended a program recently where the presenter was explaining how important it is for a company to state directly and repeatedly that “we’re a quality company.” I thought about how the presenter would have reacted if I introduced myself and spent the next half hour repeating the phrase “I’m a nice guy.” My guess is that after the conversation, she would have concluded that I was an idiot.

When we think about public relations and effective communications, it’s about what those kids in the first grade do so well. When they tell something, they also show it. More amazing yet, they also know when to just “show” and trust the audience to get the message.

The kids are great, but if you can afford it, I'd still call Toni Louw if I were you!