

SMALL BUSINESS

Formula for successful presentations

A professional speaker and trainer has some good advice: Make your audience laugh.

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The next time you are called on to make a business presentation, Monica Wofford wants you to think in threes.

First, says Wofford, a professional speaker and trainer with 17 years' experience, start with three steps to get ready: research your subject, protect your self-confidence and practice.

Second, during your presentation make three points.

And third, don't forget to tell stories.

"People learn from stories," Wofford, president of **Monica Wofford International**, said during a presentation last week at the **Office Depot Success Strategies for Businesswomen** conference in downtown Orlan-

do.

"They don't learn from your biography. They don't learn from your credentials. They learn from the way you make them feel."

Before making a presentation, Wofford suggests, work the room to learn about your audience whenever possible.

If you've been called to make a presentation on time management, for example, it might help to find out that the real problem at the company isn't organization, it's that the employees hate the boss and are doing their best to get nothing done.

No matter how good your presentation, they're not going to learn any time-management skills from you because they've got a different agenda, she said.

To guard your self-confidence, she suggests watching the voices in your head and shutting down any negative ones. And she suggests starting the day by looking at the mirror and telling yourself out loud that you look great.

"Shut the bathroom door if



WOFFORD

you have to," she said, acknowledging that it likely will feel goofy at first.

And don't forget practice makes perfect.

When it comes to the presentation itself, she said you should start with an introduction, cover three points, and sprinkle in some stories.

"It's a formula. Because it works," she said.

Wofford, who kept her audience of about three dozen women chuckling throughout the training session, emphasized that people learn more when they're laughing.

She also had tips on dealing with tough audience members. One way to cope with talkers, for example, is to casually walk over to where they are sitting, drape your arms behind their chairs and continue your presentation from there.

"Get so close to the person talking that the hairs on their arms start to stand up," she

said. "When you're dealing with adults, the quicker you call them out, the quicker you embarrass them, the faster they'll shut up."

SCORE: 7.5 million served

SCORE, the nonprofit group that pairs volunteer business executives with startup companies that need advice and technical assistance, recently tallied up the number of clients it has served.

The total is now 7.5 million.

Paul Kopelcheck, chair of SCORE's national board of directors, called the number a milestone.

"Every day of every year, SCORE stands ready to provide mentoring to help entrepreneurs achieve their small-business dreams," Kopelcheck said.

The business-development group has 389 offices nationwide, and also provides advice via e-mail through its Web site, www.score.org.

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