



Timely Information for Personal Success

Presentations: Is the Tech Stuff *That* Important?

By Mike Jacquart

The majority of EAP practitioners will attend at least one professional development training at some point this year, possibly more than one. But while some presentations are terrific, many leave a lot to be desired. You're eager for the speaker to get started. We'll call him "Joe." Only there is some sort of technical glitch. Maybe the PowerPoint slides won't advance. "Wait a minute, I'll get this taken care of," Joe says. Or perhaps the slides advance, but they don't line up with what Joe is saying. "Oops, back that up," he might say to an assistant or conference staffer.

But technical stuff can happen, and so I think most of us are pretty forgiving about such snafus. Still distracting though, isn't it?

Reciting from the PowerPoint

A MUCH bigger pet peeve of mine is when the presenter does little more than recite from the PowerPoint. Referring to it sure, I get that, but reading from it word for word? In such cases, Joe may as well have handed out his PowerPoint on your way in to the conference room and allowed you to check out a different session!

Standing *still* doesn't work very well either. I, for one, am more apt to be engaged when the speaker moves his or her way around the room. There's nothing like a speaker who stands practically motionless at a podium, sometimes without even having an interesting voice, to put you to sleep! Good speakers know how to talk *to you*,

and not talk *at you*. Joe needs to smile. Tell a joke. It'll remind the audience that Joe is a human being and not a talking head.

Don't Rely so Heavily on Technology

Joe must not rely so heavily on his technology! As we have all seen at conferences, technology can and does fail, even when it's run by people who know what they're doing. There are just too many variables... the conference center's laptop doesn't work right, the microphone might have feedback, and so on. Joe needs to be prepared to talk loudly if his mike goes out. Joe should know his material well enough that he can speak *about* the topic and

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Healthy Recipe: Chicken Dijon

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 4 chicken breasts, boneless, skinless, (about 4 ounces each), cut into 1-inch strips
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

- Calories per serving: 168
- Protein: 27 g.
- Carbohydrates: 2 g.
- Sodium: 154 mg.
- Saturated fat: 1 g.
- Fat: 5 g.

DIRECTIONS:

- ➊ Heat the olive oil in a non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until the onion becomes tender, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and cook 1 minute more.
- ➋ Turn the heat up to medium-high. Season the chicken with salt and pepper and add it to the skillet. Sauté the chicken until it is golden brown on all sides, about 4 minutes.
- ➌ Quickly add the chicken broth and stir with a wooden spoon to release any caramelized bits that are stuck to the pan. Cook until the chicken broth has reduced by half. Stir in the mustard.
- ➍ Serve with, or over rice pilaf.

Serving size: 1 chicken breast

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Questions and Answers

Firing someone is Never Easy

Q: *I am the supervisor of an IT department, and I have to let someone go whose performance just isn't cutting it. I tried the EAP first because he really tries, but he didn't improve. Any suggestions?*

A: Firing someone is never pleasant, but it's often a relief for both sides. If someone is terrible at a job, chances are this person is miserable anyway. I've yet to see a horrible employee who is thrilled with their job. In addition, a job pays you to *do a job*, not try. If Person 1 can put zero effort in and get the job done, they keep their job. If Person 2 works their butt off and still doesn't get the job done, they get fired. Companies are for-profit businesses, not charities and people are paid to do a job. By terminating them, you're moving them to the door and on to something better in life. ■

Source: Quora (www.quora.com).

Presentations...

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not just *read from it*. Joe should also have some thorough, well-written notes he can fall back on if the PowerPoint fails...

... Or better yet, is the PowerPoint mandatory? How many slides will attendees remember? If you *do* use technology, my experience is that a segment from a movie or other video is much more memorable. I attended a conference in Milwaukee last spring where a keynote used clips from the movies *Office Space* and *Miracle* to make some important points. Talk about effective!

Summary

It's much more important for speakers like Joe to consider the big picture and not sweat so much about the technical stuff. After all, attendees are there to *learn*, and not to be dazzled by your video and audio prowess. ■

Mike Jacquart is the editor of "Employee Assistance Report," the "Journal of Employee Assistance" and a frequent blogger and LinkedIn contributor.

