



Unit: Speaking

Skill 19: Presenting To A Group

Activity B: Making Your Case

Activity Skills:

Public speaking, debate, small group discussion.

Leadership Skills:

Understand how to make a presentation on an issue and advocate for a position.

Suggested Level:

Advanced

Time:

35-45 minutes

Supplies needed:

- Paper for preparing notes.
- Pens or pencils.

Do Ahead:

N/A

Source:

Developed by:
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Based On:

"Persuasive PSA's," Unlock Your Leadership Potential,
University of Florida
Extension

BACKGROUND:

To make a basic speech is one thing, but how can you present an opinion or side of a particular argument – essentially advocate for a certain position – and still keep the presentation professional? Sometimes presenting your side of an issue means that there will be others in the audience who oppose your view. Sometimes it can be difficult to not criticize the other side when presenting your argument, but the best presenters make their case by sticking to the facts.

Let's look at some situations where it's clear that there are opposing viewpoints. Ask the participants to name some current issues that are in the news as having two opposing sides. Examples might include such topics as gun control, abortion, military conflict, etc. These are controversial because they deal with issues that people have strong feelings about. Even when the issues are smaller or more local, like raising taxes to pay for building new schools (which people who don't have kids in school and/or with limited income may object to), people can hold strong opinions.

As a leader, if you are making a case for a viewpoint that others oppose, it can be critical to present your side of the argument in a non-confrontational way. What are some strategies that you can think of right now to diffuse the controversy of an issue? Here are some examples:

- **Stick to the facts** – focus on the issue and the factual support for the issue; do research and know what the facts really are.
- **Don't get personal** – do not criticize the people on the other side of the argument.
- **Know the other side's argument** – focus on addressing each point of the other side's case, but again stick to facts and do not criticize people, only refute the facts.
- **Stay professional** – keep your cool and maintain your professional language and demeanor.
- **Prepare** – this includes both truly understanding all the facts and research on *both* sides of the issue, and practicing your presentation in advance.

WHAT TO DO:

Have participants break into an even number small groups, each of 3-4 people, and then pair 2 small groups on a single issue. The paired groups will be presenting the opposing sides of a given issue, and individuals may or may not be in the group that represents his or her own personal opinion. For debate purposes, personal opinions are put aside, and you do the best job you can presenting the side of the issue

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Notes:

that you are assigned – even it's the opposite of what you feel or believe.

Go back to the initial issues that students discussed during the introduction, and assign an issue to each pair of small groups. Then they are randomly assigned whether they will present the pro or con side of the issue. Make sure to keep the issues appropriate for your participants; students may debate the issue of having an open campus at lunch hour, while older professionals may debate a municipal ordinance restricting the size of advertising signs for local businesses. Since the issues will be generated by the participants themselves in the beginning, hopefully the topics will be relevant.

Give the small groups 8-10 minutes to prepare their case. If time and circumstances allow, provide them with a longer period and have them do some research to prepare. Reconvene and have each group take 3-4 minutes to present their side of the issue. Groups can draw straws or pick numbers to see if they get to present first or second – keeping in mind that the group going second has the advantage of refuting the points made by the side presenting first.

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- How did you feel about your topic? About the side of the issue that your group had to present?
- Did your personal feelings make a difference in your ability to make your case? Why or why not?
- Were you able to keep to the facts?
- Do professionals who have to advocate for a certain view, like lawyers, always believe in the argument they are making?
- When we talk about arguing, is your understanding or arguing or debating positive or negative?

Apply:

- What can presenting both sides of an issue accomplish?
- As a leader, why is important to be able to present your views on an issue in an objective and professional way?
- As a leader, why is it important to be able to persuade others?
- Who are some leaders that you can think of who have done a good job advocating for a certain issue?
- Did they change your mind about the issue? Why or why not?

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BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Ask students to write a presentation outline on an issue that relates to their own lives. What points do they need to make to present the issue fully? What points do they need to refute from the opposing view? Where can they do research on the issue to truly find the facts?

Resources and Web Links: