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Speak up

Launching.... The VIRTUAL CLASSROOM and what it can mean for you



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QUICKPREP- OUR FIRST VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

OUR FIRST VIRTUAL CLASSROOM - 'QUICKPREP' is an e-learning method for quickly preparing a presentation for Top to Middle Management - more flexibility, same time, different place, on the internet

WATCH OUT FOR ICEBERGS!

WATCH OUT, THERE ARE ICEBERGS ABOUT! You don't have to be a sailor to know that any self respecting iceberg keeps about 7/8 of its volume under the water where you can't see it. If only presenters would do the same!

THE ATTENTION GRABBER

How you start your presentation will make an enormous difference to the commitment of the audience to listen

GPB Consulting

The European Presentation Consultants



The GPB Virtual Classroom

E-LEARNING FOR TOP TO MIDDLE MANAGEMENT



We have developed a set of skills training courses over the last seven years that have been bought globally.

This has largely been presentation skills for senior individuals as well as groups of executives. To this we have since added selling, pitching, negotiation and media interview skills. Our customers tell us that our courses are great and keep asking for more. For a group, two day courses are the norm.

But things are changing. We believe that **some** classroom training will move to the web so we built courses that run on Hewlett Packard's *Virtual Classroom* software. In October we ran pilot trials; this article is about what we learnt.

The Virtual Classroom

What is it? Well it's not a CD, video conference or another version of the Open University. It links a group of people on both a telephone conference call (for sound) and HP's *Virtual Classroom* (for picture). The screen is a whiteboard onto which you see images or slides. The best bit is the interaction. You can see a list of who is attending. With a mouse click you can ask a question, type in text, draw lines and even throw rotten tomatoes or ripe apples. (Try doing that in a real classroom!) Our consultant has other tools such as

multiple choice straw-polls. Added to which discussion takes place over an open line conference call. It's the extensive interactivity that has impressed our critical and demanding clients the most.

What has changed?

The two day real training classroom won't disappear. Personal contact with expert advisers has clear benefits especially when inspiring people to raise their game and build teams. But there are cases where you can cut the real classroom to one day and replace the other day with a series, of (maybe four) one hour modules in the GPB *Virtual Classroom*. Our first module, called **QuickPrep**, focuses on quick preparation of excellent content. Delivery skills are kept in the real classroom.

Advantages of the Virtual Classroom

Some organisations can only release people for one day at a time. Such people would commit to training they would otherwise have avoided or been unable to do. Cutting a real classroom to one day doesn't save travel costs but for people who have other meetings, it is easier to extend a trip by one rather than two days. In that case the savings become significant. The cost of the *Virtual Classrooms* is less than the

day it replaces; it also takes half the time. It certainly appeals to organisations that are geographically spread.

Insights

We thought it might be difficult to achieve the same sort of rapport that we get in a real classroom. However, even with strangers we found that rapport was quickly achieved. Getting the pace right was important. It could easily have become a lecture and yet allowing too much interaction could have derailed the module's objectives. The best duration is about an hour.

Conclusion

We are convinced that in some cases this is a better way, at less cost and time, to deliver high value coaching, especially where people are geographically spread out. **We also know that our *Virtual Classroom* would help individuals and groups with actual events such as business pitches.** We think that this really does represent an exciting advance. Do call us if you would like to know more.



Watch out, there are icebergs about!

You don't have to be a sailor to know that any self respecting iceberg keeps about 7/8 of its volume under the water where you can't see it. You can only see the tip, but you know that the rest of it is there all right. If only presenters were more like icebergs!

tip of the iceberg - plus sufficient supporting evidence to make it persuasive. Only during questions do they mention any of their detail below the water line, and even then they are succinct. Yet you can tell their expertise from their confidence particularly with any unexpected questions.

whole story, show they've prepared, are experts, and try to be helpful. So they dump truckloads of solid iceberg on an unwilling audience, confusing and boring them into tuning out.

So how can you ensure you're staying above the water line? We've struggled with many top managers on this, as they are all naturally possessive of their material, but in essence our input here amounts to severe editing. So severe that if you think you're only scratching the surface of your wonderful topic, you are about right for the poor suckers who have to listen. Even better, if you can approach the content top down (see arrow) by getting the absolute key points down first then building up only the supporting evidence, you have a better chance of stopping at the water line. We have a little game to achieve this is called the *Fire Bell Test*. Let us know if you're interested and we'll post or email you the details.



Good presenters keep the vast bulk of their detail hidden from the audience, and only give an audience the key points, a bit like the

Poor presenters don't do this. They feel, often for seemingly helpful reasons, that they should be complete by telling the

The Industrial Society - Open Course Dates

As many of you will know, we run two day open courses in Advanced Presentation Skills in cooperation with The Industrial Society. These courses might be a good opportunity where you have just one or two individuals who need help and would benefit from being in a group with people outside their organisation. The dates of courses for the next six months are:

January 9-10; February 14-15; March 13-14 and 27-28; April 10-11; May 16-17; June 12-13 and 26-27.

Please call us or The Industrial Society direct on 0870 400 1000 for further information or to book someone on a course.



The Attention Grabber

How to start your presentation

We were all taught somewhere that we should "tell them what we're going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what we told them". Seems sensible enough advice but there is a flaw! There is strong evidence that people's commitment to listen depends on how you start. A bureaucratic traditional start won't necessarily have people saying "Wow! I really must listen to this person."

Starting well is particularly important at a conference. Imagine you are the third speaker on the second day. How can you get the audience to sit on the edge of their seats and listen intently. Here is one way which may **not** work:

"Good afternoon my name is John Smith and it's a great privilege to be speaking to you on this august occasion, I am very honoured to have been asked to speak in the company of so many leaders in this area of web based process management analysis. It's not the most fascinating of subjects and I am sorry I haven't had much time to prepare but hope you will bear with me. Let me start by telling you about the Irishman,

Scotsman and Russian who were all in a plane travelling to Sierra Leone."

Apologising up front and implying the topic is boring is deadly. Of course if you are late then a quick but sincere apology is fine. As for set piece jokes, leave them to comedians. Light-hearted humour is fine but it must not offend or distract.

So what to do. This is where the you have to, with care, catch their attention. There are a number of ways. These techniques are well known to speech writers:

Bait. *"Last year the French got 25% of the European Regional Development fund. How many of you know how we did in Britain? Let me tell you; we only got 5%. I want to talk to you about how we, the bankers, can help British Industry."* These comments may be provocative at the beginning of a talk but should persuade people to listen.

Verbal Imagery. *"Imagine Hyde Park. You can see it is covered in rubbish to a depth of 15 feet everywhere. That's the amount of rubbish that is fly tipped in London every day. Let me tell you what we*

are doing about this challenge."

Bottom Line. Instead of a long and detailed argument about ways of increasing the efficiency of a new plane, the presenter started by saying *"If we can reduce slip stream friction by 8% then we can reduce noise levels significantly and reduce fuel burn by 3%. Let me tell you how we hope to achieve this."*

Conclusion

Many of us when starting our talk are keen to explain what is about to follow. But gaining people's attention is about dangling something in front of them that will make them want to hear more as well as focusing them on the purpose of the talk. To some audiences, a strong start could be too pushy, so always factor in cultural issues. After five minutes are you hanging in there or is your mind wandering? Noting your reactions to the start of others' presentations gives you a good indication of what works and what doesn't. Observe your own reaction to other people's presentations.

**Alastair Grant
Partner**

GPB Consulting: Our Services

GPB Consulting is active throughout Europe and, through our associate network, around the world.

We cover the areas of presentation, selling, negotiation, new business pitching, telephone skills, and media training.

We offer our advice both as

consultants on important business issues, and as trainers in general skills development.

We work both one to one with top management and with group workshops for middle management. Workshops run for between one and five days, and are tailored to each client's requirements.

In this newsletter we have written about our initial experiences with our GPB Virtual Classroom. We have taken the first steps. We will now start running courses with virtual modules for groups and individuals. For queries on this or any other topic, please contact us at the address below.



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