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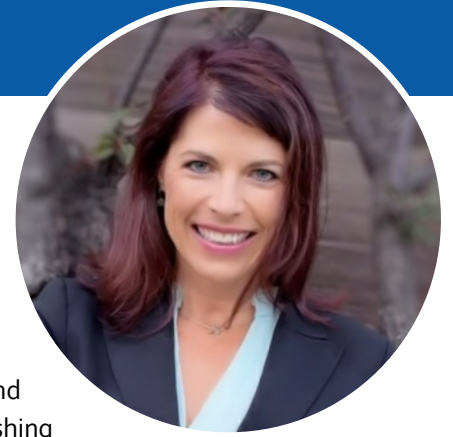


*Start Increasing Your Influence by
Focusing on Ongoing Presentation Skills
Not First Time Impression Management*

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*Helping
executives and
entrepreneurs
achieve results
through a
people-centered
approach*

Who Am I and Why Can You Trust Me?

I am Sara LaForest, an entrepreneur, consultant, coach, instructor, and author with comprehensive experience in the private, nonprofit, education, and government sectors.

I am on a mission to empower entrepreneurs, executives and leaders to grow their businesses and help them create flourishing workplace environments. If you share this mission, these articles will introduce my approach. I believe you will find them helpful and pragmatic.

For more than a decade, I have grown, managed, and nurtured my own companies specializing in leadership consulting, organizational development, and executive and performance coaching. My focus is on the critical—yet often overlooked—interdependencies of strategy, branding, culture, and talent necessary to foster and propel growth. My high-touch, personalized approach helps leaders improve company performance and team functioning at all levels, while facilitating a positive and productive workplace culture.

How am I different? What new perspective do I bring? My strength is combining company growth with an emphasis on the personal growth and well-being of the people with whom I work and serve. My deep-rooted commitment to human advancement is my advantage.

This article, along with many other national and international published works, was co-written with my retired partner, Tony Kubica. Our book, *Organizational Gravity: A Guide to Strategically Growing Your Company's Brand, Culture, and Talent*, is available on [Amazon](#).

To learn more about my services, publications, and speaking engagements, please visit [LaForestConsulting.com](#). You can contact me directly at Sara@LaForestConsulting.com or via [LinkedIn](#).

Improving
Performance

Navigating
Transitions

Accelerating
Results

If increasing your influence and creating a reputation as the “go to” person is important to you and your company - then you need to focus on strengthening your presentation skills.

This requires an understanding of presentation that goes far beyond the old interpretation of “platform skills.” You see, many leading business professionals focus on first time impression management when they present. They focus on influencing others’ perceptions about a person, a group, and/or an organization by providing self-assessed beneficial information in social interactions to gain an advantageous first impression. And, they achieve these results through personal presentation, visual aids, use of space and effective speaking.

However, if you want to truly increase your outreach, influence and reputation then you need to also focus on your *ongoing* presentation. We’re talking about after you have made that first critical impression.

At Kubica LaForest Consulting, we find that presentation skills, or a person’s “presentation” is a package. Our definition of presentation skills is more montage.

The Combination of Tangible and Intangible Behaviors You Must Have to Possess Excellent Presentation Skills According to Our Definition

- **The ability to consistently perform “on your feet”** -- When commonly faced with superiors, colleagues, subordinates, vendors, prospects and clients who are busy (and some less interested than they should be); like it or not, *how* you present becomes even more important than *what* you present.
- **The ability to get those you want to influence to not only want to meet with you, but also to listen to you, seek your advice and respond to it** - Remember, while brevity and fact-based presentation is key to influencing others, if what you present is solely a recitation of the facts, you will bore your listeners and have the opposite effect.
- **Your appearance and poise** – Yes, if you want to lead and influence others then you have to dress, act, and look like a business leader and key influencer. You need to take an active role and look like a business professional who is to be heard and taken seriously.
- **Knowledge** – Every claim you make, you need to back up with knowledge, expertise, research and information. You need to prove to those you are looking to influence that you are a proven expert and thought leader. And, you need to be able to defend your positioning when faced by opposition.
- **Preparation** – You know the old saying – “If you fail to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” You must prepare for the complete presentation process (from beginning to end).

Take This Quiz to See If You Have Effective Ongoing Presentation Skills...

1. Do you have trepidations about bothering colleagues, team members, employees, vendors, senior executives, prospects and/or clients and approaching them with your concerns or questions?

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2. How responsive are you? Are you slow because you are seeking the “perfect solution?”
3. How good are you at building and maintaining relationships?
4. How focused are you on the person in front of you and their specific issues and needs? Have you inquired as to their key priorities?
5. Are you interesting to talk to and meet with? Do you bring energy, knowledge and value-added ideas to discussions?
6. How are you known in your organization? Are you known as someone who gets things done?
7. Do you challenge others to think beyond the obvious and consider things they haven’t thought of?
8. Are you confident and do you behave as a peer or as a subordinate?
9. Are you consistent and as impressive “off-stage” as you are “on-stage”?
10. Do you demonstrate emotional intelligence?

These questions reflect the “intangible” elements of presentation. And strong presentation will help you accelerate and expand your value.

If your responses are unsatisfactory to you on the quiz, here are next steps to help you.

Take a personal inventory and identify 3 areas to focus on to improve. Assess and inquire as to how you are seen in your organization or in your market if you are an entrepreneur. Understand that improving your presentation skills is a process, not an event. And it starts with awareness and caring (a sincere desire and belief) that your presentation skills can be improved.

Act like a peer, bring distinctive and useful knowledge to the discussion, demonstrate beyond what is expected, look and be impressive, and you will be seen differently. Remember, how you are known molds your influence and reputation, which we find, will promote and even drive opportunity. *And how you establish and reinforce how you are known is through your ongoing presentation.*