

The Essentials of Persuasive Public Speaking

By Sims Wyeth

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Sims Wyeth laid the foundation for his future professional path as an actor, teacher and writer during his university years as a student of rhetoric. Building upon this formal training in effective and persuasive discourse, Wyeth began his career on the stage as an actor and later became a professor of theater, voice and speech at New York University, the Michael Chekhov Studio, the Actors' and Directors' Lab, and the University of New Orleans.

In 1989, Mr. Wyeth moved from education to the business world as a Vice President of a training and consulting firm. Approximately a half dozen years later, in 1996, Mr. Wyeth launched Sims Wyeth & Company, an executive development firm specializing in the art and science of influence and persuasion. The company offers coaching and training in presentation and facilitation skills. Mr. Wyeth is the firm's President.

In addition to this new book, Sims Wyeth has written an array of articles on the effective use of persuasive speech. His work has appeared in such publications as *Business Week*, *C2M*, and *Inc. Magazine*. Unquestionably, Sims Wyeth is an expert in his field.

Mr. Wyeth describes his new book as a work containing "short pointers on presenting and public speaking" and advises his readers to consume his pointers "... randomly, serially, or topically" (p. xiv). Indeed, the author has carefully chosen a format that encourages the reader to use just such a method.

Instead of dividing his material into the dozen or more chapters of most similar sized books of approximately 200 pages, the author has organized his material into only six major sections. Within those sections, individual topics appear under unique headings and each is addressed on a single page, separated from the next topic by the pause necessitated for the reader who must turn the page to shift to the next topic. Indeed, Wyeth has arranged his "pointers" as he promised when he writes "organic jalapeno potato chips, so you'll consume them one after the other" (p.xiv). This reviewer found that his method works.

Negotiation at its core is an interactive meeting in which two or more parties seek to come to an agreement about settling a dispute, sharing resources or working together to create new value. The negotiators are the presenters of the limits and possibilities of such a meeting. Unquestionably, their skills in presentation and persuasion are critical to the success or failure of the enterprise. How to do those actions effectively is the thrust of this book. It is ideal for the negotiator as a skills guide as well as a tutorial on the art of public speaking in general.

The focus of the author is on presentation as a conversation with an audience. Win-win negotiating requires the same skills and focus to be effective.

According to the author, the art of effective presentation needs to be based on the exploration of open-ended questions and unresolved problems. Effective win-win negotiation requires the same open focus if it is to be successful. Only positional negotiation operates on an approach of closed-ended questions and problem solution certainties.

For anyone who is not trained in the art of rhetoric, this book should be a must read. Its ideas on effective presentation and persuasion are excellent and its format really does allow the reader to learn the skills very much as one might consume “organic jalapeno potato chips ....”

This is a work that should be on every negotiator’s shelf as an essential and first-rate skills manual.

Highly Recommended.

John D. Baker, Ph.D.

Editor