

# TOP TIPS FOR HANDLING QUESTION AND ANSWER

The Q & A session can **make or break** your speech or presentation. As with any other part of speaking and presenting, preparation is the key. You need to do your homework and practise answering any possible questions. This is also good practise as it may help identify any flaws in your material **before** you speak.

On question we are always asked at our **Advanced Workshops** is what the best time is for the Q & A? The answer is it depends". It depends on how your speech is structured and also it depends on what happens on the day. If you find that you have less time to speak than anticipated, the Q & A may have to go. If it suits your structure, have the Q & A before the end so that you can finish off the last 20% and leave the audience on a high.

The main point is remember that you are still in **speaker/presenter mode**, don't switch off, prepare, keep it short and dynamic and your Q & A's will be as good as the main event.

## 1. **PREPARE.**

Anticipate questions and how you would answer them.

## 2. **CALM DOWN.**

Many people develop irrational fears about 'not being able to answer a questions'. You are only human – you may have to admit you don't know or it may be that you can answer it later.

## 3. **TAKE CONTROL.**

Establish clear rules about questions, e.g. people must raise their hand and wait. Decided quickly whether to accept a question, when to finish and when to stop it going off at a tangent. It is YOUR presentation.

## 4. **DEFINE**

The parameters of the Q & A when you begin, for example: "We have ten minutes left and I will be taking around 4-5 questions."

## 5. **LISTEN**

Carefully to the question.

## 6. **REMEMBER.**

You are still on the platform and therefore your body language and tone of voice are still being evaluated by the audience.

**7. REPEAT THE QUESTION.**

Or if the question is long, paraphrase. This helps both yourself and the audience understand the question. If it is contentious try and reframe it as less negative.

**8. LOOK.**

At the questioner until you understand the question, and then give your response to the whole audience.

**9. RESPOND.**

Simply and directly. Do not start a new topic. Answer the question directly restating the key points of your presentation where applicable.

**10. PART-ANSWER.**

Difficult questions, or if you don't have the information to hand, acknowledge this. Feel free to explain to the questioner that you will make this information available to them after the meeting, whether by mail/telephone and give a specific time.

**11. AVOID.**

Saying "we have one final question" – if it is a difficult or negative question it will finish the session on a low.

**12. WRAP UP THE SESSION.**

Thank the audience and leave them with a final and very succinct message