



## Top 10 Tips for handling a Question and Answer Session

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 `s the best time 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** - Do your preparation work, **anticipate** possible questions and how you could answer them.
- 2.) **Structure** - Define the **parameters** of the Q and A when you begin, for example; *“we have 10 minutes today and I will be taking 4/5 questions”*.
- 3.) **Listen** - **Carefully** to the question.
- 4.) **Remember** - That you are still on the platform and therefore your **body language** and **tone of voice** are still being evaluated by the audience.
- 5.) **Repeat** - The question or if it is a long question, **paraphrase**, this helps both yourself and the audience to understand the question.
- 6.) **Look** - At the questioner until you understand the question, then give your response to the **whole audience**.
- 7.) **Respond** - Simply and directly, do not start on new topics or mini speeches. Do respond directly to the question and avoid going off at a tangent. **Restate** the key points of your presentation where applicable.
- 8.) **Difficult** - Questions can be part answered, or if you do not have the information to hand acknowledge this. Then explain to the questioner that you will have this information made available to them either after the meeting, by telephone or by mail at a **specific** time.
- 9.) **Avoid** - Saying that “we have one final question”, if it is a difficult or negative question it will finish the session on a **down beat**.
- 10.) **Wrap** - Up the session by **thanking** the audience and leaving them with a final and very succinct message.

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