AdminAdvantage

The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

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Developing \ and Using A Request For Proposal (RFP) For Hotel Groups

FEATURES:

CAREER Cyber Security Tips for Small and Medium Business
Reclaim Your Lunch Break for Greater Work-Life Balance
Public Speaking

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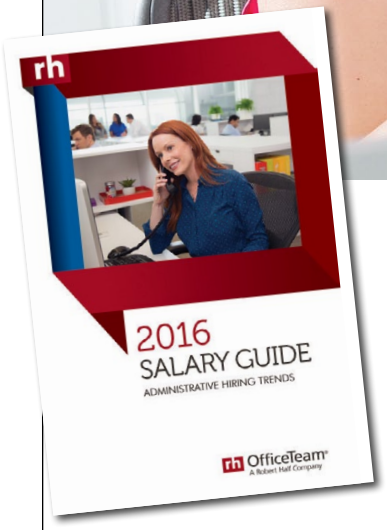

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Developing and Using A Request For Proposal (RFP) For Hotel Groups

by Richard Brody

One of the most essential parts of the negotiating process if an organization or any other group or business wishes to "block" a group with a hotel is the development and preparation of a meaningful Request for Proposal (RFP) and effectively utilizing it once prepared. Since many of the individuals that negotiate on behalf of a group with a hotel lack the necessary expertise, they generally concentrate on acquiring good guest room rates, while often overlooking or ignoring other essential aspects of their meeting, conference or convention. ▸▸

The first step in the RFP procedure is for the organization to fully explore and understand all its needs and necessities for the conference. The group should set up a small three to five person committee, composed of individuals who have been intimately involved previously in that organization's conference.

They should put together a comprehensive need's list, which should include as many possible contingencies and possibilities as possible. Once this preliminary list is prepared, it should be developed into a Request for Proposal.

The Request for Proposal should include:

1. A description and background of the organization, this particular conference, it's objective, and its general needs and purposes.
2. A request for a specific number of rooms, based on a realistic review of recent similar conferences.
3. A specification for an Attrition Clause that is generous to the organization, but under no circumstances should that figure be below a minimum of 20%.
4. The best possible group rate, and a guarantee that the hotel will not offer a lower rate during that period through any other arena or format. In addition, an agreement that if the hotel offers a lower rate elsewhere, that the group rate will automatically revert to a percentage (no less than 5%) lower than the lowest rate offered to others outside the group during that period.
5. The opportunity for the group to "give back" a certain percentage of the rooms thirty days before, while still maintaining the same Attrition percentage on the lower number.
6. Concessions regarding parking, and costs.
7. Complimentary meeting space.
8. Guarantee that the hotel can meet the required meeting and banquet space requirements, and that group will receive priority treatment.
9. Complimentary or significantly reduced cost of internet, both in rooms and in meeting spaces.
10. A certain amount of basic audio-visual should be complimentary.
11. The balance of the audio-visual charges should be not less than 20% below the present schedule of A/V charges, and that the present schedule be the guideline.
12. A guarantee that Food and Beverage will be at least 20-25% below the present years Food and Beverage rates, and that the present schedule will be the guide for the future meeting, even if rates increase.
13. Specific concessions regarding complimentary guest rooms (one free per twenty room nights).
14. The group should receive a credit of $15 per room night, credited to the Master Account.
15. Menu needs should be specified, including Special Dietary needs requests. There should be a guarantee that Special Meals should be served at or approximately the same rate as the regular per person meal rate for the specified meal, and that Special Meals can be accommodated.
16. There should be guarantees regarding the proper operation of facilities, including elevators and escalators, pool, health club/ spa, etc.

17. There should be a discount offered to attendees to use the Spa.
18. Basic health club facilities should be at no charge.
19. The price for the Bar at any meal function should be no less than 20% below the present day printed rates.
20. Hotel should offer some Welcome amenity.
21. Hotel should agree to supply choice of linen colors at no charge.
22. Hotel should be willing to supply certain basic decorations at no charge.
23. Group should be permitted to bring in Baked Goods, etc., for its initial Conference Registration procedure.
24. The per gallon coffee charge should be reduced by at least 25%.
25. Group should receive every concession hotel offers any other group.

This is just a basic and rudimentary list that I have put together to demonstrate some of the items that should be included. This RFP is used both in the preliminary negotiation with hotels, when you pit one hotel against another (in order to eliminate and select the best for your group), and the RFP should be used as an Addendum to the Contract signed with the hotel selected. Using an effective Request for Proposal will save an organization significant amounts of both monies and heartache, when used and constructed properly. Any organization not using a properly formulated RFP should be considered not fulfilling its due diligence and responsibility to its members and attendees.

Richard Brody has over 30 years consultative sales, marketing, training, managerial, and operations experience. He has trained sales and marketing people in numerous industries, given hundreds of seminars, appeared as a company spokesperson on over 200 radio and television programs, and regularly blogs on real estate, politics, economics, management, leadership, negotiations, conferences and conventions, etc. Richard has negotiated, arranged and/ or organized hundreds of conferences and conventions.

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Richard has a Consulting Website (http://tinyurl.com/rgbcons); a blog (http://tinyurl.com/rgbstake); and can be followed on Twitter.

Reclaim Your Lunch Break for Greater Work-Life Balance

by Brandi Britton, OfficeTeam

It's noon at the office and your stomach is reminding you that the yogurt you had for breakfast might have been too humble to call a meal. Coworkers are off to the cafeteria or spin class. Some are squeezing in a quick errand. Do you set aside what you're doing and take an actual lunch break? Or do you wolf down a sandwich or microwaved meal at your desk and continue to multitask? ⏭

LIFESTYLE

If the second scenario sounds familiar, we've been there, too. According to an OfficeTeam survey (http://officeteam.rhi.mediaroom.com/lunchbreaks), 29 percent of polled office employees work through their lunch. But it doesn't have to be this way. Consider the benefits of pausing to refresh. Your mind and body will function better when you have a proper break at midday — at least 30 minutes — to relax and recharge.

Taking a lunch break could fend off the dreaded afternoon slump. And conventional wisdom has it that taking regular lunches recalibrates your work-life balance, prevents burnout and allows you to be more productive. You know it, and so does your boss. It's the reason the lunch break exists in the first place.

If you're thinking of excuses, stop it. When you don't take care of yourself, your job performance inevitably slips. And do you want a client walking into the reception area while you're devouring a chicken club sandwich, ranch dressing dripping down your chin? Of course not. You want to maintain your professional image.

So here are some tips for making the most of your lunch break:

- **Eat a nutritious lunch.** When you don't eat regularly, your blood sugar drops, which could lead to lightheadedness and an inability to concentrate. You could also become "hangry," a state of grumpiness brought on by hunger. It's inadvisable to down energy drinks or grab a bag of chips or cookies from the vending machine. Unwise food choices combined with sedentary activity lead to weight gain and poor overall health.
  The best and most economical lunches are the balanced meals you bring from home. Make sure you have plenty of fruits and vegetables, some protein and some carbs (preferably whole grain). Take your food to the break room or out to a bench under a tree and …

- Socialize with coworkers. Are your lunches lonesome? According to the OfficeTeam survey, 42 percent of workers said they socialize with coworkers during lunch. When you share meals, whether in a restaurant or the lunchroom, you get to laugh, learn and catch up with each other — important aspects of deepening relationships with work friends.

- Surf and play. You've been good all morning, staying away from Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter. Now that it's your lunch break, you may be able to finally peruse your news feed and check in with online friends. The OfficeTeam survey found that 27 percent of respondents use this time to catch up on social media or surf the Web. You could also listen to your favorite podcasts while eating your meal, indulge in some e-retail therapy, catch up on current events in the world, or play a few games on your smartphone. Of course, be sure you're following your company's guidelines for personal internet use. Having a quick mental escape from office matters will help clear your

mind and prepare you for the next four hours.

- Run errands. The last thing you want to do after a full day of work is run to the store, mail a package or pick up prescriptions. That's probably why 25 percent of survey respondents take care of their personal to-do lists during lunchtime. This is a good way to incorporate some work-life balance during the day, especially if you have an hour-long break. Just don't forget to spend some time eating a balanced meal!

- Take care of personal messages and calls. Since it's unprofessional to conduct personal business on the clock, some office workers do it during their lunch break. This is a guilt-free time to check in with family members, send a few text messages to friends or respond to non-work emails.

- Get some exercise. Many of us are doing our best to keep our New Year's resolution to be more active. Since most administrative professionals sit in an office all day, the lunch break is an ideal time to get in some extra steps. When the weather cooperates, put on comfortable shoes and take a brisk walk outside. If you have enough time, head to the gym and work out on the machines or yoga mat. The poses, stretches and mindful breathing will give you a boost in the middle of a busy workday.

- Read. Another smart way to clear your head and restore work-life balance is to read a book in the middle of the day. Bring a novel with you to work and let your mind wander as you eat your lunch. You could also keep your personal journal handy and continue entries in your life story.

- Enjoy your meal. Our survey found that 1 percent of respondents do nothing else during their lunch break than simply eat. This choice may come as a surprise to you. Many of us are so conditioned to doing something else while eating that this solitary act is novel and a little unusual. But this 1 percent may be on to something. Nutritional and weight loss experts say that taking your time during meals is good for your digestion. And when you savor your food, you're also less likely to overeat.

It's said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day, for good reason. It fuels you for the workday demands. But when it comes to maintaining work-life balance as a busy administrative professional, a proper lunch break is crucial, too. Make the most of yours by taking the time to recharge as you refuel.

Brandi Britton is a district president for OfficeTeam, the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled administrative and office support professionals. OfficeTeam has more than 300 locations worldwide and offers online job search services at www.officeteam.com. Connect with us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest and the OfficeTeam blog.

Cyber Security Tips for Small and Medium Business

by Priya Sajeet

Keeping business data safe is the number one concern of business nowadays. Due to the rising security breaches on several companies, data security against unwanted intrusion is on everyone's mind. No matter big or small, IT security is the biggest challenges organizations face. When it comes to small or medium enterprise the impact of security threat is even more severe. ⏩

Cyber criminals love to target small business largely due to the fact that SMBs cannot afford to implement strong security protocols. Nothing can be hundred percentage safe, but at the same time SMEs can advance the protection environment by acquiring a strong understanding of their external web presence and ensuring it is secure by undertaking penetration testing and minimizing exposure by taking action such as regularly updating security patches.

What is Data breach and how it happens?
Data breach is an incident in which sensitive, protected or confidential data has potentially been viewed, stolen or used by an individual unauthorized to do so. The most common concept of a data breach is an attacker hacking into a network to steal sensitive data. A number of industry guidelines and government compliance regulations mandate strict governance of sensitive or personal data to avoid data breaches. It is a scenario where your company or organizations' data is stolen. When we check into the company folder and find all information is gone, client files, logs, billing information have all been compromised. Then it is clear that your business is becoming a victim of a data breach cyber-attack.

Most common causes of data breaches
Protecting sensitive data is critical to the lifeline of an enterprise. What can be the most common causes of data breaches?

- **Physical loss or theft of devices is one of the most common causes of data breaches: This is arguably the most straightforward of the common causes of data breaches. However, there are many different ways that this can occur. It could be that anyone of your laptop, external hard drive, or flash drive has been damaged, stolen, or misplaced.**
- **Internal threats like accidental breach (employee error) or intentional breach (employee misuse): This can occur when employees handling delicate data not clearly understanding security protocols and procedures. Data breach can also occur from a mental error, when an employee sends documents to a wrong recipient.**
- **Weak security controls are often top concerns for protecting an organization's data: Incorrectly managing access to applications and different types of data can result in employees being able to view and transport information they don't need to do their jobs. Weak or stolen password has been yet another main concern. When devices such as laptops, tablets, cell phones, computers and email systems are protected with weak passwords, hackers can easily break into the system. This exposes subscription information, personal and financial information, as well as sensitive business data.**
- **Operating system and application vulnerabilities: Having outdated software or web browsers is a serious security concern.**

Tips to prevent Cyber threat
Amid the chaos and the hype, it can be difficult to get clear, accurate information about what's really going on when a data breach occurs.

TECHNOLOGY

While data breaches are certainly a complex issue, equipping yourself with basic knowledge of them can help you to navigate the news, to handle the aftermath, and to secure your data as best as you can. The increasing frequency and magnitude of data breaches is a clear sign that organizations need to prioritize the security of personal data.

Latest developments like embracing cloud, deploying BYOD etc. enhances the risk of cyber threat. Employee ignorance is also one of the major concerns. Hackers are well aware of these vulnerabilities and are organizing themselves to exploit. There is no need to panic, especially if you are a small business, but it is imperative to take a decision. Make yourself difficult to target and keep your business secure with these top 5 tips.

Here are the top 5 tips to prevent the cyber threat.

1. Encrypt your data: Data encryption is a great preventive control mechanism. If you encrypt a database or a file, you can't decrypt it unless you have or guess the right keys, and guessing the right keys can take a long time. Managing encryption keys requires the same effort as managing other preventive controls in the digital world, like access control lists, for example. Someone needs to regularly review who has access to what data, and revoke access for those who no longer require it.

2. Choose a security that fits your business: Cracking

even the most secure companies with elaborate schemes is now far greater than ever. So adopt a managed security service provider that can deliver a flexible solution cost effectively and provide a seamless upgrade path.

3. Educate employees: Educate employees about appropriate handling and protection of sensitive data. Keep employees informed about threats through brief e-mails or at periodic meetings led by IT expert.

4. Deploy security management strategy: Nowadays cyber-attacks are highly organized so organizations need to establish a strategic approach so that your entire environment works as an integrated defense, detecting, preventing and responding to attacks seamlessly and instantly.

5. Install anti-virus software: Anti-virus software can secure your systems from attacks. Anti-virus protection scans your computer and your incoming email for viruses, and then deletes them. You must keep your anti-virus software updated to cope with the latest "bugs" circulating the Internet. Most anti-virus software includes a feature to download updates automatically when you are online. In addition, make sure that the software is continually running and checking your system for viruses, especially if you are downloading files from the Web or checking your email.

Actions or measures that can be taken if any, malicious attack suspected in your network

- **If when an unknown file is downloaded, the first step is to delete the file. Disconnect the computer from the network and have IT run a complete system sweep to ensure no traces are left.**
- **Whenever a key logger is detected on a computer, IT should immediately reset password on all related accounts.**
- **Businesses should have central administration capabilities on their local and cloud server. Controlling which users have access to what files/folders on the server ensures that essential business data is only accessible by authorized individuals.**
- **Have all business files backed up in a remote cloud server. If disaster recovery is necessary, all files backed up in the cloud can be imported back to the local server to prevent complete data loss.**
- **Perfect Cyber Security involves:**
  - **Determining what assets need to be secured**
  - **Identifying the threats and risks that could affect those assets or the whole business**
  - **Identifying what safeguards need to be in place to deal with threats and secure assets**
  - **Monitoring safeguards and assets to prevent or manage security breaches**
  - **Responding to cyber security issues as they occur**
  - **Updating and adjusting to safeguards as needed**

Every day businesses are under attack on multiple fronts, and realizing that data breaches can stem from several different source allows for a more comprehensive protection and response plan. Never assume that your data is safe because you have the best electronic protection, or because you don't use POS terminals. Criminals want your data, and they will try anything to get it.

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"SURE, AT FIRST I WAS A LITTLE TAKEN ABACK BY THE WHOLE PEEING STANDING UP THING. BUT I TAUGHT HIM TO THROW A STICK AND NOW HANGING OUT WITH HIM IS THE BEST PART OF MY DAY."
–EINSTEIN
adopted 12-09-10
A PERSON IS THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO A SHELTER PET
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Practical and Detailed Time Management Tips for a Fulfilling Life

by Nirupama N Raghavan

Time is what we need most, but what we use worst - William Penn. One of the biggest reasons for stress, frustration and irritation is poor time management. We often feel that we never have enough time to do anything. This is a flawed assumption to begin with. Each and every one of us has twenty-fours in a day, no more and no less..

Why is it then that some people are able to accomplish many activities while others struggle on? Time management does not mean squeezing in many jobs in a short time-frame! Time management means managing your hours in a way that maximizes productivity while allowing free time for leisure, relaxation and fun. Effective time management strategies can help you in several important ways and minimize stress. Are you managing your time effectively? Signs of Poor and Ineffective Time Management 'Short as time is, we make it shorter by wasting time' Victor Hugo

Rushing around with a full diary of appointments, tasks and meetings does not imply good time management. If you notice any of the following signs in your life, you're probably wasting precious time:

- **Poor punctuality:** You are always late for appointments
- **Negative feelings dominate:** You are always feeling stressed, anxious and impatient
- **Poor work productivity:** Are you always asking for extra time to complete projects and submit reports?

- **Lack of leisure and relaxation:** You find yourself always working with no time for family and friends
- **Chronic Procrastination:** Do you constantly find yourself postponing tasks?

If you constantly find yourself chasing your tail, unable to make decisions and falling through the cracks, you may need to understand why you are unable to manage your time.

10 REASONS WHY TIME MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

1. You can improve productivity and quality of output without burning out

2. Time management leads to more leisure and relaxation time and better work-life balance

3. We are able to accomplish much more while doing less instead of running around in circles

4. You no longer feel overwhelmed, rushed and stressed.

5. Managing our time effectively helps us make better decisions and make empowering choices as we no longer jump to erroneous conclusions in a rush

6. Effective time management is the key to professional and academic success

7. You will feel relaxed and will experience improved levels of mental and physical wellbeing

8. Time management is one of the most effective techniques to beat procrastination

9. You begin to value your time as a precious asset and learn to use it wisely instead of squandering it frivolously

10. Time management helps create a positive flow of energy in your life and is a key factor in goal achievement

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND STRATEGIES

'The bad news is that time flies; the good news is that you are the pilot' Michael Altshuler
You can read through the following list of carefully chosen time-management tips and select the ones that resonate with you.

20 EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS AND STRATEGIES

1. Stop wasting your energy complaining lack of time; start planning your day instead.

2. Slot your tasks and activities into defined time frames. Give 10 minutes to X activity, 30 minutes to Y activity and so on.

3. Show respect and value for your time and others will also follow suit.

4. Use effective time management tools like a calendar and an organizer. There are free online organizers include tools such as Google Calendar and

Backpack. A good old diary is just as effective!

5. Create your priority list and time allotments according to your preferences. Don't pressurize yourself because your friend wants to borrow your car during evening rush hour.

6. Set a definite time after which you won't work; otherwise work will creep into your evening.

7. Do regular time audits for the week and examine how your time was spent. You may want to redistribute your time for better utilization.

8. Highlight deadlines clearly and legibly in your calendar so that you can plan before project end dates.

9. Pinpoint activities and people who waste your time and drain your energy.

10. Schedule time for relaxation with family, children, friends and pets. A good work-life balance is very important for a stress-free life.

11. Place your clock where you can see it clearly at all times. Many times, we tend to have to look for our mobile phones in order to see the time!

12. Open a minimum number of online tabs. This wastes time as the eyes are continually darting towards other tabs. Close down everything except what you need.

13. Delegate tasks for improved time management. Most people feel obliged to do everything on their own.

14. Whenever you make a time estimate, always add on extra time to be on the safe side. We have a tendency to underestimate time required for tasks.

15. Plan your time but don't force an unnatural pace. See if the time management plan is aligned with your preferences and expectations. Each person is different and there is no single plan that fits all.

16. Batch similar tasks together for improved efficacy and minimization of time wastage.

17. Avoid fussing about unimportant and trivial details. Keep the larger picture in mind.

18. Don't stick up tasks one after another; keep a 10-minute buffer zone to take a breath between tasks.

19. Schedule time to reflect on thoughts, conversations and ideas that may help improve your life.

20. Close your eyes for two minutes and breathe gently. Focus on your breathing. This will help clear the mind before any important meeting and reduce stress instantly.

You can start implementing the above listed tips at any time. As you use them consistently, you will be pleasantly surprised to discover that you are able to do much more in less time without salving yourself into the ground.

Public Speaking

by Marie Herman

Many administrative professionals avoid public speaking like the plaque, but this can actually prove detrimental to their career.

Some people think of public speaking as being forced to stand all alone, under blinding spotlights, reciting boring memorized materials. Even worse, they can fully imagine forgetting even the boring memorized materials and instead standing speechless like a deer caught in a car's headlights without being able to voice a word or remember a single word they had intended to speak.

Public speaking doesn't just mean you are presenting formally to a group of hundreds of people. It could be as simple as speaking up during a small meeting or introduce someone to a group. Far better to face up to this fear and learn to master your nervousness. You can overcome this fear. There are a few key elements that anyone can focus on to enhance their public speaking skills. This article will focus on two of those skills: Vocal Variety and Body Language.

VOCAL VARIETY

Vocal variety is essentially everything verbal you do EXCEPT the actual content of the words coming out of your mouth. Using engaging vocal variety will help you to keep your audience's attention. Lest you think I'm encouraging you to break out in a foreign accent, let me show you some of the different areas that are included under the umbrella of vocal variety.

Volume – This is how loud or quiet your voice is. When you are angry, your voice tends to naturally get louder (or perhaps you are the type who gets a deadly quiet voice as you get angrier). Fear may cause us to speak too quietly or too loudly.

Tone – Tone is not "what" we say, but rather "how" we say it. This is the basis of many jokes in the comedy circuit of what a woman means

when she says "Fine" during an argument with her spouse.

Rhythm – Like music, language has rhythm as well. Lewis Carroll demonstrated rhythm beautifully in his poem The Jabberwocky. This is the lyrical quality of language.

Rate – Rate is how how fast or slow we speak. Nervousness tends to make us speed up when we are talking, especially if we aren't using good breathing techniques.

Inflection – The peaks and valleys in our pitch create inflection. Some women tend to end a sentence on a higher note, which makes others think they are asking a question.

Pauses – Underuse AND overuse can be equally ineffective with pauses, but a well-placed pause can serve many purposes in speaking – giving your audience time to digest and appreciate your message as well as serving as a transition to another part of your speech.

Pitch – A lack of range in a voice translates to a monotone. Pitch is the high and low of our voices. A voice that lacks pitch tends to hypnotize us and in some cases lead to us getting drowsy.

All of these factors together comprise vocal variety and incorporating multiple facets into your speeches will ensure that you keep your audience fully engaged in your presentation.

Toastmasters International (http://www.toastmasters.org) can be a fabulous resource to discover the world of improved communication and leadership skills. I strongly encourage you to check them out even as you are incorporating some of the techniques in this article into your speaking routine. They will provide helpful feedback and a supportive environment to learn and grow as a public speaker.

BODY LANGUAGE

Body language can help you to really emphasize key elements of your speech and engage your audience more. Body language is inextricably tied to our emotions, our voices, and our feelings. It's actually very difficult NOT to have body language during a speech. However, sometimes our natural movements don't have the impact we are hoping. Here are a few suggestions you can focus on to allow body language to support your speeches.

There are four common types of gestures to try to include in your speeches:

1. Follow the leader – If you want your audience to clap, you start clapping to show them what you want. Want them to raise their hand? Demonstrate by raising your own hand.

2. Emphasize! – Underscore what's being said by pounding your fist on the table when angry or jumping when excited.

3. Clarity – Use your fingers to show that something is tiny or outstretch your arms to show that something is huge.

4. Expressing Emotion or Symbols – You could shrug your shoulders to express confusion or put your hands out to show giving or receiving.

Excessive body language should not be your goal in public speaking, but selectively looking for opportunities to incorporate body language naturally into what you are saying can add life and action to your speeches, helping capture your audience's attention and hold on to it.

Even though an action may feel awkward initially when you do it, you will find that with repeated use it becomes more natural. After all, walking probably comes naturally to you now, but you had to learn how to do it and then practice a lot to reach that stage.

Thinking through your presentation in advance and actively seeking out places where vocal variety and body language can be added will help you to put together a solid performance that will have your audience taking you seriously as a speaker and wanting to hear more. While these are only two of many skills you will develop on the path to successful public speaking, they

are some of the basics that you can use as a foundation to build upon.

The most important factor that contributes to your success as a public speaker is PRACTICE. Get up and start doing it! The more you do it, the easier it will become and the more you will convince your mind that you really aren't going to suffer a heart attack and die on stage in front of your audience.

Marie Herman CAP-OM, ACS operates a successful business, MRH Enterprises (www.mrhenterprises.com), whose services include online tutoring, Certified Administrative Professional and Organizational Management and Microsoft Office certification study groups, writing articles, and conducting workshops and other speaking engagements. She can be reached at info@mrhenterprises.com.

Spot the Difference

There are 5 differences, can you spot them?