

Walking the talk

In his second article on putting finance on the map, **David Parmenter** extols the virtues of networking with colleagues, and gives some tips on how to prepare for a presentation

In last month's article, I argued that one needs to manage the perception of the finance team's contribution. This month I address some new areas.

Network within the firm

Only fools believe one's achievements speak for themselves. Walk about more – encourage the management and financial accountants, accounts payable staff and so forth to spend more time on proactive visits. Spend time adding value to the senior management team by helping them to understand the business. Ways of doing this include:

- * Use morning or afternoon break times for networking with budget holders and other stakeholders. See working through a coffee break as a lost opportunity rather than a badge of honour.
- * Invite new staff from major subsidiaries or departments to call in when they are next in the head office.
- * Consider running events where the finance team organises a coffee break to raise funds for a local charity, and budget holders donate a dollar or so and enjoy some hospitality at the finance team's office. You have scored a goal by just organising such an event.
- * Ensure that you talk positively to others. Popular people are seldom the fountain of negativity – so learn to keep your negative thoughts private.
- * No matter how much pressure you are under,

learn to smile whenever someone comes to your desk. This needs plenty of practice as the corporate accountant has more deadlines than most head office staff.

Be great on your feet

Far too often the accountant will short-change themselves by 'under cooking' their preparation and practice time before giving a presentation.

Being great on your feet is a skill you need to master in order to be a great corporate accountant. I will assume that you have attended a presentation skills course, a prerequisite to delivering bulletproof presentations. The speed of delivery, voice levels, use of silence and getting the audience to participate are all techniques that you need to be familiar with and comfortable using.

There are at least 25 rules for a good presentation which I have discussed in my recent book, *Winning CFOs: Implementing and Applying Better Practices*. I set out a few for you to consider:

- 1 At least 10 to 20% of your slides should be high-quality photographs, some of which will not even require a caption.
- 2 Read *Presentation Zen* by Garr Reynolds, *Slide:ology* by Nancy Duarte and *Enchantment* by Guy Kawasaki.
- 3 Use Kawasaki's '10/20/30 rule' for a sales pitch presentation. Have 10 slides that last no more than 20 minutes and ensure all text is no smaller than 30pt in size.

NEXT STEPS

- 1 Aim to have a coffee break with a peer, colleague or stakeholder at least twice a week
- 2 Send me an email and I will send you a copy of my 25 rules for a good presentation
- 3 Attend a 'train the trainers' course to take your presentations to the next level
- 4 Read the books featured in this article
- 5 Observe how the successful people in your organisation dress and replicate this

- 4 Bring theatrics into your presentation, use memorable props, be active and have a bit of fun. This will fully engage your audience.
- 5 Practise your delivery. The shorter the presentation, the more you need to practise. An important pitch to the board should be practised more than 10 times, for example. ■

David Parmenter is a writer and presenter on measuring, monitoring and managing performance



LOOK A MILLION DOLLARS

If you look a million dollars, then you will feel like a million dollars. Note that most of your organisation's successful managers actually look successful. Observe them and create a look of 'success' that you are comfortable with. Far too often I see corporate accountants apparently proud about how little they spend on their wardrobe. It could be said that quality business attire and a well-groomed appearance are 'tickets to the game'.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.davidparmenter.com



www.davidparmenter.com/courses

