

Nine Ways to Wow A Bilingual Audience

By Patrick Leroux



Since I live in La belle Province de Quebec, I am asked several times each year to present in both French and English. Here are a few tips I've learned on how to make the best bilingual presentations.

- 1. Adapt:** Learn a few words in the native tongue of the audience. Use them especially at the beginning (great way to establish rapport) and at the closing of your presentation. It's very important to practice the pronunciation however.
- 2. Vocabulary:** Think like a well-educated person but speak as if you are speaking to 6th graders. Avoid using complex words; instead, use simple vocabulary.
- 3. Slow down:** Please, give us a break! I have been told on many occasions! Don't forget that translators have to understand and then repeat what you are saying. It is not beneficial if your audience can only catch one out of every three words you are saying. No wonder they don't laugh when they are supposed to!
- 4. Outline:** Prepare an outline of your presentation and give it to the translators when you arrive. Since there are almost always two, make two copies. They will be able to follow your presentation much more easily.
- 5. Articulate:** Articulate much more than you usually would. Exaggerate a little. Most of the time people understand the words you are saying, they just don't understand your pronunciation.
- 6. Animation:** Use more gestures than usual. Tell your stories as if you were reliving them. If they don't understand all your words, at least they will understand the images you create.
- 7. Visuals:** Have your slides or overheads made in both languages. For example, on the right side you may have it in English and on the left side in Spanish.
- 8. Don't worry:** If you forget or don't know one or two words in their language. Ask the audience members to help you. They will be more than happy to assist. It also demonstrates that you are humble and arrogant.