OPCD Podcast: Episode 21 - “Content Tips for Business Presentations” (3/5/2015)
Interview with Ms. Melissa Voynich, Professional Development Communications Coordinator for the Office of Professional and Career Development, Harbert College of Business

Voiceover: So business presentations: what’s that all about? Turns out that’s going to cover a lot of the interaction you have in the professional world. But no worries, if it’s not one of your strong points yet, we’re here to help!

Last week we took a closer look at how to brush up your business communication and today we’re kind of zooming in on a very specific area that falls into that category. Mrs. V is back with us and, as the professional development communications coordinator for the OPCD, she’s talking us through the importance of, and how to gain, strong business presentation skills.

M. Voynich: The thing about business presentations is you should always be prepared to give them and you should always be prepared to continue working on them. At most any job you’re going to be tasked with pitching an idea. That’s a sales presentation. It might be a short one but it is essentially a persuasive presentation. Providing information about yourself? Well, an informative presentation - that’s basically what you’re doing if you’re attending one of the OPCD career fairs. You have three minutes to give the most persuasive information to the recruiter that’s listening to you. So you need to be prepared to provide something that is informative in content and persuasive in delivery.

Voiceover: And we’ll be delving into both of those factors. This week we’re focusing on content and what better place to begin than the beginning? The first thing that you say will set the tone for how the rest of the speech will go.

M. Voynich: At the very beginning of the presentation, always have an attention getting introductory statement. And the way you make a presentation grab the audience’s attention really matters. So think about the audience’s needs and why they would be interested in the presentation that you’re giving. And then start with something like that.

Voiceover: Needing a little help figuring out how to command the attention of the group?

M. Voynich: Start with a joke relating to the topic. Start with an interesting statistic or start with an interesting question for the audience to think about.

Voiceover: In terms of what not to do: unfortunately, the quickest way to lose everyone’s attention is quite often our go-to statement for a speech starter.

M. Voynich: The least interesting way to start a presentation is by saying “Hello, my name is ______, I’m a major in ______.”
**Voiceover:** And when it comes to developing the body of your presentation, keep what we talked about last week in mind. You’re audience will hear you no matter what you say, but what you’re wanting them to do is listen and there’s a simple way to help that along.

**M. Voynich:** When you are writing a presentation you should relate your points to the audience. Everything that you say should be seen through their eyes. You might be the expert on a subject but you need to convey that to the audience by making it relate to them. What would they find interesting about what you’re trying to say.

**Voiceover:** If all of this is sounding like it’s easier said than done, a simple place to start is checking out how the experts handle it.

**M. Voynich:** Another way to really work on your presentation skills would be to watch other successful presentations. They’re available for free online so go searching regarding your topic and find other speakers who have skills that you find intriguing.

If you’re stumped about finding these videos of successful speakers, then come and see me. I’m happy to help you out and provide you with video links of excellent speakers.

**Voiceover:** That’s also a great tip for learning the ins and outs of presentation delivery which is something we’ll be talking more about that next week. I really appreciate Mrs. V spending time with us today and if you’d like to find out more from her check out Lowder 101 to make an appointment. It’s never too early to start working on a skill like this and it’s one of the quickest ways to start looking the part of the professional. We’ll be back next time with more on that and till then, hope you have an awesome rest of your week. See ya!