Interview with Ms. Melissa Voynich, Professional Development Communications Coordinator for the Office of Professional and Career Development, Harbert College of Business

**Voiceover:** We’re picking up where we left off last week here on the Harbert College OPCD podcast. A dynamic delivery is a must when it comes to successful business presentations and we’ve got a few tips that’ll help get you there. Stick around!

So you know we talked about watching the professionals as a way of improving your own presentation skills. We’re back with Mrs. V this week and as the OPCD’s Professional Development Communications Coordinator, she explains how this tip can make a big difference, in more ways than one.

**M. Voynich:** When you’re watching professional presentations, you can watch for both content and delivery. Be aware of how the speaker starts their presentation, how they grab the audiences attention. That’s an important part of content. And then watch the speaker. Do they walk around the room? Do they have notes? How do they use their visual aid? That’s all an important part of delivery.

**Voiceover:** Once you’ve got a few ideas there, it’s time to throw them into the mix and start practicing.

**M. Voynich:** One of the best ways to do that is also the hardest. Don’t practice in front of a mirror. Practice in front of a real, live audience. Your friends are going to be some of your toughest audience members and they will also provide you with some of your best critique for things you can do to make your speaking better.

**Voiceover:** This is also where the next tip for better delivery comes in. Practice sessions are a good time to learn how to work off a few notes as opposed to a fully written out speech.

**M. Voynich:** One thing that every speaker should pay attention to in their delivery is how they’re using notes and a note card. I would strongly recommend, for professional presentations, never have a sheet of paper up there with you. It is too tempting to read off the sheet of paper, and then your speech (spoken in a monotone voice) “comes across sounding like this.” A little bit monotone, a little bit too fast. So have a notecard up there with you so that you have something to rely on, just in case you completely lose your train of thought.

**Voiceover:** So what’s the best way to keep that notecard concise?

**M. Voynich:** Use only key words, not full sentences. That way you’ll have something to refer back to but you won’t be tempted to read the entire presentation.
**Voiceover:** Now here’s where it may get harder for most of us - you’ve managed to get through the prep and practice but now it’s time for the feedback. This again is one of those that can apply to both presentation content and delivery.

**M. Voynich:** In order to truly improve your speaking skills you need to be open, as a speaker, to taking critique, taking constructive criticism. We have so many professionals here in the OPCD, and also around the campus, that are happy to help and provide you feedback on a presentation. But it’s really important that you’re open to, not just hearing that feedback, but listening to it.

**Voiceover:** And making changes based on that listening is what will make you a better speaker in the long run. If you’re finding that you have questions or need feedback on anything we’ve talked about, Mrs. V is available by appointment. Just stop into Lowder 101.

**M. Voynich:** If they’re not feeling confident in an aspect of their communication, then come and meet with me about it. I’m always happy to be a sounding board.

**Voiceover:** A couple of the hints and tips we’ve discussed focus on specifically presentation content or presentation delivery. But several apply to your speech as a whole. And always remember to think about your presentation in that way - as a whole. Good content is key and delivery is important, but in the end they have to come together to form a complete and effective finished product.

**M. Voynich:** They really are intertwined. You can write a great presentation, but if you don’t have the confident delivery to go with it then your great presentation might not be that great.

**Voiceover:** If you’d like to find out more be sure to check out the two previous episodes of this podcast on itunes and stop into Lowder 101 if you’ve got questions. Thanks so much to Mrs. V for hanging out with us and I’ll see you back here next week on the OPCD podcast. See ya then!