

## **Church of the IESNA**

Their reaction was instant and looked unanimous to me. “How many of you feel that the lighting industry is experiencing an accelerated pace of change” was my question. It was preceded by qualifying the experience level of this large group of lighting professionals. Almost all had been baptized into the lighting industry for over 10 years. They weren’t just sprinkled, they were fully immersed believers. They had come to what amounted to an evangelism course. How do we mentor and effectively preach the gospel of lighting? Quickening dramatic change in our industry heightens the sense of urgency since new information and skills are required now. This is a need and an opportunity.

Nearly 100 were gathered here to share ideas about how to help their local IES chapters grow. How do we deliver needed education in an engaging and meaningful way that will pack the pews and keep them coming back? What do we need to do to convey the excitement inherent in the art and science of lighting? Fred Oberkircher, our IES president and one of the finest ministers of this message asked me to join him at this event. We addressed this group at the Leadership Forum during the 2009 Annual Conference.

A serious concern raised frequently at and often since the 2006 IESNA Centennial Celebration was that our leaders are aging (most of them gracefully) and will soon be less active in our society. To continue my church analogy, the health of a church is measured in large part by age demographics. Without a youth group and/or converts organizations die. Where will our new disciples of lighting come from? If we measured the health of the IES by its youth group, how healthy would we appear?

One reason that mega churches are successful and growing is that they have shown how their message is relevant to the congregation. The challenge for pastors and priests is similar to what lighting presenters, trainers and educators face. When presenting to a group you must deliver valuable and immediately useful information in a short timeframe. Ideally this will be presented in a compelling and captivating way. The issue of effective presentations affects all denominations including the church of the IES. Quality educational opportunities are critical to perpetuating our story and attracting new blood to populate our ranks.

My charge at the Leadership Forum was to “How to mentor effective educators in our Sections and help motivate those involved in the coordinating and delivery process”. A secondary aspect was “How to put together a course for maximum effect.” When I started the presentation it was with a few questions asked in addition to whether the attendees were experiencing an accelerated pace of change. Each of these questions was followed by suggestions on how to resolve the concern as noted below.

Are you having a problem getting good speakers?

- Engage with local AIA, USGBC, AEE chapters to share quality presenters.
- Call other IES chapters for recommendations.
- Local NALMCO members can address retrofit/relighting topics.
- Look to your own Board of Directors for knowledgeable speakers.
- Manufacturer representatives may be providing CEU content and some excel

Have you experienced boring presenters and/or canned content?

- Ask presenter where they have presented before and who can you contact?
- Ask the reference if the content was commercial.
- Ask if the audience was interested and engaged.
- Ask if they would have this speaker back again.
- Prepare a speakers document stating your expectations for their content.

Are you uncomfortable presenting?

- This skill is worth the investment of time and effort.
- Chapter meetings are an opportunity to sharpen your skill and enhance your credibility.
- Local Carnegie, Covey & Toastmaster organizations can help with techniques.
- Sincerity and knowledge trump style. Schtick, humor and enthusiasm help but a sincere presenter with information to share can be more substantive.

There were 10 presentation tips that were elaborated on...

- Know your audience & meet as many before the presentation as possible.
- Encourage interaction & questions.
- Qualify attendees by asking them questions.
- Keep the lights bright and the room cool.
- Move through the room if possible rather than stand in one spot.
- Watch audience response and pace accordingly. If the cell phones come out then it is time to step up the pace.
- Send out meeting notices and follow up with phone calls before the meeting to confirm attendance. Once people have verbally committed they are more likely to show up.
- Smile, be honest and humble.
- Over prepare content and set-up early.
- Be respectful of your allotted time and rehearse.

New Resources were discussed...

- [www.articulate.com](http://www.articulate.com) (online training tool for narrated PowerPoint)
- [www.instanteffects.com](http://www.instanteffects.com) (makes PowerPoint look animated and new)
- Dale Carnegie Presentation Classes and their Audiobook “Stand and Deliver” helps build confidence and speaking skills.
- Why PowerPoints Suck, a book by Rick Altman identifies why this decades old tool can be boring and ineffective. He offers solutions to enhance your slides.
- Papershow is a simple tool for writing on your PowerPoints in real time. A USB device connects to your PC and allows you to draw and make notes on the screen.

These “Hot Topics” were identified for future meetings...

- Solid State Lighting/New Technology
- Energy & Energy Legislation
- Rebates & Tax Incentives
- LEED & Sustainable Design
- Control Strategies
- ARRA
- Retrofit, Relighting & Audits

And lastly, lighting can be exciting if...

- The speaker is passionate
- The topic is interesting to the audience
- The presentation is informative and targets the knowledge level and skill sets of the attendees

This is a call to action. We who believe in this organization need to spread the word. Volunteer, teach, sign up members and let our enthusiasm be communicable. I cannot count the times I have heard the comments and seen the evidence to support the fact that people do not leave the lighting industry. They may stray but ultimately they don't depart from it. Our mission is to get them interested, for us to convey what drew us to lighting so that they see that attraction through our eyes and actions.