

## Handling Hostile/Difficult/Troubling Questions

When handling hostile questions, do not get defensive. Doing so will damage your credibility and only encourage the other person. Maintain an attitude of respect, and stay cool and in control. Attempt to defuse the hostile questioner with respect and goodwill. Never give the impression that you think a question is stupid or irrelevant, even if it clearly is.

### Key points

- Take your time before answering a difficult question. Listen carefully. Don't strike back at a hostile question. Be diplomatic and keep your cool.
- Assist nervous questioners—Encourage, praise and thank.
- Don't let an audience member's question become a speech. After a reasonable period of time, ask what the question is. If the person keeps going, you may find audience members asking the questioner, "What's your question?"
- Never embarrass or insult a questioner. If a questioner is being abusive, offensive, or threatening, suggest that they talk to you after the presentation.
- If possible, recognize questioners by name.
- Control your body language. Looking bored, annoyed, impatient, or angry sends a negative message and can damage your credibility.