

## Stand Up

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**Y**our lips move, but they can't hear what you say. Ever feel that way? Yeah, me too. Why is that? Is it because what we have to say is not important? Or is it perhaps in the way we present it?

My son asked me to bring him to a school board meeting the other night. His senior class had some issues they wanted to bring up before the board. When it was their

turn on the agenda, the class spokesman began his presentation. I looked around the room. No one, not the board or even the few in the audience, gave him their undivided attention. They were looking at the floor, out the window, at their papers (you get the idea). Then it hit me. I rolled my chair close to him and whispered "Stand up boy". When he stood, it was as if someone had turned on the lights and everyone could see what was going on in front of them. He had everyone's undivided attention. They looked and listened to him and what he had to say, and paid no attention to the squeak of the janitors bucket out in the hallway. As a matter of fact, someone actually got up and shut the door so the noise outside did not distract from the presentation inside. Amazing! Something as simple as standing up focused everyone's attention.

I remember attending Town Board meetings when I was running a plant. I would give the sewer updates and attempt to answer questions, but felt no one was really listening. Of course I never stood up. That would make me too easy of a target. Now, when I attend your board meetings, I honestly feel that my, actually your, message is getting across. Why, because I'm some sort of expert who has something really interesting to say? No. I'm saying the same things you have been saying for a while. It's because I'm standing, either in front of the room or at my seat, but standing and addressing the board and the people in the audience. They really don't have much of a choice but to pay attention.

I've noticed that during breakout sessions at our in-service training, the facilitators are always urging people with questions or comments to stand up. Why? It's all coming together for me now. The people that remain seated tend to mumble in their coffee and can't be heard, especially by those furthest away from them. There is also nothing for people to focus on, consequently drawing attention away from the speaker/question. By standing, people have something that draws their attention. A physical body to focus on. Your voice also carries better when you stand, allowing you to be heard easier.

How we present our information is just as important as the information itself. Give your audience a body to focus on, not just a voice. 💧