

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

There are several steps you should consider before and during the questioning session.

1. Make sure you really know what question is being asked.
 - a. Instead of having the person repeat the question, you repeat the question back to them.
 1. Utilizing this method, you will truly understand the inquiry.
 2. Everyone in the audience will hear and understand the question being asked.
 3. You also have an opportunity to word the question in such a way as to lean towards your own viewpoint. (you must be subtle)
2. Congratulate the questioner on the question they propose.
 - a. This will make the person asking the question feel good about his contribution.
 - b. This should encourage others to ask questions.
 - c. Examples
 - "That's an excellent question."
 - "I'm frequently asked this question, I'm glad it was asked here."
3. Before you respond to the question, pause and think of a good, concise answer.
 - a. There is nothing wrong with a few moments of silence. You don't have to constantly be talking.
 - b. Pausing prevents initial rambling, where you think of the best answer half-way through your response.
 - c. By pausing it at least appears that you are thinking, and not just delivering a programmed answer.
 - d. There are some questions that you will be asked that you can't actually answer. By pausing you can think what part of the question you can answer. Or the question can be a vague frustration that the questioner merely wants to get off his chest.

Example: at the Lions Club at Oak View, a man asked;
 "What can we do about the courts that let convicted murderers
 out within 7 years?"

Why is this person asking this question? Frustration? Concern?
 What is the real question being asked? Your stance on law and order?

It would be very important to rephrase the question and
 get to the real reason the question was asked.

Then you can give your view to that question and go ahead.

But really, you have virtually nothing to say about why
 7 years etc.

d. Contemplating for a moment also gives you time to figure out
 what your audience would like to hear.

1. If your view is consistent with the view you think they
 possess, great, then play it up big.
2. If your view is inconsistent with the view you think they
 possess, then you may want to play down your response.
 I'm not advocating that you abandon your principles!!!
 Definately not!

Consider the question that was asked at the Oak View Lions,
 "What is your opinion of Gun Control?"

I think it is safe to assume that the group was very much
 against gun control legislation.

First, let your audience know that you understand and
 sympathize with their feelings.

In this case you would emphasize their right to
 bear arms, etc.

Secondly, you might want to explain what the problem
 is. That is, the problem with assassinations, and
 how something should be done.

Finally, If you disagree with the proposed method of solving
 the problem, then say so, In the Lions Club you
 basically skiped the first and second step and went
 to this step by saying that you disagreed with
 state laws and that we needed Federal guidlings.

This method could be used for questions of abortion and bussing.

4. When you begin to answer the question, make the answer concise and simple. One easily remembered.
5. Be ready with a couple of pertinent questions in the event that no one asks any.
 - a. People may be afraid to ask questions so you will need to supply the "ice breaker."
 - b. Another method of breaking the ice that should be successful is to ask the audience for their opinion on some pending problem.
 - 1.. This lets the audience know that you really do appreciate their opinions.
 2. It allows you to learn just what the "typical" voters are thinking.
6. If the question being asked is too difficult or too complicated to give a simple response, then acknowledge the problem. For example, back to the question of law and order. It seems impossible to answer this in 2-3 minutes. So you might want to start by saying, "This is a very difficult question and we could spend hours discussing it. I will try to give a few of the ideas I have on ***_____." (or something along this line.)
7. Sometimes you will have to be fair to your audience in the people you select to ask their questions.
 - a. Occasionally you will have one or two people trying to dominate the question and answering session. Be nice to them, but let them know that there are others who have questions you wish to answer.
8. At the close of the question and answering session thank the audience for their good questions, the opportunity to attend their meeting, the hope you can return at some future date, etc.