Survey after survey shows that the general public doesn’t know what a credentialed veterinary nurse/technician does. Even worse, most don’t know we are educated individuals who have a definite roll in veterinary medicine. One way to remedy this is through self-promotion. National Veterinary Technician Week provides the perfect opportunity to educate the public about what we do. You may be asking yourself, “Where or how do I do such a thing?” Think about educational institutions, clubs, and organizations in your area and volunteer to speak to them. Great groups to contact would be humane societies, adoption or rescue groups, and schools.

Statistically speaking, most of us are not seasoned public speakers. While it is a rather daunting experience, especially if you do not know where to start or how to put a presentation together, we’ve compiled some tips that should give you a good start. We’ve included the main components of any presentation, vocal and gesture suggestions, and the use of graphics to enhance your presentation.

Every presentation should have three distinct parts: an opening, a body, and a closing. The opening sets the stage for your presentation, the body provides most of the information, and the conclusion ties everything together. The following are some pointers for each of these areas.

Visit the following videos for more ideas on building your presentation!

- Sandra’s You Better Believe it Video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBTmKTVhms&app=desktop
- Andy Roark: Sharpen Your Axe Video: www.partnersforhealthypets.org/Sharpen_Your_Axe.aspx
- DVM360: Coffee-Couch-Conversations with Veterinary Technicians

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The Opening
The opening should tell the audience who you are and what you plan to share with them. One way to open a presentation is to answer this question, “What makes you an expert on this subject?” To answer that question, just talk a little bit about yourself. Explain how you became interested in veterinary medicine and why you chose to be a veterinary nurse/technician. Sharing a personal story provides the audience with an inside look at you, while helping you relax during the presentation. Follow up with a brief overview of what you will be covering, three or four points that you want to cover.

The Body
Spend some time collecting all the information you need and then tailor your presentation to the needs of the audiences. The body of your presentation will expand on the three or four points you mentioned in the opening. For example, if you are speaking to a career day audience, cover the education involved in becoming a veterinary technician, share where they can find work in the field of veterinary medicine, and finally touch on the salary they can expect. You could exchange those three points with, where veterinary technology programs are located across the country and how the job market looks. When speaking to a younger group, you could talk about the kind of practices available or share a day in the life of the veterinary medical team. It is really up to you what you want to include in your presentation, but remember to keep it to three or four main points.

The Conclusion
To conclude, briefly revisit the three or four main points you covered in the body of your presentation, providing a one or two sentence description of each point. Then open the floor by inviting questions. It is usually better to say, “Do you have any questions about what we discussed today?” rather than asking for general questions. This will cut down on feeling obligated to advise people on their personal animal issues. However, this tactic doesn’t often work well with smaller children, so be ready to answer anything that may come out of their mouths! After the question and answer period, thank your audience for allowing you to talk with them and invite them to your business for a tour. This encourages people to use your services and ask more questions if they are interested. Be ready to hand out business cards and answer questions when the program is completely over. Most people are shy about asking questions in front of a crowd, and will ask you personally after the program.

Gestures and Vocal Variety
Gestures and vocal variety are two key ingredients to keeping the attention of your audience. Gestures, for the most part, should be natural and relaxed. However, if you are talking to a large group of people, you need to make those natural gestures large enough to be seen from the back of the room. For example, when using the gesture of holding your hands out in front of you like you are cradling a small puppy or kitten, you usually have your hand close to your body and about waist high. For a large audience, you need to bring that gesture up to your chest and away from your body so that everyone can see what you are doing.

Vocal variety is where we pitch our voice higher or lower, softer or louder, or vary the rate in which you speak. This lends drama to your presentation and keeps the audience listening. You never want to speak in a monotone at the same rate. When that happens, a five minute talk seems like 30 and your audience will show you they are bored by fidgeting and rustling around.
Graphics also include props such as an instrument, an anatomical model, or even a live animal. They are especially effective with small groups and young children. If you plan on using a prop, make sure it can withstand being passed around or handled and that it can’t inadvertently injure your audience. A note about using live animals as a prop: Expect the unexpected. Have plenty of paper towels and disinfectant on hand to clean up messes, and a carrier in which to place the animal in case it gets nervous.

Hopefully this has helped you feel better about making a public presentation. By constructing your presentation with a definite opening, body and conclusion you will better educate your audience and leave a lasting impression about you as a professional.

Plus by having a set pattern to your core presentation you will be able to adjust your presentation to almost any situation in which you are asked to speak.

PLUS, when you begin offering presentations to other organizations, you can place this valuable skill on your resume!