

Effective Presentation Skills

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By the end of this presentation you will be able to:

- List the questions you must answer in order to prepare your best presentation.
- Describe why they're important.
- Explain how to choose a style and structure that works for you and your audience.
- Prepare, practice and rehearse your presentations effectively.

I have seen a lot of presentations...

Most people:

- Begin well.
- Organise and present their main content acceptably.
- Don't look anywhere near as nervous as they feel.

I have seen a lot of presentations...

Most people:

- Fail to tell their audience why they should listen.
- Use too few slides.
- Go over time.
- Fail to give a summary, conclusion or recommendations.

‘Preparation is the enemy
of fear.’

British Army

Preparation: six questions

- Why?
- Who?
- Where?
- When?
- What?
- How?

Why?

- Your audience's objective or reason for listening.
- Fights 'So what?'
- Helps them make decisions or take actions.

Who?

- Status: seniority, knowledge and experience, background, age, gender, culture, needs...
- Receptivity: how much are they going to accept what you say? (Less receptive equals more preparation.)
- (Number: how many of them are there?)

Where?

- Location and venue.
- Layout: cinema style, board room, U-shape, café style. They all work but it's nice to be forewarned.
- Amenities: air, heat, light, comfort, refreshments.
- Facilities and equipment: test it out and make sure you know how it works.

When?

- How long to present? Always plan to under run.
- How long to prepare? Spend at least 10 minutes preparing (including rehearsal) for every minute of the presentation.
- Time of day. Beware the graveyard slot: people need to sleep or do something active after they're eaten.

What?

- Main content: the middle.
- This is the bit you know.
- You'll probably do it right.
- Let the material structure itself: chronology, normal practice, cream at the top, keep it short and simple.
- Try brainstorming and mind maps to find fresh ways into stale or complex material.

How?

- Nerves
- Style
- Structure
- Prompts
- Visual Aids
- Voice
- Appearance
- Questions
- Rehearsal

Nerves

- Everybody good gets nervous.
- Trust your nerves: they are telling you the presentation is important.
- Reframe them as excitement or as a will to succeed.
- Prepare and rehearse.
- Breathe.

Style

- You already have a style: use it.
- Words and sentences like you use every day.
- Don't try to be funny. Try to be yourself.

Structure

Write your presentation in this order

1. Objective.
2. Middle or main content.
3. End or summary, conclusions and recommendations.
4. Beginning or introduction.
5. Questions.

Be prepared to re-write it!

Prompts

- Short bullet points. Key words. No complete sentences.
- Put all your prompts onto your PowerPoint slides.
- *If you have to hold something*, put prompts onto numbered index cards on treasury tags.
- *They're for you.* Your audience will understand them when you explain them.

Visual aids

- Simple fonts, illustrations, graphs, **colours**.
- Use fancy stuff, like clip art or animations, very sparingly and for emphasis.
- 3 to 7 bullet points per slide.
- 3 to 7 words per line.
- New or different VAs wake people up.



Voice

- Louder and slower than your normal rate.
- Vary pitch, pace and volume.
- Over emphasise.

Stance and gesture

- Minimise fiddling: give yourself nothing to fiddle with.
- But... allow yourself to move a bit.
- Wear comfy shoes and try to weight your feet evenly.
- Big, intended slow movements look confident.

Eye contact

- Look at the foreheads of all your audience members.
- Don't stare. Don't flit.
- Break eye contact to look at the big screen: they'll follow you.

Appearance

- Be comfortable.
- Less (skin) is more (professional).
- Dark colours are read as businesslike.
- ‘Dress like your audience but wear better labels’.

Questions

- Thank or acknowledge each questioner.
- Repeat or paraphrase their question.
- Answer, defer or refer each question.
- Check the questioner's satisfaction with your answer.
- Thank them again.

Rehearsal

- Speak out loud with all visual aids and handouts.
- In front of a clock.
- In front of a mirror.
- In front of a friend.
- In front of a video camera. And watch the video!

Summary, conclusions and recommendations

- There are six questions.
- Answer them all. Not just *What?*
- Try to hold off on the final content, style, structure, prompts and visual aids until you know the audience and their objectives.
- Make sure your presentation has an end: that people leave knowing what to do.
- Prepare and rehearse as much as you can.

Final thoughts

- Your audience wants you to succeed.
- You don't have to be a great presenter to give a great presentation.
- You look much more confident than you feel.
- Find friends to practise on.

Questions?