

## Presentation tips and techniques

It is a myth that good presentations are made only by people born with immense skill and *the 'gift of the gab'*. All of us can learn the secrets used by experts to become both competent and confident when speaking to either a large audience, chairing a meeting or making face to face presentations.

Here are a few simple tips and techniques which experienced presenters use to establish professionalism and credibility when communicating with clients.

### Small group presentations

Audience sizes of between five and twenty are most common. You are actually 'on show' as the distance between you and the audience is fairly small and it is important to get them on your side straight away.

Speaking to your audience at the right 'level' is essential to maintain a good interest level throughout. Researching the audience and analyzing their needs will enable you to include the information they will find most interesting.

Before you start to write your presentation consider its aims and objectives: "What do I want the audience to do and how do I want them to feel after I finish my presentation?" This question is the most important starting point for success. By concentrating on your audience you will then be in a position to influence them effectively.

The power of visual images is one of the most important skills a powerful presenter can learn. People learn and remember most through mental images not words.

By carefully using language which 'paints pictures' you can make boring and technical subjects interesting and easy to understand.

### Presenting to a large audience

However daunting you may find public speaking, you can calm your nerves by using a process of 'self-visualization'. Prior to speaking you visualize the presentation having just finished and the audience clapping and cheering. Picture them on their feet, hear the applause and the cheering, feel the warmth of feeling they hold for you, you can almost smell the success as you shake hands with your admiring followers. This has the effect of implanting positive subconscious messages in your mind. These will counteract negative thoughts which are the main causes of 'presentation stress'. Keep imagining your presentation going well

### Essential preparation

Practice makes perfect and rehearsing your presentation is the key to a great start and a relaxed delivery. Depending on the importance of the meeting you should look at spending at least 10-15 min preparation for every minute you speak. The following is a checklist which will help to both improve your presentation preparation and calm your nerves.

### Presentation checklist

- Practice where you will be presenting

- Devise your presentation yourself and make it memorable
- Rehearse until it becomes second nature and you can then concentrate on your audience
- Run the presentation through your head repeatedly
- Say it aloud whenever you find yourself alone
- Rehearse using more energy than you would on the day
- See what you look like doing it
- Practice in front of other people and seek honest feedback

### Definition of a presentation

**A structured, prepared and speech-based means of communicating information, ideas, or arguments to a group of interested people in order to inform or persuade them**

No presentation will achieve its desired level of success unless the presenter gets the audience to:

1. **HEAR** what we have to say (or see what we have to show them)
2. **UNDERSTAND** what we mean
3. **AGREE** with what they have heard
4. **TAKE ACTION** in accordance with our over all objectives

It is important to make your presentation last in the audiences minds because people will forget:

**38% in 2 days, 65% in 8 days, 75% in 30 days**

**These are the points to remember if you want people to remember your presentation:**

- The first and last impressions made to them are both positive and favorable
- Points are made of special interest to them
- Giving an overview before moving onto the points of detail
- More than one sense is stimulated e.g. speech and visual aids
- You seek their feedback
- Talking about their problems and requirements

**There are many factors to take into account when communicating effectively and the following are the essentials of good communication**

1. Unless someone hears what you have to say, there is no communication
2. You do not communicate with just words, the whole person that you are comes with them
3. Talk to people in terms of their own experience and they will listen to you
4. When you have difficulty in getting through to people, it is a sign that your own communication and thinking is confused, not theirs
5. When you fail to communicate it is not the words that need straightening out, it is the thoughts behind them
6. Know what your listener expects to see and hear before you start to talk
7. Your communication is always more valuable if you appeal to the values and aspirations of your audience

**A good presentation has a clearly defined structure and, if followed can allow anyone to present in a relaxed, clear and interesting way. Excellent presentations will always follow this structure:**

## **1. Beginning**

*"Tell 'em what your going to tell 'em"*

- Getting attention
- Building rapport
- Statement of theme
- Audience needs

## **2. Middle**

*"Tell 'em"*

- Points to be made
- How will they benefit the audience?
- Support material, examples, third party references, visual aids
- Possible audience objections

## **3. End**

*"Tell 'em what you've told 'em" .*

- Reiterate the theme

- Summary of points
- Closing words and commitment

The deciding factor any presentation is the answer to the following question:

*"Were my aims and objectives achieved? Did I get the audience to do/think/feel what I wanted them to?"*

## **Powerful PowerPoint presentation tips and techniques**

### **Maintain good eye contact.**

Scan the audience and establish constant eye contact. Only talk when you're looking at someone; work the whole room; a good rule of thumb is no more than two seconds on each member of the audience. And remember, never talk to the screen and turn your back on the audience.

### **Taking a stand.**

If the setup allows, stand on the left side of the room, or the left side from the audience's point of view, at a 45-degree angle to the room. This establishes a non-threatening stance and opens your body to the screen when you need to gesture or move.

### **Vary your speaking volume.**

When you practice in an empty room, adjust your voice level accordingly for a full room. Deliver the presentation just slightly above the conversational mode, louder than you think you should. As you increase volume, you automatically increase inflection.

### **Use pauses.**

Say a phrase and pause, then say a phrase and pause. Each pause gives you a chance to make eye contact, to breathe, or to take a moment to think. When you slow down, you gain control.

### **Don't read your presentation.**

When you write your presentation, make sure it's written for the ear - with shorter sentences, action verbs and simple grammar. Get comfortable with your material so you aren't dependent on notes or reading a script. If you use notes, keep them short, highlight points you want to make, and use them as memory joggers, not script.

### **Connect with your audience.**

Successful presenters enjoy their topic and share their enjoyment with the audience. Establish a personal connection with your audience. Example, if you know a person's name, use it when you refer to that person. Be enthusiastic about your subject - you won't get enthusiasm from people unless you *give* enthusiasm to them. You can't get a smile unless *you* smile first.

# Visual aids in PowerPoint presentations

Why use visual aids?

Research has shown that visual aids:

- **increase your persuasiveness**
  - Presenters using visuals conduct meetings in 28 percent less time; increase audience retention up to five times and get proposals approved twice as often.
- **heighten retention**
  - When visuals are added to an oral presentation, retention increases by about 10 percent.
  - Students learn vocabulary twice as well when the instructor uses visual aids.
- **improves understanding**
  - People comprehend about seven percent of information delivered verbally but they comprehend 87% when the information is delivered both verbally and visually.

## **Tips for successful visual aids**

1. Try to limit visuals to about 40 words and use large, bold letters that can easily be seen from the back of the room. Sans serif fonts such as Ariel and Comic Sans MS are more readable than serif faces such as Times New Roman. Feel free to use italics, boldfaces and colors to embellish points. And remember, consistency counts.

2. Your language should be punchy and concise with "you" appeal. Try "Opening Your Own Business" instead of "How to Open A Business." Condense paragraphs into sentences, sentences into phrases and phrases into key words. Use bullets to highlight key ideas. Avoid using full stops at the end of your bullets except at the end of quoted statements.

3. Use a pictures or designs to quickly and colorfully convey an idea. The advent of clip art has made conceptual visuals commonplace but don't throw in clip art just to have clip art.

4. Charts and graphs are useful to show relationships among variables at a glance. Whether you use a line, bar, pie, organizational, flow or table chart, remember to focus on the message, not the numbers. A descriptive title such as "Sales results show significant rises" will be much more effective than "Sales 2000." Using action words such as "grow," "decline" and "trend" effectively show change over time.

5. Once you have compiled your presentation, check it and double-check it. Little undermines your credibility faster than typos, misspellings and factual errors.

5. When your presentation is finished, it's time to start practicing. Pace yourself. The average time a slide should be on screen is 40 to 90 seconds. And keep in mind, the average attention time span of an audience can be as low as 8 minutes.

And one final way to ensure your messages leave the meeting room - have hard copies of your presentation available as handouts.

## **Helpful Hints**

- Keep your visuals simple. Avoid clutter. Use large, bold fonts.

- Check your presentation room beforehand.
- Use clip art judiciously.
- Proof-read and edit with care.
- Have hard copies of your visuals available as handouts.
- When making a PowerPoint presentation, have a backup of your visuals printed on transparency film to insure against unexpected equipment problems.

## Using transitions in PowerPoint presentations

Good transitions are critical to an effective presentation. They help tie your presentation together and make it flow smoothly from one idea to the next. Plus, transitions signal important ideas so your audience pays extra attention.

Transition effects also can be used with graphics such as tables, charts and graphs. You can add transitions and movement to individual slices of a pie chart, bars in a bar graph, rows in a table or levels of an organization chart.

PowerPoint offers you more control over the number of elements that you can apply transition effects to, easier access to transition effects and better preview capabilities, allowing you to try out various transition effects before applying them.

### Types of Transition Effects

- Blinds -- the new slide is unveiled in a series of horizontal or vertical rows, similar to the effect of opening the blinds of a window.
- Boxes -- the new slide "grows" from the middle of the previous slide, or grows inward from the edges of the screen.
- Checkerboards -- the new slide appears over the previous slide as a series of boxes.
- Dissolves - an advanced case of checkerboards, where the new screen is unveiled in numerous small boxes or other graphic elements.
- Wipes - the new slide replaces the previous slide from left to right, top to bottom, or diagonally.
- Fades through black - the first slide fades to black before the next slide is revealed.
- Splits - the new slide expands horizontally or vertically from the center of the screen.

- Builds - points in a text chart are highlighted one point at a time. This prevents your audience from reading ahead of you by focusing their attention on the point you're discussing and dimming previously introduced points.

### **Choosing the Right Transition Effect**

Your transition choices should be based on your message, your audience and the presentation environment (the computer hardware used to deliver the presentation and the length of the presentation itself).

Some tips to help you select the right transition effect for the right time:

1. Reflect your message. Your transitions should reflect the basic feeling of your presentation. Is your message intended to be entertaining, instructional or motivational? Should it be serious or light-hearted? Are you communicating good news or bad news?
2. Your presentation reflects your audience. Consider the formality of your presentation and the expectations of your audience.
3. Pay attention to the environment. Consider the level of technology you're using to deliver your presentation. Advanced transition effects add demands on the computer and can slow it down if you have included effects beyond its comfort level.
4. Presentation length should be considered part of the presentation environment. Transitional effects appropriate for short presentations become tiring during long presentations. Entertainment quickly turns to boredom and then annoyance when the same effects are used over and over.
5. Use them as pacing elements. Because transition effects can be applied to every slide or just individual slides within a presentation, you can use transitions as a pacing tool. Pacing involves chunking, or dividing, your presentation into smaller sections (similar to chapters in a book)