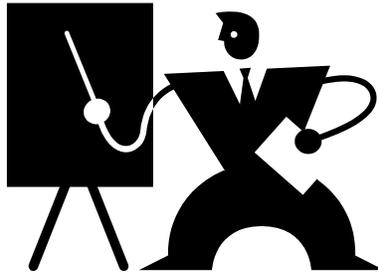


Giving Effective Presentations!



by

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Making presentations should be fun, but can be downright scary! In fact, they should be your opportunity to show off your skills and sell yourself in the process. Truth be told, not everyone is a natural at getting up in front of a group or audience and confidently addressing them. However, there are a few things that can help anyone give a great presentation. Mostly, it's planning, preparation and a bit of understanding.

Let's consider the understanding part first. In any audience there are basically four types of learners: the 'what' folks; the 'why' folks; the 'how' folks; and the 'questioners.' Each of these groups must be addressed during the presentation; otherwise, they will lose interest.

So, start off the presentation telling what will be presented, why the information is important, how the information will be given, and finally asking the questions. If you fail to address immediately the 'what' and the 'why' folks, they will become immediately disinterested. That is, the 'what' folks will be wondering what it's all about and the 'why' folks will be wondering why they should pay attention. But that's not all...

In addition to the four types of learners, there are basically three ways people absorb information: visually (seeing something), orally (hearing something), and kinesthetic (doing something). Interestingly, it's important not only to address these methods, but to address them in the right order or folks will lose interest.

Typically, it's best to give them something to do. Then, give them something to hear or listen to. Finally, give them something to look at or read. However, before you begin presenting you need to get yourself ready to perform.

So, the day of the presentation, make sure that you're in the proper frame of mind. Even while still at home begin visualizing your success. Visualizing is similar to a professional baseball player visualizing the trajectory of the ball even before they hit it. Okay, once you arrive at the location continue to repeat the visualizations. Try to hear, see, taste, feel and touch the success. Remember, you're trying to boost your self-confidence.

You want to feel self-confident, so that you can project self-confidence. Think about something that you have previously accomplished successfully. In particular, something that makes you feel especially proud. You should begin even before you enter the presentation room. It'll kick-start your internal system flooding it with endorphins, which are an instant confidence booster. Another words, get pumped!

When you begin presenting, stand with your weight well balanced on both feet, shoulders back, head high, chest out and hands clasped behind your back. Make sure to look around the room trying to look at everyone periodically. If it's a large room, look at the folks in the back frequently. There's a tendency to look at the folks in the front because it's easier to see them. However, if you look at the people way in the back, the folks up front still will feel as though you're looking at them. Let's step back and consider how we got here. Here's a list of things to consider:

GENERAL:

- Never turn down the opportunity to speak in front of a group. Practice is incredibly important! It's the key to improving and gaining confidence.
- Try to get feedback after your performance(s). Even consider handing out a simple critique sheet to your audience, so that they can provide you feedback. Collect and read their feedback with an open mind. Make any necessary adjustments. Don't be upset if there are negative responses or even lots of them. Remember, you asked! Besides, the idea is to make improvements.

- Join a speaking improvement group, such as the “Toastmaster’s” or volunteer to speak for charitable organizations. Perhaps your employer is in need of volunteer speakers to support company efforts. The point is, take advantage of every opportunity to improve.
- Try to find out in advance a little about your audience. It may help you better connect with them if you understand their interests, perceptions, expectations and backgrounds.
- Dress properly. A good rule-of-thumb is one level better than the audience. So, if they’re in casual attire, you should consider dressy casual. The exception is when you’re going for some particularly crazy or outlandish affect. However, make sure that the exception is appropriate for both the occasion and the audience.
- Addressing the ‘What’s’; ‘The ‘Why’s’; the ‘How’s’; and the ‘Questioners’. Prepare your presentation in sections. There should be three:

The beginning – The beginning is where you basically take care of the what’s, why’s, how’s, and questioners. Start off with an explanation of **what** they will here. Try to really get their attention. Statistics work particularly well towards this end. Next, state the objectives of the presentation which should tell **why** they should listen and **how** the information will be conveyed. Next, present them the questions that you will answer during the presentation. The stage is set.

The middle – This is the detailed information. It’s a good idea to organize the information into sections that correspond to the stated objectives. That should make it much easier to follow. Also, provide supporting evidence that proves any stated points, questions or arguments. Otherwise, the entire presentation will be entirely an opinion.

The end – Recap the major points made. Provide a summary of the things you’d really like them to remember. This is important because people tend to remember the things they’ve heard first and last. So, they’ll generally remember your objectives and your closing. This may do just fine! Lastly, ask them to take action. It could be doing something, buying something, trying something, etc. This is the time to ask. It’s time to close the deal!

PRACTICE:

- Study and know your subject well. You should be able to discuss it as though speaking to friends about your latest vacation. After all, you don’t need 3x5 cards or PowerPoint slide. You lived it!
- Practice at least 10 times, using video or audio tapes to record your practices. Watch or listen to them and make any necessary adjustments. Use checklist to when watching so you don’t miss anything.

PERFORMANCE

- Always start on time and quit on time. The audience will appreciate both.
- Breathe properly. This actually starts before you stand up to speak. Take several deep breathes through the nose and breath out slowly through the mouth. This can be extremely relaxing.
- Stand upright with your head held high to increase oxygen flow, which should better enable you to speak from the diaphragm. Speaking from the diaphragm enables better voice and sound projection.
- Try to use voice variations or inflection. Be visual using gestures and movements. Be dramatic and use pauses, vary the tempo and, if possible, move away from the podium or lectern

- Maintain eye contact, but make sure to look around at everyone, not just once but periodically. Pay attention to how they look. Their eyes may be sending you messages. More importantly, give them a message they'll remember. Remember, eye contact personalizes the experience and helps develop trust between you and your audience.
- Include humor, amusing anecdotes, examples, analogies, and statistics, when and if appropriate.
- If you want to use handouts, proceed with caution. If you provide someone something to read, they just might read it, instead of listening or paying attention to use. So, if it's only visual, provide it in advance. If it requires reading, consider distributing it after the presentation as a reference.
- Don't read from a manuscript or from text-laden PowerPoint slides. Use only general brief notes to serve as a memory jog. Reading implies that you're not well prepared and that you really don't care.
- If using PowerPoint, try to use visual slides only. Yes, that's no text! If you must use text, limit each slide to three or four lines of text each containing only three or four words. Again, this should be used as a memory jog, not as a prepared speech.
- Present with energy! Be enthusiastic! Remember, presentations usually are done to sell something. Whether it's an idea, a product or you, you must be enthusiastic. Otherwise, you can't expect the audience to be enthusiastic.
- Avoid "uh" or "ah" and "ya know" or "like". These are poor techniques used primarily as a pause. Practice will eliminate many of these tendencies and learning to simply pause instead of saying them will take care of the rest. It's okay to pause and can be particularly effective if done right.
- Use everyday language and speak conversationally. Avoid pomposity, colloquialisms, slang and jargon, unless of course one is needed to achieve a particular effect. Use jargon only if you're absolutely sure that your audience will understand it.

Typical presentation evaluation sheet:

Enter a number between 1 and 10 for each category. The highest total is 100.

- 1 ___ Opening: (captured audience attention)
- 2 ___ Objectives (made clear the reasons for the presentation)
- 3 ___ Key Points (consistent with the stated objectives)
- 4 ___ Supporting material (provided evidence/info to support key points)
- 5 ___ Level (spoke at a level that was easy to understand)
- 6 ___ Style (appropriate body language, good eye contact, etc,)
- 7 ___ Enthusiasm (energetic and/or exciting presentation)
- 8 ___ Vocal quality (good intonation & pitch, good use of inflection, good speaking rate)
- 9 ___ Summary (provided an overall summary of the presentations key points)
- 10 ___ Call to action (conveyed to audience what they should do, such as buy the product)