Formal Presentations

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Developing effective presentation skills is important for all. Whether you are searching for a job, working with an organization, or doing your own business; you will grow and succeed if you know how to present yourself and your knowledge. You might have very sound knowledge of your core subjects, but if you don't know how to present your knowledge before the interview panel, you will not likely be the first choice of the selection committee. If you are serving in academia, you will have to show your presentation skills in classrooms, in conferences, in seminars, etc. If you are in industry, you will have to show your presentation skills almost at every moment – while reporting to seniors or management, while training your juniors, while dealing with customers etc. If you are in politics, you are not likely to win the support of people unless you have the capability to convince and persuade them to vote for you.

Presentation is the art of sharing ideas, information or knowledge with a specific audience. A formal presentation always has a definite purpose. In the following sections you will learn different tips and techniques of making effective presentations.

Before the Presentation

Before you make actual presentation

Purpose
Defining purpose of the presentation will help you tailor the content and style of your presentation. The content, the language and style of a presentation to persuade will certainly differ from that of a presentation prepared to entertain people. What you are going to deliver and how are you going to deliver is determined by the why of the presentation.

Audience
A presentation is for the audience. Knowing about the target audience will help you organize the content and think about the style of delivery of the presentation. Citing from Bollywood or Hollywood to make your points may not interest to an audience comprising septuagenarians. On the other hand, an audience comprising teenagers will not take much interest in the examples from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, the Quran, etc. In a presentation on 'Stress Management' to computer professionals, using biological terminology will not help; you have to use layman's language here to make your points. Hence understanding and analyzing the audience before hand is a wise thing to do. Here are some important things to know about your prospective audience:

- ➢ their age group
- ➢ gender ratio
- ➢ their cultural, religious and educational background
- ➢ their profession
- ➢ their interests, likes and dislikes.
- ➢ approximate number
- ➢ their expectations from the presentation

The above information about the audience will help you tailor the content and style of your presentation.

Organization

Once the purpose is set and you have enough information about the audience, prepare the outline of the content and then organize it in the following manner:

1. **Introduction:** Introduction of a presentation is like the trailer of a film. Just like the trailer of a film significantly determines its success, the introductory part of a presentation determines whether your audience will take interest or not in the further proceedings. The introduction should be catchy and should grab the attention of the audience. To make it effective you may begin your presentation with a related story, related shocking data, by asking questions, etc. This will help you arouse interest in and prepare the audience to be with you during the main part of the presentation. Your introduction should set the agenda of the presentation.

2. **Body:** The major highlighted points in the introduction get expanded here. Use illustrations, graphical representations, audio-video clips, comparisons, contrasts, analysis, etc. to explain your points. The presented ideas and points should be logical and coherent.

3. **Conclusion:** All is well if end is well. The conclusion gives the final impression to the audience. Here you get another opportunity to impress your audience. You should put the same energy level here as you put in your introduction.

Here is a link of a very good video on 'How to Open and Close a Presentation. Type the following URL and watch
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yl_FJAOcFgQ

Preparation

Practice makes perfect. Once you have organized the content of the presentation, practice and rehearse so as to ensure that you do not forget any important point and that you do not make any mistake during the presentation. There is no substitute to practice. Practice, practice, practice!

Also, arrive early so as you can relax yourself and ensure that everything is okay. Check the venue, the projector and other audio visual aids before you actually begin your presentation.

Audio-Visual Aids

The audio-visual aids include handouts, white/black boards, flip charts, PowerPoint slides, charts, tables, graphs, pictures, audio-video clips, etc. Let the audience see what they will hear in the presentation. It will add to the effectiveness of your presentation. Present data in tabular and graphical form, use diagrams, pictures, audio-video clips to make your presentation more clear and powerful. It will also help the audience save and retain the detailed images of the key points of your presentation. Graphical and

pictorial representation of ideas and facts and figures create greater effects than from those expressed

through words only.

Creating PowerPoint Presentation
While preparing slides, the following points may be kept in mind:

1. **PowerPoint** is just an aid to presentation. It helps you use audio-visual aids to make your presentation more effective. Your comments and explanations are what audience comes to listen.

2. **Number of Slides:** There is no minimum or maximum limit of slides for a presentation. It all depends how informative your slides are and how much time you want to devote to a slide. Some slides may require more time than others depending on the amount of information it is loaded with and the explanation it requires.

3. **Font Style:** Experts recommend using sans serif fonts like Arial, Tahoma, etc. Serif fonts like Times New Roman are generally avoided in PowerPoint.

4. **Background and Font Colour:** Dark font colour over light background is highly recommended. This colour combination is soothing to eyes. A dark background, even if you use a lighter font colour, irritates eyes and makes the text on the slide difficult to read. This kind of colour combination is annoying and may put your audience feel sleepy. Compare the following slides, for example,
Slide 1

Versus
Slide 2

1. **Text on Slides:** One slide, one idea is the ideal rule. Once you change the idea change the slide. For example, you are making slides for a presentation on 'Creating Slides in Presentation' and you are on the slide(s) 'Background Colour', once you shift your viewpoint to the next idea, say 'Font Style', you should ideally change the slide.

   Furthermore, you should not put the whole text on the slide. Make points and put them in bullet style on the slide. If everything is put on the slide, what purpose the presenter will serve? The text written in the screenshot of the slide 2 given above under the head 'Background and Font Colour' is better organized in the following screenshot, for example,
   Slide 3
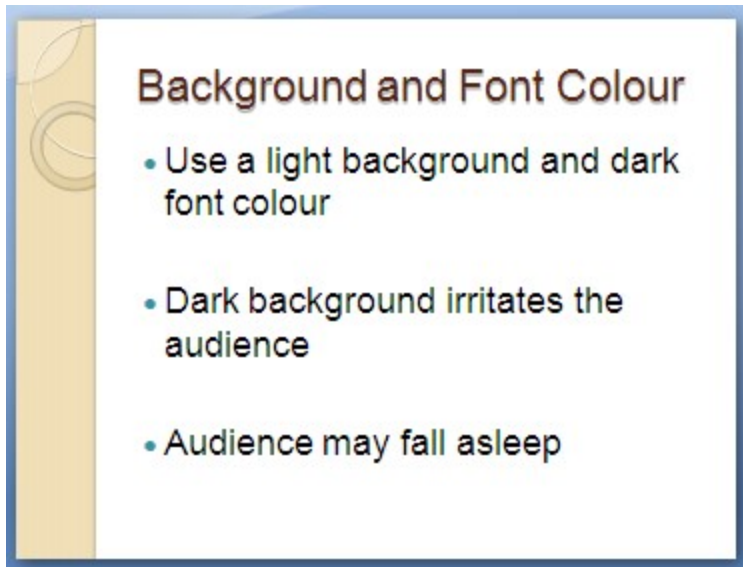
Note: Do not use a period (.) after the points put in bullet style.

Pictures and Animations: It's a good idea to have pictures and animation but using them just for the sake of using them may mar the interest of the audience. Pictures must be related and should cohere with the idea presented in a slide. Will the following pictures in a presentation on 'Random Access Memory' serve any purpose?

Pictures and animations should not be overused. Their overuse may be annoying and irritating to the audience.

2. **Graphs, Tables, and Diagrams etc:** It is always good to give a graphical representation to your ideas but never forget to assign captions and levels to the different elements of graphs, tables or diagrams. Compare, for example,
   Slide 4

Versus
Slide 5

Since the X and the Y axis are not defined in the slide 4, the audience will not be able to comprehend it. In contrast, slide 5 is self explanatory.

During the Presentation

What is more important while delivering a presentation is 'how you say something' rather than 'what you say'. Though 'what is said' can not be ignored but unless you use your body language and paralinguistic features of the language of the presentation, it is very difficult to retain the interest of the audience in the presentation. Use your body language and paralinguistic techniques to avoid monotony and to ensure that you convey your points strongly and effectively. Given below are some important aspects that should be taken into consideration during the presentation:

Kinesics

It refers to non-verbal behaviour related movements of the body. Use the non-verbal signals to make your points. Though a born speaker generally has the inherent quality of using appropriate body signals, but you can always develop and improve your body language by practice. You can convey the nonverbal signals through the following:

1. **Postures:** The way someone sits, stands, walks, holds the shoulders, neck and back, etc.
2. **Gestures:** The movement of the head, hands, arms, etc. to make a point
3. **Eye contact:** Maintain eye contact to build rapport and to get proper feedback.
4. **Facial Expressions**: Ideally you should present your ideas with pleasant expressions but the expressions must vary as per the situation and nature of the content.

Given below are the links of two very good videos on 'Body Language in Presentations'. Watch and learn.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFLjudWTuGQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pp4YlyXjcKI

Voice Dynamics/ Paralanguage
Being inaudible and monotonous will certainly kill your presentation. Your voice, volume, pitch, tone, tempo, rhythm, intonation pattern, etc. must vary as per the nature of content. Nobody likes a monotonous speech. You have already gone through all of these voice dynamics in the Unit II of this module. Make use of your learning of Unit II while delivering a presentation.

Now watch some good presentations:
1. Steve Jobs introducing the iPhone at MacWorld 2007
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7qPAY9JqE4
Steve Jobs' Presentation Skills
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6bC8h83CHs
2. Google CEO Sundar Pichai's I/O 2017 Keynote
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWLcyFtni6U
3. Presentation by Emily Johnston - **University of South Australia**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dh0pJdgY6Lc
4. Cambridge Analytica - The Power of Big Data and Psychographics
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8Dd5aVXLCc