Lecture 21

Presentation

A presentation is "a means of communication which can be adapted to various speaking situations" or a "way of communicating your thoughts and ideas to an audience." This lecture concerns with effective presentation skills and planning. These include, for example, briefing a team, addressing a meeting, talking to a group, making a speech or simply getting points across in a video conference.

To be effective, a step-by-step preparation is required, no matter how eloquent your speech is. Although, you may be creative in your presentation, depending on your audience and need, there are some universally agreed upon points which are recommended. This includes methods and means of presenting the information.

21.1. Purpose

There are three broad categories in which a presentation can be classified. These are as follows:

- **Information:**
  An informative presentation gives the audience information about the topic; this could be information that is interesting or useful. For example, you could provide detailed information about the hurdles to clear up any misconceptions, or take an opportunity to tell the audience that the hurdles are not as dangerous as they look. In this case, you would provide the strongest pieces of information needed to get the audience to this mind set.
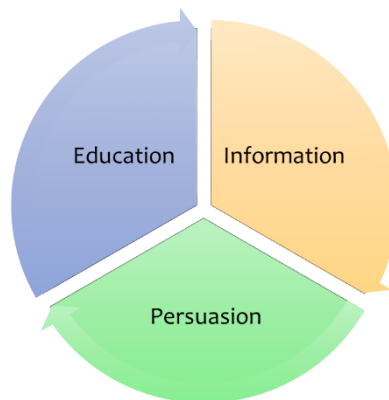
- **Persuasion:**
  A persuasive presentation is an effort to change or influence opinions, beliefs, or behaviors of the audience by presenting your most convincing arguments.
- **Education:**
  The purpose of your presentation clearly decides the content and style of the delivery. This is especially considered during educating an audience, for example, in a university. The content for HUM102 Report Writing Skills is a different form of a presentation.

21.2. Key Elements

Following are the key elements of presentation:

21.2.1 Context

Context may be a setting or scenario in which you give presentation. Ask yourself the following questions to develop a full understanding of the context of the presentation:

- **Place:** When and where will you deliver your presentation? It may be a classroom or a video-conference room. There is a world of difference between a small room with natural light and an informal setting, and a huge lecture room, lit with stage lights. The two require quite different presentations, and different techniques.

- **Familiarity**: Will it be in a setting you are familiar with, or somewhere new? If somewhere new, it would be worth trying to visit it in advance, or at least arriving early, to familiarize yourself with the room.

- **Audience:** Are you already familiar with the audience? You should perform a context analysis to determine the nature of the audience. Your resulting presentation should vary, accordingly, if you are presenting to your fellows, friends, colleagues or boss. With a new audience, you should build rapport quickly and effectively, to get them on your side.

- **Equipment:** What equipment and technology will be available to you, and what will you be expected to use? In particular, you will need to ask about microphones and whether you will be expected to stand in one place, or move around. This also includes the requirement for a projector. However, remember to have slides in your hands in printed form, as well, to avoid any disaster due to technical equipment going haywire.

21.2.2. Presenter

The role of the presenter is to communicate with the audience and control flow of the presentation. The presenter's success lies in his "knowledge" and "experience". Through knowledge and experience, a presenter can manage both time and audience. As a corollary, this may also include handing over the control to your audience, especially if you want interaction. A good presenter offers new knowledge and the stimulus for change. As the person in the driver's seat, be responsible enough to project yourself professionally and confidently. And remember: the biggest secret to confidence and professionalism is "practice, practice, practice".

21.2.3. Audience

The audience receives the presenter's message(s). However, this reception will be filtered through and affected by such things as the listener's own experience, knowledge and personal sense of values.

21.2.4. Reaction

The audience's reaction and therefore the success of the presentation will largely depend upon whether you, as presenter, effectively communicated your message, and whether it met their expectations.

As a presenter, you don't control the audience's expectations. What you can do is find out what they have been told about you by the conference organizers, and what they are expecting to hear. Only if you know that can you be confident of delivering something that will meet expectations.

21.2.5. Delivery Method

How will the presentation be delivered? This is an important question which requires you to plan your presentation, accordingly. Presentations are usually delivered direct to an audience. However, there may be occasions where they are delivered from a distance over the Internet using video conferencing systems, such as Skype, or may even be recorded. In this case, it is important to remember that people may be able to access it for several years, especially if your presentation is posted on the internet.

21.2.6. Impediments/barriers

Many factors can influence the effectiveness of how your message is communicated to the audience e.g. Language and Psychological Barriers. For example, background noise or other distractions, an overly warm or cool room, or the time of day and state of audience (e.g., alertness) can all influence your audience's level of concentration. As a presenter, you should be prepared to cope with any such problems and try to keep your audience focused on your message.

21.3. Three Stage Process of Presentation
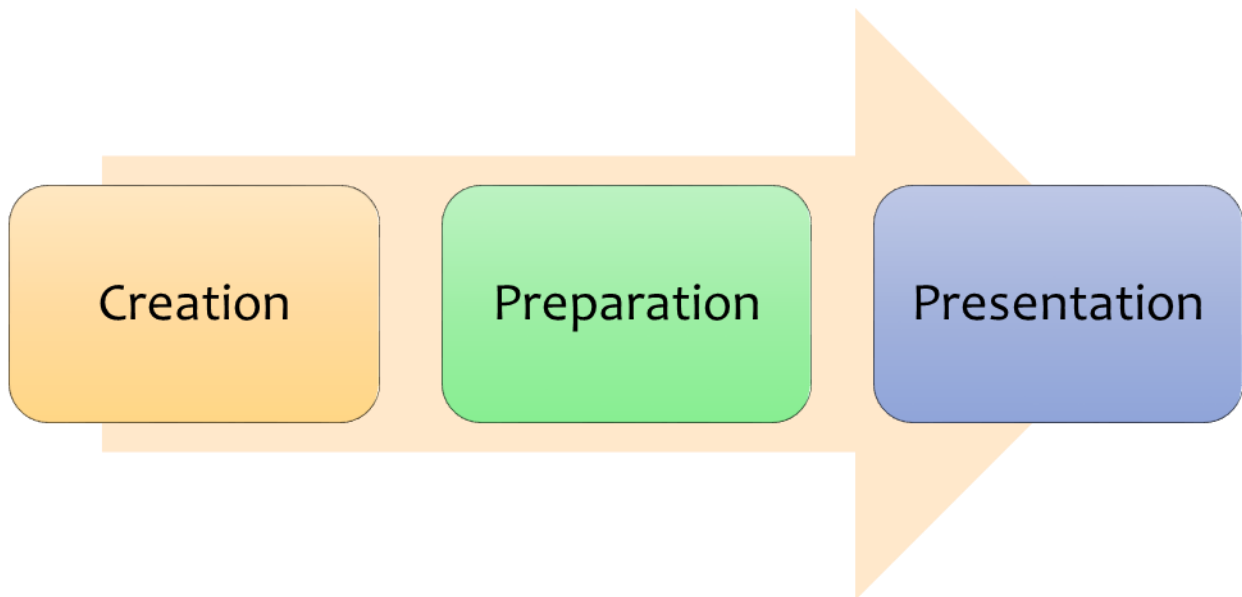
21.3.1. Stage 1-Creation

Tend to be overlooked by many but this stage is very crucial as it sets the pace for the next step.

- **Selecting a topic:** Select a topic that is of interest to the audience and to you. It will be much easier to deliver a presentation that the audience finds relevant, and more enjoyable to research a topic that is of interest to you.

- **Setting clear objectives and specific goals:** Once you have selected a topic, write the objective of the presentation in a single, concise statement. The objective needs to specify exactly what you want your audience to learn from your presentation. Base the objective and the level of the content on the

amount of time you have for the presentation and the background knowledge of the audience. Use this statement to help keep you focus as you research and develop the presentation.

- **Conducting Research:** After defining the objective of your presentation, determine how much information you can present in the amount of time allowed. Also, use your knowledge about the audience to prepare a presentation with the right level of detail. You don't want to plan a presentation that is too basic or too advanced.

  The body of the presentation is where you present your ideas. To present your ideas convincingly, you will need to illustrate and support them. Strategies to help you do this include the following:
  - Present data and facts
  - Read quotes from experts
  - Relate personal experiences
  - Provide vivid descriptions

  And remember, as you plan the body of your presentation, it's important to provide variety. Listeners may quickly become bored by lots of facts or they may get tired of hearing story after story.

- **Audience Analysis:** preparing a presentation requires you to learn the audience beforehand to whom you'll be speaking. It's a good idea to obtain some information on the backgrounds, values, and interests of your audience so that you understand what the audience members might expect from your presentation.

- **Creating an Outline:** Beside creating an outline for audience, which you should convey at the beginning of the presentation, make one outline for yourself for your ease.

- **Using a presentation tool (e.g., MS PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.)** Much has been written on how to prepare a PowerPoint presentation, but only one thing remains important: your audio and visual materials should strengthen your key points. If your slides simply distract the audience, you are mentally driving them away. Below are a few guidelines on how to make your PowerPoint slides visually and analytically appealing:

  - The background should remain a background. Choose a background color, texture, or photo that won't distract audience attention. You want them to concentrate on the main message.
  - Select colors that subconsciously elicit a desired emotion. Take heed of the fact that people tend to associate colors with past events, and with certain feelings and emotions. (Much has been written on this – it is worth studying.)
  - Use graphics, images, charts, animations, tables, diagrams, and other visuals meaningfully. Their presence should further your message, and be pleasant to both the mind and the eyes.
  - Font style and size need to be easily readable by the whole audience. Pick a font color that stands out against your background, too.

- **Inserting Content:** The presenter has the power to bring content to life as a fully formed presentation – give it space, life, physicality and character – by blending in your presentation methods, aids, props, and devices, as appropriate. This entails the equipment and materials you use, case studies, examples, quotations, analogies, questions and answers, individual and syndicate exercises, interesting statistics, samples, visual and physical aids, and any other presentation aid you think will work. This stage often requires more time than you imagine if you should source props and materials.

- **Using Appropriate Media:** Use appropriate media. If your presentation entails audio-visual (AV) support and equipment provision by specialists, then ensure that you control the environment and these services. If there are audio-visual aspects happening that you don't understand, then seek clarification beforehand. You must understand, manage and control these services – do not assume that providers know what you need – tell the providers what you want, and ask what you need to know.

- **Prepare Additional Material:** Prepare some additional material also so that if there something goes wrong e.g. electricity blackout or internet connection, then you have something extra to engage your audience.

- **Confirmation Process:** In the end, the presentation goes through a confirmation step. In this step, you should verify that the above points have indeed been covered so that the presentation is complete. Make sure you know the place and time of the presentation and whether or not supporting equipment is available. Check and double-check, and plan contingencies for anything that might go wrong.

21.3.2. Stage 2-Preparation

- **Rehearsals:** Practice your presentation with all your aids and devices. Review and record the timings. They will be different compared to earlier simple read-throughs. Amend and refine the presentation accordingly. Practice at this stage is essential to build your competence and confidence – especially in handling and managing the aids and devices you plan to use – and to rehearse the pace and timings. You'll probably be amazed at this stage to realize how much longer the presentation takes to deliver than you imagined when you were simply reading on your cards or notes. Ask an honest and tactful friend to listen and watch you practice. Ask for his/her comments about how you can improve, especially your body-language and movement, your pace and voice, and whether everything you present and say can be easily understood. If your test-listener can't make at least half a dozen constructive suggestions, then ask someone else to watch and listen and give you feedback.

  Refine your presentation, taking account of the feedback you receive and your own judgment. Test the presentation again if there are major changes, and repeat this cycle of refinement and testing until you are satisfied. Practice your presentation it in its refined full form. Amend and refine as necessary, and if possible have a final rehearsal in the real setting, especially if the venue/situation is strange to you.

- **Sleep:** Take a good night's rest. On average, about 8 or 7.5 hours of regular sleep is considered healthy.

- **Dress for the occasion:** Your suiting will be according to the occasion or nature of the presentation. Your clothes are probably the most obvious aspect of personal presentation. In deciding what to wear, there are several things to consider: It does depend what your audience is expecting. On some occasions, or in some industries, smart casual or business casual may be much more appropriate. If you're not sure, ask the organizers about the dress code. You can also ask someone who has been to the event before, or have a look online. If it's a regular event, there will almost certainly be photographs of previous occasions and you can see what other people have worn.

- **Arrive early:** Make sure you arrive early so as to observe the venue of presentation and arrangement of the presentation**.** This includes, but is not limited to, stage, sitting arrangement and lighting.

21.3.3. Stage 3-Presentation

At the beginning of the presentation, apply an 'attention getter'. An audience not only listens to your ideas, it also responds to the way you use your voice and your body. You need more than a well-written presentation to make an impact. You will also need to deliver it in a lively, flexible and interesting way. In this leaflet, we suggest many ideas for invoking energy in your presentation style.

- **Relevant Anecdote:** This is as basic is it gets, but story telling is the best way to connect with an audience. You can start your presentation with one and then connect it to the purpose of why you're there. Many presenters use this technique and it remains one of the most critical pieces to becoming an effective presenter.
- **Rhetorical Questions**: To start a presentation you can begin with direct, rhetorical questions to the audience. It's a great way to wake their senses, get them engaged and get you more connected with them.
- **Startling Statistics:** Showcasing data and statistics to prove a point remains a critical strategy not just at the beginning but also throughout. Use research and data only to further your points. Statistics can be boring but if there is some compelling information that can help further the conversation, statistics and data can be a powerful tool, whether used at the very beginning or end of any presentation.
- **Analogy:** Create analogies and themes, and use props to illustrate and reinforce them.
- **Humor**: As a follow-up to silence or as a standalone, tell a joke to elicit laughter form the audience. Even for marketing and sales representatives, this can be a way to lighten the room and become more connected with the audience. Don't overdo this as it can steer people away from your purpose, but proper usage of this technique can be effective in starting any presentation. Remember cultural differences!
- **Gimmick:** There can be a plethora of ways to shock the audience. You can show a funny video that showcases or furthers your purpose or even state something that is contradictory to most people. Remember to be smart about how you choose to shock your audience as it could backfire if what you do is offensive to the majority.
- **Introduce self, title, background (if necessary):** On some occasions, you will need to provide some background information to orient your audience to the subject of your presentation. Remember that introductory material and explanations are not especially interesting, so interweave the required background information with something that will be of greater interest to your audience, such as a preview or a benefit.
- **Setting the theme:** Another powerful mechanism used by many speakers is getting the audience to imagine or think of something. This technique can be useful in starting off a presentation and is used to involve the audience thoroughly.
- **Specify agenda/outline:** Specify the agenda/outline of your presentation for audiences and as well for yourself.
- **Use of presentation slides:** The slides you make with a presentation tool are only meant to guide you and to involve the audience. They are not meant as a substitute for you. It is considered very awkward to load the slides with words and read them off for the audience as it shows that you're teaching the audience to read.
- **Start presentation on time:** Be on time. Period.
- **Have confidence**: In the context of presentations and public speaking, a poor presentation is usually due to lack of confidence, and/or lack of control (or a feeling of not having control) over the situation,

other people (the audience), our own reactions and feelings and (in some cases) possibly a bad memory or experience from our past. So be confident and forget the bad experience.

- **Develop eye contact:** For those who tend to get nervous in larger audiences, picking different people in the audience to speak to can ease those nerves. Start this at the beginning of your presentation, speaking to your audience directly. Pick different people to speak to in the room and everyone will think you are talking directly to them.
- **Body Movements:** If your words are flowing clearly but your hands are clasped to your thighs or swinging wildly, the audience will miss your message. The same confidence coming from your mouth should be present in your body language. Avoiding these saboteurs will help you disguise your nerves:
  - Paddling – moving your hands below your hips in a circular motion
  - Slapping or grabbing your thighs or arms
  - Wringing your hands
  - Fiddling with jewelry or your hair
  - Crossing your arms
  - Clearing your throat
  - Touching your face or mouth
- **Voice:** Effective pitch voice depends upon the size of the audiences. If your audience is large enough to require a sound system, check to make sure that it works. If you have a choice of microphone, request a lavaliere. A lavaliere microphone will allow you to move around while speaking. A hand-held mike is second best because it limits your gestures and needs to be held at a constant distance from your mouth so that your voice hits the "sweet spot" on the mike that allows for the cleanest sound. Because a stationary microphone attached to a lectern increases the physical and psychological separation between speaker and audience, consider them a last resort to be used only for speaking to large audiences when you have no other options.
- **Poise (balance): Standing/Sitting:** Express appreciation for the opportunity to speak and, perhaps, the importance of the occasion. While you speak, watch the audience for signs that everyone can hear you and follow what you are saying. Move naturally, but until you are an accomplished speaker, avoid moving and talking at the same time. Use natural pauses in your presentation to move from one location to another, plant your feet, and begin speaking again. Gesture naturally, but remember that the larger your audience, the bigger your gestures need to be for everyone to see them.
- **Handling Questions:** Always remember to let the audience know how you will handle questions. Simply give them the free will to ask questions when they best see fit.
- **Reminders:** Make some reminders points to keep focus on the theme.

21.4. Dos and Don'ts of The Presentation:

- **Do's**
  - Keep slides clean and simple
  - Keeping 1/3rd of a slide clear is a good idea
  - Add effective content
  - Format appropriately
  - Add consistent title and text placements
  - Label charts and tables
- **Don'ts**

Don't use too many words or include non-essential information. A page which contains too many words for a presentation slide is not written in point form, making it difficult both for your audience to read and for you to present each point. In short, your audience will spend too much time trying to read this paragraph instead of listening to you. Eventually it will make your slide wordy and boring. You will lose your audience's attention before you even reach the end of your presentation.

21.5. Text Tips

- Text slides should be brief
- No more than eight words per line
- No more than eight lines per slide
- Fewer words will force an explanation rather than reading slide word for word
- Titles should be 36-40 point
- Body text should be around 24 points
- Use sans serif font such as Arial

21.6. Spellings and Grammar

- Avoid spelling and grammar mistakes
- Proof-read your slides carefully for:
  - Spelling mistakes
  - The use of repeated words
  - Grammatical errors you might have made
- Do try to have someone else check your presentation

21.7. Font Analysis

- Don't use small text on your slides. Think about those people at the back of the presentation room. If you use small font your audience won't be able to read from the slide.

- **CAPITALIZE ONLY WHEN NECESSARY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO READ.**

- Don't use complicated/distracting transitions.

- **Don't use a complicated font**. Stick to sans serif fonts (without twiddles) like Arial, Veranda and Tahoma.

- **Avoid Excessive Bullet Points**

Figure 1 Too many bullets are distracting!

21.8. Background and Colors

Don't use a fancy background. It may be pretty or even on topic, but the text will be difficult to read. Keep to a subtle backdrop for the information.

21.9. References

Give references in the same way as you would in a written assignment

- **Citation:** *"Freeloading means individuals, believing that their contributions will not be valued. Contribute less effort to achieving goals when working in a group than if they were working alone. (Kerr, 1983)"*
- **Direct Quoting:** *"Most effective speakers are flexible, able to adapt the manner of their speaking to the particular context" (Stott, et al., 2001:3)"*

- **Diagrams and Images:** *Adair's (1987), Interlocking; Needs of a Team*

Summary

- Be clear about the purpose of your presentation
- Rehearse well, maintain eye contact, be comfortable
- Follow the tips and tricks of a presentation tool
- Provide appropriate amount of information in allocated time
- Answer the questions confidently at the end of presentation

Resources:

1. https://www.skillsyouneed.com/presentation-skills.html
2. http://blog.strideapp.com/2014/06/4-elements-of-an-effective-presentation/
3. https://www.businessballs.com/communication-skills/presentation-skills-and-techniques-149/
4. http://slpnn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/PowerPoint-Presentations.pdf