

Basic requirements for a presentation to maximise score

- A presentation is a story, and so in order to succeed it needs a beginning, a middle and an end. Structure is crucial, but even more so is flow. If the content doesn't lend itself to craft a flowing narrative, you are missing something. Find it, and weave it in!
- The structure of a presentation can vary from project to project, and from team to team hence why I don't like recommending a specific one here. There is no one way to achieve perfection, but I guarantee you that following the structure of the report itself is the least likely way to achieve success. Presentations are VERY DIFFERENT from reports, and so should be their structure. In this academic setting, we ask you to answer a number of questions, but these should not be listed/made part of the structure of the presentation, although they might likely be part of the structure of the report itself.
- A business presentation needs to appeal to a very different audience than a technical one. However, it is important that you demonstrate your credentials as a solid data analyst/scientist, so some analysis needs to be presented. Don't make it dry and textual, lean on creative visuals and take the audience through a journey of why the data you are showing is important and how it led you to your findings. Again, storytelling is key!
- A presentation has two output channels, audio and visual. Whilst you have to talk about your analysis, insights and recommendations, it is crucial that the visual part is fully utilised. Avoid talking over a title screen when you could be providing valuable details on the visual channel that you don't necessarily need to address directly. The sum total MUST BE greater than the audio and visual parts individually!
- Always make sure you introduce yourselves, either as a group or individually if you are taking turns to speak. But most importantly, do close off the presentation with a graceful "thank you" for giving their time/listening/their attention/the opportunity, or any other number of things. NEVER close a presentation abruptly and without goodbye. You would never do that in person, so don't do it over video either!
- Presentations tend to be limited in time, in our case 10 minutes, for a number of reasons. Besides the part where we have to review dozens of them and therefore can't spend days doing this, the main reason for our presentations to be 10 minutes long is to force you to decide what content is worthy of those precious seconds. This is an invaluable skill for any presenter, and to be timed to perfection you need the right content planning, and not to speak faster or to cut important parts of the presentation just to fit within the time. Key to this is identifying the most relevant parts of your work that will help the client understand the journey you are taking them on. I go back to the word "flow", there can't be flow without the right content and the right connectors. Abrupt changes between slides break the flow. Broken flow means disengaged audience, and in your case, lost points.
- In the context of this module, there has to be a part within the presentation where you propose ways in which your client could improve the performance of their business based on the data and the insights you obtained from it. You cannot however dedicate 70% of your presentation reinventing their business, as this does two things: takes away from valuable time where not enough analysis detail has been covered (which in turn fails to build trust in your abilities) but most importantly, tells the client that they have been doing it wrong all this time. This might be true sometimes in real life, but then you would not be reporting to the business but to their investors or potential acquirers (HINT: none of those make an appearance in this module).

Bonus and Negative points

- It is always good to see the people who are speaking during a recording, although this is not mandatory. However, if you are going to appear on the video, DO NOT stare at a piece of paper whilst reading robotically from a script. If you are going to read, make it sound natural and switch off the camera! If you are going to speak to the camera (or off to the side, as if talking to an audience) make sure you are speaking with flow, and this can be either because you have practised, or because you can do it naturally.
- When speaking, do not lean constantly on bridges such as umm and err, and ABSOLUTELY don't use any words that will discredit what you just said. For example, we can't give an accurate data point or fact and follow it up with "whatever" or "whenever" or any other ever as you will instantly lose your credibility with the audience and they won't trust any other data points/facts you might mention from then on.
- Adding visual pizzazz that in turn adds value is recommended. By this I DO NOT MEAN animations or music, this still is a business presentation after all. But there are supporting devices such as infographics, that can be much more appealing and effective at explaining concepts than a graph straight out of matplotlib. We have seen great examples in the past summarising the background of the client in a single infographic slide covering demographics and other aspects of the client's customer base, this is highly valuable and worthy of bonus points.
- Whatever you do, DO NOT USE a laser pointer. These visual devices are needed when someone must highlight an area of a complex graph. This is a lazy approach to solving a problem that should not exist in a non-technical presentation. Furthermore, people with a laser pointer (or mouse cursor) in their hand tend to use it to highlight the text they are reading from the screen. DO NOT DO THIS or you will suffer the consequences with a severe point deduction.
- Avoid any artificial devices to fit your presentation in the allocated time. Playing the video at 1.5x will not help you, since you will get a large point deduction. Instead, ensure you only put key points in your presentation that add value. This should not require all 10 minutes if done correctly.