

Group Discussions

A group discussion involves a particular group of people who meet face to face and develop, discuss and share ideas through free oral interaction. Group discussions are used as personality tests to evaluate several candidates simultaneously to select personnel for positions of responsibility, especially in the service sector and also to select students for admission to professional institutes. This mode was first employed by the Indian defence forces to discern the potential and eligibility of candidates to be recruited as officers.

Speaking in Group Discussions

- Seize the first opportunity to speak if you have a good understanding of the topic of discussion.
- Listen patiently to others and then react to their viewpoints.
- Speak clearly and audibly so that everyone hears and understands.
- Be concise in your expressions. Do not repeat ideas just for the sake of speaking something.
- Ask for clarification, if necessary.
- Facilitate contribution from others.
- Use statistics and examples to justify a view point.
- Avoid talking to only one or two persons in the group.
- Assume an impersonal tone. Treat all members as fellow participants; none in the group is either a friend or a foe.
- Be assertive without being aggressive; be humble without being submissive. Raise your voice (just enough to be heard) and speak out a strong point in case of a fishmarket-like situation in a GD.
- Conclude objectively by briefly presenting the important points of the discussion and any decisions taken.

Discussing Problems and Solutions

In a discussion, identifying the problem can sometimes be a little difficult. The problem can be related to a personal, social, physical, or mental aspect, or it might be organizational–technical, managerial, or business related. The problems related to an organization are easier to analyse and solve, because in an organization the number of possibilities of the cause of a problem and the consequences of the solution are relatively simpler to analyse than the problems related to a society. Problems must be discussed in detail so that each participant of the team understands it. When beginning a discussion on a problem encountered, try to define the problem first.

Defining a problem helps to understand what the problem is and also the nature of the problem, which in turn is crucial to solving the problem. For example, if a department is not working satisfactorily, then we should try to define the problem exactly, i.e., whether the problem is with the efficiency of the department or the output of the department.

Once the problem is identified, get into the discussion about finding a solution. Talking about problems in terms of systems makes the discussion easier. What are systems? Any mechanism put in place, which takes inputs from various factors and produces outputs, is a system. The management of a company or a pipeline for manufacturing a product can be regarded as a system. Having identified the problem means we have identified the system that is causing or facing the problem. Now all that needs to be done in order to find a solution to the problem is to identify the various inputs or factors that affect the system. Discuss elaborately the factors of the system. The problem should be discussed with participants who are experienced in the field so as to identify what factors are most likely to cause the problem. Each factor can then be individually checked to determine the root cause of the problem, which can then be directly addressed.

Once the root of the problem has been identified, there may be the problem of multiple solutions. Choosing the optimal one is essential because the solution should not only fix the problem within the system but also ensure that its consequences do not cause further problems in other systems. Discuss the pros and cons of the various solutions and take inputs from each member. Taking into account the consequences of the particular action taken for solving the problem helps obtain an optimal solution.

Creating a Cordial and Cooperative Atmosphere

It is said that ideas flow free in an atmosphere conducive to the participants. By creating a friendly and cooperative environment during a GD, we may be able to derive better solutions to our problems or create more ideas as the members' contributions are maximized. However, creating such an atmosphere is the responsibility of each member of the group. In an atmosphere that promotes friendliness and cooperation, we feel positive, optimistic, confident, and assertive and hence will voluntarily contribute to the discussion. The following strategies might help us understand how to create such an atmosphere in GDs:

- Listen to others' viewpoints with an open mind and interest.
- Respect others' ideas and try to understand the speaker's perspective.
- Develop mutual trust among each other.
- Avoid being too formal with others (e.g., knowing the names of others will help in

addressing them by first names rather than using Mr/Ms; using I/you/we and active voice rather than impersonal passive voice—‘Reena, I am unable to get your point. Could you please give some statistics and elaborate further?’).

- Adopt a friendly attitude so that others put forth their ideas freely.
- Use body language effectively to convey interest and sincerity in the discussion.
- Avoid being friendly with only one or two participants in the group.
- Be objective and unbiased in the discussion.
- Allow others to speak.
- Recognize significant contributions by others and appreciate them.

Using Persuasive Techniques

Our ability to make others believe in what we say is important in GDs. In other words, mastering the art of persuasion or convincing others is crucial for GDs and the following tips may be helpful in this regard:

- Do your homework and be knowledgeable about the topic of discussion.
- Show maturity while reacting to others (by exhibiting appropriate body language and a firm tone of voice; by not interrupting somebody abruptly).
- Listen carefully and then react.
- Always use evidence (statistics/examples/testimonies) to justify your views.
- Establish mutual respect.
- Win the confidence of others.
- Be considerate. We may have a strong view on some issue. However, if others give evidences against these views, be willing to listen.
- Always be friendly and respectful during GDs.

Being Polite and Firm

As already mentioned, we need to be assertive but not aggressive in a GD and by being firm and polite we satisfy this requirement. When we feel that a particular idea suggested by another

member may not go well with the organization, we need to express our view firmly, but politely.

There are various expressions that can be used to express politeness with firmness. See the following sample expressions:

I understand that this idea may be liked by everybody. But, I am afraid it will not gel with our organizational environment.

I'm afraid this idea may not work in our system. (when we have to tell somebody something they may not like)

Has this idea failed? I am afraid so.

I wonder if I could have one more example on this point. (when asking somebody for a clarification)

Could you repeat that please?

Well, I am not convinced that the implementation of this idea is that urgent. / I am not sure about how urgent the implementation is.

I do not agree completely. Perhaps we should have more discussion on implementing this idea.

Turn Taking Strategies

The term 'turntaking' refers to a speaker giving a chance to others to comment on or question the point raised by him/her during a discussion. This process is repeated by the members of a group and if it does not go smoothly, the discussion will not be useful, and can end up in an unpleasant argument. It is often noticed in GDs that there are members who are quick thinkers, and hence would grab a turn to speak as soon as one of the others completes speaking. There are others, generally ineffective listeners, who may not allow anyone else to speak. On the other hand, there are members who give verbal/non-verbal signals to others for taking their turn. The following three events occur in turn-taking:

Taking a turn Being ready to speak when one finishes is taking one's turn. For instance, if you respond to some member by agreeing, disagreeing, posing a query, or by paraphrasing what was said, you are taking a turn.

Holding the turn There may be members in a group who do not wish to give turns to others to speak. They may like to keep the turn to themselves and continue further. Hence, they may suppress their verbal and non-verbal cues that are used to tell others to take their turn. Though they think that being able to dominate the discussion earns them points, they in fact lose by coming across as bad listeners.

Yielding the turn When we give cues to indicate that we are concluding our remarks and

others can take up the discussion further, we are yielding the turn.

Assume that a group is discussing the details of a project it is going to take up during next month. Given below are the statements spoken by some members during the course of this discussion. Read them carefully to understand the turn-taking strategies explained above:

Speaker 1: I don't think we need to use the project management software for cost control of our Mobile

Medics project. The software is quite expensive and instead of procuring and using that we can think

of some other alternative. Do you agree? (By asking a question this speaker gives a verbal cue to others to

take their turn; he is yielding a turn. He may also use non-verbal cues such as stretching his hand to someone

particularly.)

Speaker 2: I agree with you, but we should at least study the software available for project management. I've

heard about them. They are efficient, no doubt, but... (This speaker takes the turn but later on by pausing or

by uttering an incomplete statement, the speaker gives the turn to others.)

Speaker 3: You mean to say they are expensive? I don't think so. Some of my friends in other companies are

using XYZ software for managing most of their projects. They are able to manage their projects very well

in terms of planning, scheduling, resource allocation, cost control, issue tracking, etc. Such software may

be economical and hence we should also go for them. (In the beginning, even though the speaker asks a

question, he wants to hold the turn for himself and hence continues.)

The turn-taking process will yield good results when members have time to think before the discussion as they may have gathered many ideas about the various issues related to the topic of discussion. At times, groups are asked to go for an on-the-spot discussion of a topic. In such cases, participants who can think fast can take turns while others may not be able to do so and hence there may not be a well-balanced participation. These strategies can be used effectively by responding to questions, by making a suggestion, initiating interaction, paraphrasing, requesting the speaker to repeat, etc.

Effective Intervention

Interventions or interferences are necessary in a GD for reasons such as correcting an error, controlling unruly behaviour, adding some detail, or asking a question for clarification.

Generally members do not like intervention during their speaking turn. So, we should interrupt somebody only when there is a valid reason and also using appropriate phrases while doing so. If we do not use polite expressions while interrupting a member, the person might get annoyed. It is always better to use expressions such as *excuse me*, *sorry to interrupt*, *may I say something*, *can I add something*, etc., before interrupting in order to avoid confusion and also to exhibit a decorum during a GD. The following are some sample expressions for effective intervention:

Excuse me for interrupting you, but it is of two months' duration, not one month.
May I interrupt? Let me correct the time frame. It is two months and not one month.
I would like to say something, if I may. The duration is two months and not one month.
Can I just say that the duration is two months and not one?
Sorry to barge in... but this idea has already been discussed.
Can I add here that the duration also needs to be considered along with other factors?
May I ask you a question at this point?

Reaching a Decision

Most of the GDs end with a decision—either final or interim. Whatever the type of decision, it can be arrived at only when members participate actively to explore the topic, contribute significantly

to the discussion, and reach a consensus or an agreement. After thoroughly discussing various points involved in a problem by analysing their pros and cons, the group finally arrives at a few solutions. After ranking the solutions by considering their feasibility or practicability in their organizational environment, the members will accept one solution. When they decide on this, it will be presented by the leader of the group to everybody. However, before presenting the solution,

the speaker will summarize the main points of discussion keeping in mind the goal of the GD.

At times, because of various constraints such as time, inadequate participation, preparation, etc., the group may not be able to decide upon the given issue and it may decide to meet again. In such

cases, some interim or tentative decisions may be taken. For instance, if the administrative heads of a college discuss a revamping of the curriculum, they may not arrive at a final decision, but may

be able to take decisions on certain courses. They may continue their discussion later.

There are two main categories of GDs, namely organizational GDs and GDs as a part of a

selection process. We will discuss these two formats in the following sections. Also, go through the PowerPoint presentation on group discussions in the CD to understand the various issues involved in a GD.

ORGANIZATIONAL GD

In organizations, GDs are mainly used for group decision-making. Members of the interacting group take the responsibility of explaining their ideas and arriving at a consensus. GDs can help reduce many problems inherent to traditional interactive groups. The word ‘traditional’ here refers to an organizational set-up wherein hierarchy is given considerable importance. In such organizations, the group decision-making process may involve groupthink. A team suffering from groupthink will place so much value on maintaining loyalty, unity, and agreement that critical thinking and open enquiry are prevented. The participants may censor themselves and pressurize other group members into agreement. In order to minimize this, the following techniques may be used:

- Brainstorming
- Delphi technique
- Nominal group technique

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a method for generating a variety of ideas and perspectives. It is as uncritical as possible because criticism inhibits the free flow of ideas. The people involved in brainstorming should ideally come from a wide range of disciplines and have divergent social and cultural backgrounds. The more diverse the group, the more likely it is to generate unexpected insights, ideas, and connections, and hence even unthought-of and novel solutions to problems. A typical brainstorming session follows the steps given below:

- A group of six to twelve people sit around a table.
- The group leader states the problem in a clear manner so that all participants understand it.
- Members then suggest as many alternatives as they can in a given length of time and write them down on a blackboard, whiteboard, flip chart, or a piece of paper.
- No criticism is allowed, and all the alternatives are recorded for later discussion and analysis.

There are two types of brainstorming techniques:

1. Storyboarding 2. Lotus blossom

In storyboarding, participants identify major issues and brainstorm on each of them. It is often used to solve complex problems. In the lotus blossom technique, a core thought is presented and participants provide eight ideas surrounding it like the petals of a lotus blossom. Then each of these ideas becomes a core thought to be surrounded by a further set of eight ideas

and so forth, until participants can no longer generate ideas or until decision-makers feel that they have a good grasp of the problem and potential creative solutions.

However, brainstorming is mainly a process for generating ideas. The other two techniques—the nominal group technique and the Delphi technique—go further by offering methods to actually arrive at a suitable solution.

Nominal Group Technique

The nominal group technique restricts discussion or interpersonal communication during the decision-making process and hence the term ‘nominal group’. In other words, in this technique, although group members are all physically present as in a traditional committee meeting, they operate independently, as described below. The problem is presented and then the following steps take place:

- Members meet as a group, but before any discussion takes place, each member independently and silently writes down his/her ideas on the problem.
- Each member takes his/her, going around the table and presenting a single idea until all ideas have been presented and recorded (typically on a flip chart or chalkboard). No discussion takes place until all ideas have been recorded.
- The group now discusses the ideas for clarity and evaluates them.
- Each group member silently and independently rank-orders the ideas.

The final decision is determined by the idea with the highest aggregate ranking. The chief advantage of the nominal group technique is that it permits the group to meet formally but does not restrict independent thinking, which an interacting group might do.

Delphi Technique

The Delphi technique is a more complex and time-consuming alternative in group decisionmaking.

It is similar to the nominal group technique except that it does not require the physical presence of the group members. In fact, this technique never allows the group members to meet face to face. The following steps characterize the Delphi technique:

1. The problem is identified and members are asked to provide potential solutions through a series of carefully designed questionnaires.
2. Each member anonymously and independently completes the first questionnaire.
3. The results of the first questionnaire are compiled at a central location, transcribed, and reproduced.
4. Each member receives a copy of the results.
5. Based on the results, another questionnaire is prepared, and the members are again

asked for their solutions, as the compiled results typically trigger new solutions or cause changes in the original opinion.

6. Steps 4 and 5 are repeated as often as necessary until consensus is reached.

Like the nominal group technique, the Delphi technique insulates group members from the undue influence of others. As it does not require the physical presence of the participants, the Delphi technique can be used for decision-making in geographically scattered groups. For instance, a company having branches in Tokyo, Brussels, Paris, London, New York, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro, and Melbourne can use the technique effectively to query its managers on the best global price for one of its products. By following this technique, business enterprises can avoid the cost of bringing their executives together at a central location.

The Delphi technique also has its drawbacks. As the method is extremely time consuming, it is frequently not applicable when a speedy decision is required. Additionally, the method may not develop the rich array of alternatives that the brainstorming or the nominal group technique does. Ideas that might be inspired by face-to-face interactions may never come up. An organization can decide upon the type of GD required mainly on the basis of availability of time, urgency of the situation, location of the group members, and the complexity of the decision to be made.

Group Discussion based on a Topic

Topic-based GDs are generally more difficult to handle than case study-based ones as there is no starting point for a candidate's thought process, particularly when the topic is unfamiliar. The panel may or may not allow time for thinking. The dynamics in the first couple of minutes are generally chaotic. Ideally, to start with, some ideas have to be generated on the topic. These ideas must then be prioritized so that the presentation is coherent. At this point, there may not be much time to fully develop the ideas.

In order to pre-empt the possibility of other participants starting off first on the same ideas that we have thought of, we have to start speaking as early as possible. Not only must we develop the idea as we speak, but also think ahead for subsequent ideas. A weakness in any of these steps will lead to poor presentation.

As a rule of thumb, we should not speak unless we have content for a speech of at least one minute. Second, listening carefully to what the other participants have to say will trigger fresh ideas. A healthy discussion can take place only when there is an exchange of ideas and these ideas are subjected to analysis. Therefore, it is not necessary to keep on generating new ideas for the entire duration. It is also important to carefully examine each word of the topic, noting it down if possible, and checking that there are no words that can have different interpretations. If some ambiguity exists, it makes sense to define the terms first. GD Situation 8 in the CD

demonstrates how one can deal with an unfamiliar topic.

Group Discussion based on a Case Study

If an individual's analytical skills are good, then case studies are easier to handle than topic based GDs, because there is a starting point in the form of a particular situation. Cases are discussions of situations (in business or other organizations) calling for an appraisal of past action, a decision on future action, or both. Virtually every case calls for both analysis and decision-making. Logical analysis and a firm grasp of the facts are crucial. Judgement is needed to sift through available information and find the relevant facts, and so is imagination for developing an action plan.

The following is a list of tips for handling a GD successfully.

- Be thorough with current issues.
- Always enter the room with a piece of paper and a pen.
- Listen to the topic carefully.
- Jot down as many ideas as possible in the first few minutes.
- Try to dissect the topic and explore the underlying causes or consequences.
- Organize the ideas before speaking.
- Speaking first is a high-risk, high-return strategy. Hence, speak first only if there is something sensible and substantial to say.
- Try to contribute meaningfully and significantly every time you speak. Do not speak just for the sake of saying something.
- Identify supporters and opponents and allow the supporters to augment your ideas.
- Keep track of time and share time fairly.
- Have an open mind and listen to others' views.
- Maintain eye contact while speaking and listening.
- Do not indulge in parallel conversations.
- Use tact and wit. If you must use humour, do so judiciously so as not to hurt others or deviate from the topic.

- Display a spirit of cooperation and an accommodative nature.
- Draw out the silent members and encourage them to speak.
- If things get chaotic, take the initiative to restore order by providing a fresh direction to the discussion.
- Attempt to arrive at a consensus although the ultimate aim is to reach a conclusion. Within the specified time, the group may not be able to arrive at a consensus. However, working towards consensus will reveal the individual's capability and inclination towards being a good team player. GD Situation 10 in the CD demonstrates how to effectively conclude a group discussion.

Interviews

An interview is a psychological and sociological instrument. It is an interaction between two or more persons for a specific purpose, in which the interviewer asks the interviewee specific questions in order to assess his/her suitability for recruitment, admission, or promotion. It can also be a meeting in which a journalist asks somebody questions to determine their opinions. It is a systematized method of contact with a person to know his/her views and is regarded as the most important method of data collection. In addition, interviewing a person gives an idea of how effectively the person can perform a particular task.

Objectives of Interviews

Interviews may be conducted for various reasons. Generally, interviews are conducted to achieve some of the following objectives:

- To select a person for a specific task
- To monitor performance
- To collect information
- To exchange information
- To counsel

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Depending on the objective and nature, interviews can be categorized into the following types:

- Job
- Persuasive
- Evaluation
- Conflict resolution
- Termination
- Information
- Exit
- Counselling
- Disciplinary
- Media

Each of the above types has a slightly different approach. For example, in a job interview *you* may have to convince the interviewer that you are the best person for the job, whereas in a

termination interview your *employer* may have to convince you that your services have been terminated for reasons that are specific, accurate, and verifiable.

Comparing the involvement and contribution of the interviewer and the interviewee, an interview can be divided into three types: *telling*, *telling and listening*, and *problem solving*.

Telling In a telling interview, the flow of communication is almost entirely one way—downwards. It is used most effectively in a directing, time-constrained situation; but it can cause hostility and defensive behaviour when the employee does not have the opportunity to participate.

Telling and listening In a telling and listening interview, more feedback from the subordinate is allowed, but the interviewer still maintains control over the flow of communication.

Problem-solving In a problem-solving interview the flow of communication is two-way. The bulk of communication is upwards, a genuine rapport is established, ideas are pooled, and exchange facilitated.

Job interviews

In job interviews, the employer wants to learn about the applicant's abilities and experiences, and the candidate wants to learn about the position on offer and the organization. Both the candidate and the employer hope to make a good impression and to establish rapport. In the initial round, job interviews are usually formal and structured. But later, interviews may be relatively spontaneous as the interviewer explores the candidate's responses.

Information interviews

The interviewer seeks facts that bear on a decision or contribute to basic understanding. Information flows mainly in one direction: one person asks a list of questions that must be covered and listens to the answers supplied by the other person, e.g., doctor-patient, boss-subordinate, etc.

Persuasive interviews

One person tells another about a new idea, product, or service and explains why the other should act on his/her recommendations. Persuasive interviews are often associated with, but are certainly not limited to, selling. The persuader asks about the other person's needs and shows how the product or concept is able to meet those needs. Persuasive interviewers require skill in drawing out and listening to others as well as the ability to impart suitable information, adapted to the situation and the sensitivities of the interviewee.

Exit interviews

In exit interviews, the interviewer tries to understand why the interviewee is leaving the organization or transferring to another department or division. A departing employee can often provide insight into whether the business and human resource is being handled efficiently or whether there is a considerable scope for improvement. The interviewer tends to ask all the questions while the interviewee provides answers. Encouraging the employee to focus on

events and processes rather than on personal gripes will elicit more useful information for the organization.

Evaluation interviews

A supervisor periodically gives an employee feedback on his/her performance. The supervisor and the employee discuss progress towards predetermined standards or goals and evaluate areas that require improvement. They may also discuss goals for the coming year, as well as the employee's long-term aspirations and general concerns.

Counselling interviews

A supervisor talks with an employee about personal problems that are interfering with work performance. The interviewer is concerned with the welfare of both the employee and the organization. The goal is to establish the facts, convey the company's concern, and steer the person towards a source of help. Only a trained professional should offer advice on problems such as substance abuse, marital tension, and financial trouble.

Conflict-resolution interviews

In conflict-resolution interviews, two competing people or groups of people with opposing points of view, such as Smith versus Jones, day shift versus night shift, General Motors versus the United Auto Workers, explore their problems and attitudes. The goal is to bring the two parties closer together, cause adjustments in perceptions and attitudes, and create a more productive climate.

Disciplinary interviews

In disciplinary interviews, a supervisor tries to correct the behaviour of an employee who has ignored the organization's rules and regulations. The interviewer tries to get the employee to see the reason for the rules and to agree to comply. The interviewer also reviews the facts and explores the person's attitude. Because of the emotional reaction that is likely, neutral observations are more effective than critical comments.

Termination interviews

A supervisor informs an employee of the reasons for the termination of the latter's job. The interviewer tries to avoid involving the company in legal action and tries to maintain a positive relationship with the employee. To accomplish these goals, the interviewer gives reasons that are specific, accurate, and verifiable.

Media interviews

Most of us might have watched programmes such as *Walk the Talk*, *Meet the Entrepreneur*, etc., as well as press conferences organized by the government/businesses/industries on television. Many a time, reporters call up over the phone the head of an educational institution, an important person in the government, or the chief executive officer (CEO) of a company to ask about their success stories or their alarming anomalies. We might have watched the interview given by Mr Ratan Tata, Chairman of Tata Group, during the release of Tata Nano or the one given by Mr Shashi Tharoor, the former Minister of State for External Affairs, during the IPL

Kochi Franchisee controversy. All these are media interviews, which are generally conducted to disseminate information to the public on the lifestyle and achievements of an individual/business or on the new policies introduced by the government. When there is an emergency, such as a terrorist attack, internal disturbances, etc., the media conducts interviews with the people in power and also with the experts in order to get their views, interpretations, and more information on the steps taken by the government. At times, we may give some news and the media may interview us over the phone to confirm some part of the message or to get more information on some issue. Thus, media interviews can help viewers to get quick updates on the issue.

In our professions, we may come across most of the types of interviews mentioned above. However, in this chapter, we will focus mainly on job interviews and resumes, and later on provide some tips for taking control in media interviews and press conferences. In the following section, we will discuss the various aspects of job interviews such as employer's expectations, certain critical success and failure factors, preparation, process, follow-up, and guidelines.

JOB INTERVIEWS

Campus interviews

Campus interviews are the interviews conducted at the campuses of colleges. The companies inform the students well in advance through the placement department of the college that they would be visiting their campus to select students for jobs. Once the companies arrive at the campus they would deliver a presentation (known as *Pre-placement Talk*) to the interested students about themselves, the type of projects they carry out, the selection mode (aptitude test/group task/case study/technical interview/HR interview), etc., and also answer the students' queries if any. As a company has to conduct several rounds of interview in a limited time, it may be able to spend only a little time with students. Hence, these interviews will be brief and to the point.

On-site interviews

On-site interviews are the interviews conducted at company premises. Many companies shortlist candidates after going through their resumes or talking to them over phone and call them to the company for a face-to-face interview (services such as www.placementindia.com, www.monsterindia.com, www.naukri.com, and www.bestjobsinindia.in give information about the job openings in various industries and forward the candidates' resumes

to the companies). At times, shortlisted candidates of the campus interview may also be called for a final interview at their office. As the interviewers have more time on hand in this type of interview, they may be able to spend more time with each candidate. Hence, this type of interview may be more detailed than the campus interviews.

Telephonic interviews

Telephonic interviews are the interviews conducted by the companies over the telephone. This type of interview may be used for shortlisting the candidates by talking to them and verifying the details of the resumes that they have submitted. The interviewing company informs the candidates well before, seeks their convenience, and sends an email to confirm the date and time of the interview. Generally, a telephonic interview will be shorter than the face-to-face interview and may not be the final interview for selecting the candidates.

Videoconferencing interview

With hiring becoming increasingly global, many companies especially multinationals conduct videoconferencing interviews to select candidates for jobs. Generally when hiring for senior positions from countries across the world, companies may use this mode of interviewing. Nevertheless, it can be used for recruiting within the same country as well. If the interviewers inform the candidates about the videoconferencing facility they have arranged in the candidate's institute or campus, they can use such facility. Otherwise, the candidates need to go to a nearby agency that provides videoconferencing facilities. In either case, they will attend the interview in a professional setting as they do in an in-person interview.

Stages of Interview*

Appraisal of résumé Some companies may shortlist candidates on the basis of projects they have completed, specific courses they have done, internships they have taken up, etc.

Tests Companies conduct aptitude tests (written/online) comprising sections such as technical, quantitative, verbal, reasoning, psychometric, etc.

Group discussions Most recruiters use this as the second stage after the aptitude tests. Some companies may conduct group activities as well to assess the candidates' personality, leadership skills, knowledge, communication skills, etc.

Presentations A few companies may ask the candidates to present themselves in two or three minutes in order to shortlist.

Face-to-face interview This may be the final round of an interview. Many companies these days give the candidate a short or long case containing a hypothetical problem in the business/ industrial context, ask the candidate to present the case, and suggest a few alternative solutions in a limited time.

Videoconferencing interview This could be a technical-cum-HR interview.

Negotiations This stage comes after the candidate has been selected. The company makes

a job offer out to the candidate after discussing the candidate's expectations about salary and other benefits.

Medical test Once the job offer is confirmed, the candidates may be asked to go for a medical examination. This is done by the companies that offer the benefit of medical claims. Since the amount that can be claimed is substantial, the company ensures that the candidate is suffering from a major ailment. This is also done to ensure that the candidate is not suffering from any condition that would prohibit him/her from performing the duties required of him/her.

Face-to-face Interviews: Campus and On Site

A face-to-face interview for any job is a personal communication between the interview panel and the interviewee. It gives adequate scope for both the parties to know about each other and to get immediate feedback during the various stages of the interview. As this is the most commonly used form of interview, let us discuss how one can give a face-to-face interview whether it is conducted on campus or at the company site.

Skills and attributes most employers look for

The following is a list of the skills and attributes most employers look for in prospective employees.

Technical skills: The candidate's subject knowledge suitable for the post he/she has applied for. For example, for a 'programmer-analyst trainee' the company may look for the candidate's ability

to plan, develop, test, and document computer programs, and apply knowledge of computer techniques and systems. Interview Situation 4 in the CD demonstrates the importance of indepth subject knowledge.

Analytical skills: The candidate's ability to examine and assess a situation, look at it from different perspectives, improve upon, and streamline it. For example, there may be a complex process that one may be asked to analyse critically.

Career objective: The candidate's goals and aspirations—what the candidate wants to pursue in his/her life and whether he/she is clear about it, whether the candidate's background and aptitude matches his/her career objectives.

Mental agility: The candidate's ability to quickly grasp things/mental alertness.

Communication skills: The candidate's skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Interpersonal skills: The candidate's skills to build relationships with colleagues, seniors, and subordinates, and ability to move with team members.

Flexibility/adaptability: The candidate's multi tasking skills or ability to adapt himself/herself to

the changing situations or environment and handle multiple concurrent projects. The candidate's

ability to adapt himself/herself to culturally diverse work environment.

Management/leadership skills: The candidate's ability to plan, organize, motivate, inspire, manage, and lead the colleagues to achieve the organizational goal.

Creativity: The candidate's out-of-the-box thinking and ability to innovate. For example, if others suggest *imposing fine* for an employee for violating a rule and you suggest *appointing him* as the guardian of rules, and justify your solution, you are creative.

Positive/can-do attitude: The candidate's positive way of looking at things and people. For example, if one thinks of and projects good aspects of one's college/organization/parents/employers/job, one has a positive attitude.

Social skills: The demeanour in public or with strangers/employers or how a person conducts himself/herself with others—the way one meets and greets others, stands, sits or moves in front of others, shakes hands, reacts to opinions, eats or drinks, etc.

Factors responsible for failure

There may be many reasons for failure in an interview. The following are ten common reasons for a candidate being rejected and some tips for handling them:

Arrogance It refers to overconfidence. If you exhibit overconfidence the panel may take you as arrogant. Avoid interrupting even before the interviewer completes his/her question. Do not display a facial expression that conveys, 'Why this silly question? I know the answer. It is very simple'. Do not lean on the back of your chair all the time airing arrogance.

Apathy It refers to lack of enthusiasm or interest. Avoid *frozen* or *nil* expression on your face. A smile on your face, eye contact, confident posture, timely gestures, etc., may convey that you are enjoying the interview and that you have really come for an important occasion in your life.

Uninhibited nervousness It refers to *explicit nervousness*. Though nervousness is common during an interview, you should try to control it rather than showcasing it through your clammy hands, dry lips, sweaty forehead, shaky hands or legs. If you are nervous, avoid keep clearing your throat/placing your hands on the table/wiping your forehead with tissue/handkerchief. Try to place your hands on the armrests of the chair and tell within yourself, 'I am fine/all is well' and look confidently at the interviewers.

Equivocation It refers to *evasion* or *beating around the bush*. When you do not know the answer to a question even after spending a few minutes on thinking, tell the interviewer politely, 'Sorry, I am unable to recall the correct point. However, can I make a guess?' Similarly, when you are unable to understand a question correctly get it clarified either by asking, 'Excuse me sir, could you please repeat the question? or paraphrasing in your own words rather than answering incorrectly.

Lack of concentration It refers to *inadequate focus because of poor listening, wandering mind or apathy*. The panel gets an idea of this quality when you give irrelevant answers or look elsewhere when the panel speaks to you. Remember to listen attentively exhibiting non-verbal cues and maintain eye contact. Listen completely and then answer.

Lack of crispness It refers to *lack of precision, conciseness, and clarity in your communication*. Time is precious for everybody, and hence keep in mind that the interview panel is busy with many interviewees like you. If you are well-prepared you can be focused and clear in your answers. Avoid being verbose and sounding artificial. Preparing answers for certain anticipated questions will enable you to be concise and clear.

Lack of social skills It refers to using inappropriate/not following certain etiquettes during your interview. Meet the interviewers with a firm handshake and a warm smile. If some snack or beverage is offered to you during interview, either refuse politely or take it exhibiting appropriate table manners. Use polite expressions such as, 'could you please...', sorry, pardon, excuse me, thank you, etc.' Thank the interviewers when you are offered a seat, speak softly but assertively, thank the panel before leaving the room, use positive and powerful words and be excited about your interview. Consider it as a learning experience.

Lack of firmness It refers to *lack of determination consistency/decisiveness*. Do not keep on changing the areas of your expertise. For instance, if you have mentioned in your objective that you are specifically interested in computer programming, your answers should reflect the same. You cannot suddenly change your interest to some other unrelated area. Try to look into your skills and knowledge while preparing for the interview. Know well what you want to become in life and what your interest areas are.

Inadequate quantitative/qualitative skills It refers to *inability to justify your answers or points of view*. Keep ready some examples to prove your skills or personal qualities. If you keep on speaking without adequate justification, the panel may not trust you.

Unsuitable personality It refers to *a personality that does not match the job requirements*. For instance, if you are appearing for a marketing manager's position, you need to be an excellent communicator. If you need to handle a lot of employees you need to be cordial, patient, and a good listener. If your personality does not match the demands of the job you are applying for, the panel may not be interested in selecting you. Hence, it is important to know the job description well before you appear for the interview.

Preparing for interviews

The key to success in an interview is not one's experience, grades, extracurricular activities, but one's attitude. To rise above others with better experience, grades, or skills, a highly positive work attitude is needed. The way most employers differentiate among candidates at the entry level is by the candidates' attitude towards work. They look for those who have the 'can-do'

attitude and are sincerely willing to put forth their very best effort. In the following paragraphs, we will touch upon the various aspects of preparing for interviews.

Preparation of résumé A resume is a written record of a candidate's education, and past and present occupation, prepared when applying for a job. This document enables the employer to judge the candidate's potential fit for the post. The resume should be modified as per the requirements of the job and the organization. We will discuss how to prepare a job-winning resume later in this chapter.

Personal attributes One needs to analyse one's own hard and soft skills, strengths, weaknesses, attitude, likes, and dislikes. At least two unique strengths and weaknesses must be distinguished. For example, if you think of your *hard work and commitment* as your strengths, many candidates may have this. On the other hand, your *passion for a particular job, your strong foothold in certain areas of study and research*, etc., may differ from others. Likewise, *being very*

sensitive or short tempered may be a weakness common with many candidates, whereas *taking many responsibilities at one time and struggling with the same* need not necessarily be. Hence, analyse yourself carefully and note down your important strengths and weaknesses. Think whether you look at things in a positive perspective or negative perspective. If you have a negative attitude, try to change yourself. Knowing yourself or introspecting your qualities and skills is a very important step in the preparation of your job interviews. Interview Situation 8 in the CD demonstrates a confident and convincing answer to the common interview question of strengths and weaknesses.

Mock interview A mock interview is more than just a chance to work out the interview jitters. It is an opportunity to practise interviewing technique and answers live. It is also a chance to hear constructive feedback from someone who can guide towards improving the style and presentation during the real interview. Just one mock interview may bring about a marked improvement in the interview skills. Ideally, the mock session should be videotaped, and thereby one can have two opinions—the mock interviewer's and one's own. Go through at least one mock interview. For maximum effectiveness, review your answers and then go through a second mock interview. This will give you confidence in your first real interview.

Knowing the prospective employer You need to know the company that you wish to apply/ have applied for. You can collect information about the following factors:

- Age of the company
- Services or products
- Competitors within the industry—both national and international
- Growth pattern
- Reputation/where it stands in the industry
- Divisions and subsidiaries

- Locations/length of time there
- Size of organization
- Sales/assets/earnings
- Provision for career growth
- Ongoing projects
- Mission, culture, and values

You can collect the information through the company website, annual report, CD-ROMs, brochures, columns/articles in newspapers and magazines, personal contacts, if any, in the company, etc. The depth of information that is collected beforehand is far greater than that provided in the pre-placement talks or at the interview.

Awareness of job description The nature of the job should be understood thoroughly. You can get an idea about the job profile from the company website. Also, you need to acquire a clear idea about the subject knowledge and skills that the job demands and also the knowledge of the type of activities you will be required to do. Such exercise will enable you to match the requirements with what you have in hand. If necessary, you can seek clarification from the person concerned at the company.

Subject fundamentals You need to quickly go through the contents of basic courses done in the college. The job description generally gives an idea about which subjects you need to refresh in mind. Interviewers generally ask very basic questions (e.g., What is an array? What is the difference between RAM and ROM?). Knowing your main subjects well before an interview gives you immense confidence, which in turn leads to a better performance.

Examples corroborating skills Besides testing the technical skills, the interviewers may also assess the candidate's team skills, decision-making ability, leadership skills, problem-solving skills, etc. Hence, pick up at least four or five such examples that show the above-mentioned qualities. Then prepare the narration of these examples using the STAR (situation, task, action, and result) approach. The STAR approach provides the outline for the answers. Preparing examples saves time and makes one feel more confident while answering behavioural questions. The STAR approach has been explained in the Students' Resource.

Appropriate dressing Campus fashions and work fashions are two different worlds. You should be doing the talking, and not your clothes. Select conservative, good-quality clothes. They should be neat, clean, and ironed. Make sure your shoes are conservative, clean, and polished. Arrange all your documents systematically in a neat folder and carry it with you.

Questioning the employer Interviewers expect you to come in with a working knowledge of the company as well as with a list of questions. When you have really done your homework you may not be able to think of any questions because you already have the company's history. Still,

make up some questions ahead of time to ask during the interview. They can be based on the job that you are applying for or your prospects in that job.

Memorizing your résumé Imagine the embarrassment if your interviewer asks you to elaborate on the project which you have done during your course of study, and you fumble. For every item on your resume, try to have a paragraph's worth of information in addition to what is already said; even better, try to think of a way in which each item illustrates one of your particular strengths or weaknesses. If you are too nervous to remember everything, it is all right to hold a copy of your resume in your hand to jog your memory.

Punctuality The waiting room is your initial face-to-face connection point with your potential employer. Always arrive at least ten to fifteen minutes early. This will give you the time necessary to do a quick mental review before the actual interview. Have a glass of water to avoid the 'cotton mouth' syndrome. Check in with the secretary or administrator. Ask how long the interview is scheduled for, so that you have an idea of how much time you will have.

Relaxing the nerves By the time the interview day comes closer, you should be set. Get a good night's sleep, eat well, and take a relaxing walk beforehand. And remember, it is just a job interview. If you do not get it, it is not the end of the world—take it as something better being in store for you in the future.

Knowing the possible types of interview

questions Interview questions may either be open-ended or close-ended. While open-ended questions allow one to give more information, close-ended questions restrict the responses to 'yes' and 'no'. For example:

Open-ended: How good a manager are you?

Close-ended: Are you a good manager?

There are basically six types of questions you may face during an interview:

1. Experience questions

The main purpose of this type of question is to objectively measure the features of your background.

What is your C.G.P.A. (cumulative grade point average)?

How long were you at ...?

2. Credential questions

This type of question aims at subjectively evaluating the features of your background.

What did you learn in your network programming class?

What were your responsibilities in that position?

3. Opinion questions

This type aims at analysing subjectively how you would respond in a series of scenarios.

What would you do in this situation?

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

4. Questions requiring innovative answers

These questions are asked to find out if you are capable of an original thought:

Can you sell this pen to me in one minute?

What kind of animal would you like to be?

5. Behavioural questions

The purpose of this type of question is to anticipate future responses based upon your past behaviour.

Can you give me a specific example of how you did that?

What were the steps you followed to accomplish that task?

Behavioural questions are gaining greater acceptance by the trained interviewers because past performance is the most reliable indicator of future results.

6. Tough questions

Good interviewers often ask difficult questions to establish the weaknesses as well as the strengths of each candidate. They want to find out how you stand out from the other candidates who possess almost the same skills as you. Look at your curriculum vitae from the interviewer's perspective. List out the gaps, weaknesses, and any problems you can see. If you were the interviewer, what would you ask? Work out your answer to each question.

The interview process

In its simplest form, an interview consists of three distinct steps:

- Establishing rapport • Closing
- Gathering information • Using body language effectively

Understanding and successful completion of these basic steps are critical for one to reach the next step in the process, whether that be another interview or the actual job offer.

Establishing rapport The rapport-establishing step is where the vital first impressions are formed. Some employers may claim to be able to make a decision about a candidate in thirty seconds or less. The truth is that you set the tone for the interview through your physical appearance and initial responses. When you enter the room, look around and establish eye contact with the people there. Smile warmly and greet them. Shake hands with a firm grip, if required, and sit when invited to do so. Address the panel members as 'Sir/Madam' or use their surnames if you know correctly. Do not call them by their first names unless they insist you to do so. Interviewers will analyse you in reference to the company culture. Further, your initial responses will greatly affect how you are perceived in the eyes of the interviewer. It is not necessarily the words you say, but how you say them. This is where your positive attitude and confidence will establish the tone for the interview.

answers against their expectations. Your honesty and sincerity in answering the questions should be evident; remember that interviewers are experienced and can judge whether you are

speaking the truth or telling a lie. Most interviewers are keenly aware of when they are being deceived or tricked. Questions in this step will usually be probing questions that drill deep into your background, attempting to get past the interview veneer. In fact, this is the stage in which you will need to consolidate the employer's view. You will be judged on attitude, work ethics (will you really work hard or are you just looking for an easy job?), intelligence, and honesty. Interview Situation 9 in the CD demonstrates undesirable and desirable answers to an ethics-based question.

Closing If your interview has been successful, there will usually be an indication of what is to come next. You may be given further company information that is reserved only for the select few. You may get a hint from the interviewer's body language. No matter what your view of the

interview is up to this point, it is important to personally close the interview by establishing continuity of the process. Ensure that you understand the next step and be prepared to follow up from your side. Always pursue each interview as if it were your last.

Using body language effectively Various aspects of body language, namely personal appearance, facial expression, posture, gesture, eye contact and personal space—all need to be used effectively during a job interview as they communicate your confidence, sincerity, enthusiasm, interest, seriousness, social skills, etc., to the interview panel.

Personal appearance Take care of your attire, accessories, and personal hygiene. Keep at least two sets of neat, well-ironed formal attire (men: pants, shirt, tie, belt, shoes; women: pants and full sleeved top/salwar suit/sari and blouse) specially for your interview. Clip your nails. Be well groomed. Avoid gaudy colours, clunky jewellery, and excess perfume.

Facial expressions Your face is an excellent tool to communicate your interest, sincerity and enthusiasm about your interview to the panel members. Wear a smile on your face while entering and meeting the interview panel and use appropriate expressions while answering the questions. Even if you do not like some questions, try not to show your dislike on your face. Be happy and sporting and answer the questions patiently.

Posture Do not sit on the edge of the chair and do not lean on the chair either. Sit in a straight posture in the beginning and after some time you can change the posture. Be natural but at the same time try to control nervousness if you have any by resting your hands on the arms of the chair.

Gesture Use small gestures (e.g., if you wish to show two fingers to tell 'I have two points' keep the fingers close to you rather than stretching close to the panel) while speaking as there will be little space between you and the panel. Exhibit suitable gestures, such as nodding head, tilting head, shaking hands, etc., at appropriate times.

Eye contact Maintain eye contact with all the panel members right from the time you meet them till you leave the interview room. While answering a question, look first at the member who posed the question and then at other members as well. Remember that if you do not look at the panel, you may appear to be diffident. Eye contact will also help you in getting feedback

from time to time about how the panel members receive your answers, thereby enabling you to change your approach.

Personal space As you will be sitting just on the opposite side of the panel, the space between you and the panel will be very less (a table may separate you and the panel). Hence, do not bend too much or stretch your hands on the table.

(*Note:* It will be helpful if you observe the interviewers' body language when they ask questions and also when you answer them. You can understand their intention and interest in asking the question and also their reaction to your answers.)

Interview Situation 1 in the CD demonstrates the importance of appropriate body language in interviews.

Answering techniques

Behavioural answering technique

- Talk about how you have done rather than how you would do.
- Be prepared to use examples from your work, classes, and extracurricular activities.
- Be ready to offer not just any example, but your own example.

Compelling story technique

- Expand your answers by developing the specific examples into compelling stories with personality, flair, and interest.
- Captivate your interviewer by providing the details and nuances that bring your story to life.
- Do not, however, be tempted into lengthy monologues that will stretch the interviewer's time.

Personality matching/mirroring technique

- Take your cue from the interviewer in terms of tone and approach. For instance, if the interviewers are using minimal gestures or facial expressions, you can also follow the same approach. If they speak in low tones, you can also do so. However, do not be too casual, even if the interviewer seems to be. Watch and learn.
- Bring under control the 'too much' area (too loud, too pushy, too confident, too egoistic, too formal, or too conventional) in your own personality.

Parroting technique

- Do not assume or make a 'best guess' of what the interviewer is looking for.
- If a question is unclear to you, it is absolutely appropriate to 'parrot back' the question in your own words to make sure you have understood the correct meaning.
- Use it as a temporary stall when you do not have a ready answer. You will get some time to think and answer.

Reframing technique

- Always attempt to answer the questions as straightforwardly as possible, initially.

- Reframe the original question to illustrate an area of your background that can further enhance your overall image. For example, if you are asked who your favourite

professor is, you might give a short answer about a particular professor, and then reframe the question by explaining why that professor is your favourite— ‘... in fact it was her inspiration that encouraged me to participate in a two-week internship over the winter break, where I combined my classroom knowledge with practical experience in the field of ...’ Thus, you can use this technique to your advantage in the interview.

Abraham Lincoln technique Abraham Lincoln, while arguing in the court, would usually argue both sides of the case to the jury. He would first take the opponent’s side of the issue and then his client’s side.

Leadership Skills

What Are Leadership Skills?

Leadership skills are the strengths and abilities in an individual that help them in overseeing processes, guiding initiatives and steering their team members towards achievement of goals. An effective leader creates a motivational vision of the future, inspires people to work towards it, manages delivery of the vision and builds a team so that it is more effective in achieving it. A few important traits of a leader include:

- ☐ Determined and Committed; drive the team towards a goal based on the work plan
- ☐ Risk takers; make calculated decisions even though there is uncertainty involved
- ☐ Motivators; inspire innovate ideas and draw the team towards the unified goal
- ☐ Communicators; listen actively, speak effectively and write persuasively

Why Are They Important?

Any team or organization takes the personality of their leaders, which is why it is absolutely vital for a team to have a good leader. If you are thinking why should I strive to be a leader, here is an answer:

1. **Develop Confidence:** Whether you are a student or a working professional, leadership skills will boost your confidence tremendously. Leading a team requires excellent communication skills and the charisma that motivates people; if you incorporate these qualities in your personality, you will naturally feel confident about it.
2. **Enhance Communication Skills:** This is another vital soft skill, which is discussed in our other guide. As a leader you become the voice of your team. Your effective communication of goals and agendas improves not only the output of the project but also the morale of the team. As a leader, the more effectively you communicate the more closer you will get to your goal.
3. **Build Accountability:** A leader is responsible for their team's actions, they have to make sure that the tasks are done and that every member is working to the best of their abilities. As a leader, if you demonstrate accountability and responsibility and gain the trust of your peers and superiors, this trait will help you at every stage of life.

4. Grow Networks: As a leader, one has to communicate with various administrators, leaders, and other high profile figures. Building relationship with these people can yield valuable personal and professional contacts.
5. Increase Recognition: A leader becomes the face of the team, so if your team is performing well under your guidance, individuals from all fields will recognize you.
6. Boost Problem Solving Skills: Leadership experiences allow you to hone problem solving and multitasking abilities that every successful future demands.
7. Strengthen Resume: Employers recognize the responsibilities that a leader takes on, and therefore, with leadership experience on your resume, you are more likely to get attention from the hiring manager.

Ways to develop leadership skills

1. Understand yourself: Analyze yourself and understand your strengths and weaknesses – this is the first step towards understanding others. Know your abilities and utilize them to deliver goals efficiently. Play your strengths and improve on your weaknesses.
2. Take initiatives and accept responsibilities: A typical boss outsources all roles to the team as and when they come, but a good leader doesn't wait around for others to get things started, instead they act on opportunities, set an example and work 'with' the team towards completion of goals.
3. Be enthusiastic and optimistic: Positive energy is contagious, and so is the lack of it. If people see their leader working enthusiastically, they will follow your lead. Inspire your team to work efficiently and develop an optimistic work environment.
4. Be passionate: This is a major trait in any leader. Would you look up to someone for guidance if they did not truly care about the goals of the team? Of course not! Great leaders are not just focused on getting team members to finish the tasks; they have a genuine passion and enthusiasm for the projects they work on.
5. Motivate people: Just getting people to finish their work is not a sign of a good leader; you need to motivate them and make sure they enjoy the tasks that are assigned to them. You should be friendly, understanding, fair and firm to get your team to give their best to the project.
6. Discipline: Discipline is a must for execution of a plan, even if your idea and vision is excellent, it is useless without proper discipline in the team. To be a good leader, exercise self-discipline and others will follow your lead.
7. Be patient: When you are working in a team, people are bound to make mistakes. You need to learn patience as no one respects an angry leader. Be constructive, tactful and tolerant when offering criticism to anyone.
8. Develop critical thinking: Good leaders are able to foresee difficulties before they happen and

can develop ways to prevent it. They are also aware of potential opportunities and use them to their advantage to benefit the team.

9. Set concrete goals and follow action plans: You need to know your destination before you start working on a plan to reach there. Design your action plan by setting a definitive goal, then work backwards from your goal to the present day and formulate action items that you will adhere to.

10. Common sense is not common! As a leader, you will be in a lot of fixes where you will have to

take prompt decision, and this is where common sense will help you.

11. Improve yourself by learning new skills: In the end, the idea is to always keep learning new things in life. Every experience will add value to your personality, and therefore, it is important to explore and try new things. Take a class in your favorite sports or hobby, learn a new language, strive to improve as you go forward in life, and you will be good to go!

Good leadership skills are a key ingredient in the recipe for success. These skills will help you at every step in your life; they will open several doors of opportunities for you, enhance your personality and fill you with confidence and zeal.

Formal Presentations

Formal presentation is the ability to deliver an interesting, informative, and organized presentation. There are several points which we are required to keep in mind when we are preparing for a formal presentation. They are:

- Planning: Occasion, audience, purpose, thesis, and material
- Outlining and structuring: Introduction, main body, and conclusion
- Choosing the mode of delivery
- Guidelines for effective delivery
- Body language and voice
- Visual aids

PLANNING

Preparing and delivering the first business presentation or public speech in our life can be daunting. We may find it difficult to decide what we want to say and how to say it, or perhaps the thought of speaking before an audience scares us. It is true that some people are naturally talented at public speaking. However, with some helpful guidance, anyone can prepare and deliver a successful speech that will be remembered for all the right reasons.

When preparing a presentation, the first instinct may be to sit down with a pen and paper and charge ahead into the first line of the speech. However, devoting some time to careful planning of the speech will save a lot of time and effort later on. Effective preparation enables us to answer all the questions and doubts about our speech before they arise. The contents of our speech, and how we deliver it, are based on five important factors:

- Occasion
- Audience
- Purpose
- Thesis
- Material

Occasion

Occasion refers to the factors such as the facilities available for our presentation, time, and context of our presentation. Facilities include the venue or locale along with the projection equipment, lighting, seating, ventilation, etc. Every location has its unique physical environment. We may present in magnificently large auditoriums or oppressively small conference rooms. We need to know the physical setting; find out whether we will have a podium or a table, whether

we will have a public address system, and so on. Also, attention should be paid to the physical conditions prevalent in the venue such as seating, room temperature, and lighting. We should try to understand whether the audience will be seated on hard metal chairs for an hour in a freezing room, whether the lighting will be too powerful to render our slide presentation ineffective, etc. If we identify such problems in advance, we can either ask for alternative arrangements or modify our materials, visual aids, and style to suit the environment.

Time refers to both the time of the day of presentation and the duration of the talk.

Straightforward and factual presentations may work well during the morning hours, but in case of an after-dinner speech, we may need to adapt our remarks to the occasion. Remembering the fact that most professional presentations are brief, we should present the important points in the first few minutes.

Context refers to the events surrounding our presentation. When we are presenting in a team, for example, we need to consider the team members. They might have left a positive or negative impression in the minds of the audience and, hence, we would need to adapt ourselves to the existing situation just before presenting our part. Besides these immediate events, the recent happenings in our company can also affect the presentation. For example, if you are about to present a new proposal on budget just after your company has suffered a financial loss, you should emphasize on those features of your budget that focus on reducing the costs. The occasion dictates not only the content of our speech, but also the duration, the tone, and the expectations of the audience. For example, humour may be inappropriate during a serious sales presentation, while it may be welcome during a wedding speech, or a sports event. We should also be aware of our role and any observations that we might make during our speech. For example, if you are presenting the final report of your project to a group of professors or senior colleagues, you need to take care of the short duration, firm but polite tone, and also their expectations.

Audience

All audiences have one thing in common. They are at the receiving end of our communication. They may be our friends, clients, colleagues, sometimes unfamiliar faces, or a combination of all these. The nature of our audience has a direct impact on the strategy we devise for our presentation. Hence, it is necessary to have some prior knowledge of the audience.

- What are their interests, likes, and dislikes?
- Are they familiar with the topic?
- Is their attitude hostile or friendly?
- What is the size of the group?
- Age range? Gender distribution?

Purpose

There can be three different purposes of a presentation: to inform, to analyse, or to persuade.

The purpose of a presentation not only decides the content and style but also affects the amount

of audience interaction. For instance, when our purpose is to provide information or to analyse a situation, we generally interact with the audience in a limited manner. Examples of typical presentation forms with an informative purpose can be a presentation at the new employee orientation programme or an explanation of our project status. On the other hand, when our purpose is to persuade people to take a particular action, collaborate with them in solving a problem, or making a decision, the interaction would be more. We generally begin by providing facts and figures that increase our audiences' understanding of the subject; we may also offer arguments in defence of certain conclusions and recommendations. In addition, we invite them to participate by expressing their needs, suggesting solutions, and formulating conclusions and recommendations. However, this would need a lot of 'on-the-spot' thinking skills and in-depth knowledge of the subject. Sales presentations, speeches by political leaders during election, etc., come under the category of persuasive presentations. At times, our goal may be to help the audience have a good time. When we welcome the gathering at a conference, we are cheering and gearing them up for the coming sessions. Likewise, when we give an after-dinner speech at a company gathering or an awards dinner, our purpose is to leave the group in a jovial mood. Depending on the purpose, we should be flexible enough to adjust to new inputs and unexpected audience reactions.

Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is very important in a presentation because it spells out the subject and establishes its impact among the audience. It is also the central idea of a presentation. Using a question or a sentence fragment should be avoided. Simple language should be used to frame a complete, declarative statement. Let us look at the following versions of thesis statement written by a student for a presentation on Choosing a reputed university for higher education. We can observe that the first two are ineffective for the reasons mentioned in parentheses, while the third is an effective thesis statement.

- Why should we be careful in choosing a reputed university? (question: does not reflect the content)
- Choosing a reputed university for higher education (fragment: does not tell anything specific; repetition of the topic of presentation)
- Choosing a reputed university for higher education has five significant advantages (tells the audience that they will know these benefits after listening to the presentation)

Begin to formulate your thesis statement as soon as you select your topic and decide on your purpose. Then allow yourself enough time to explore and develop your ideas. Shown below are the steps to arrive at your thesis statement:

Topic: Choosing a reputed university for higher education
Topic area: Advantages of a reputed university
General purpose: To inform
Specific purpose: I wish to tell my audience about the benefits they will reap by choosing a reputed university
Thesis statement: Choosing a reputed university for higher education has five significant advantages.

Material

Once we complete formulating our thesis, we need to develop the information that elaborates

it. Collecting material requires some research. For example, when we are explaining a process or procedure, the main text of our presentation will include a series of steps involved. Similarly, when we are giving a product presentation, besides the complete information about the product, we may have to collect information pertaining to the competing products and their features. For most of the professional presentations, we may have to consult the library, Internet, magazines, newspapers, organizational records, statistics, and publications. Sometimes, we may even have to collect information through surveys or interviews. We may also have to contact external organizations to procure information for some of our presentations. Once we finish collecting material and ideas for our presentation, we should assemble them at one place. We may list all the ideas on a piece of paper and then organize them.

OUTLINING AND STRUCTURING

An outline is a framework in which bits and pieces of the presentation material are fitted. It serves as a guide to show us the right path for our presentation. Hence, spending time in developing an outline never goes waste. In fact, we can use an outline as our ‘script’, but should be prepared to deviate in response to audience feedback. Suppose we are planning to deliver a presentation on ‘Graduate study in the USA’ to the graduating students of a college. This may be a thirty-minute presentation about the steps and requirements to pursue an MS or PhD programme in the US universities. The outline can be in the form of words, phrases, or sentences: • Introduction • Decision-making • Basics of US higher education • Graduate study programmes – MS – PhD • Application forms • Admission procedure • Requirements – Statement of purpose – Academic aptitude – Professional development – Personal qualities – Presentation skills – Recommendation letters • Conclusion We may have to revise the subheadings under each or some of these main topics. But, as already said, we should be ready to skip or add some topics if the audience wants us to do so. We will learn more about outlining in Chapter 13 on reports. Structuring or organizing the material clearly is vital for an effective presentation. A wellorganized presentation can make our messages more comprehensible, create the desired effect on our audience, and boost our image as a speaker. On the other hand, rambling or taking too long to get to the point, including irrelevant material in the speech, omitting necessary information, or messing up the ideas can lead to a chaotic structure. Even experienced speakers get into trouble if their material is not organized appropriately and end up confusing their audience. The key to all these problems is to organize our ideas into a well-known pattern. First, we need to tell our audience what we want to tell them; then, we should tell them the ideas; and finally, we should repeat what we have already said. In other words, a presentation should have the following format:

- Introduction should grab attention, introduce topic, contain a strategy for establishing credibility, preview the speech, establish rules for questions, and have a smooth transition to the main text.

- Main body should contain all the main points and supporting material; the entire matter should be organized into a logical sequence.
- Conclusion should contain signal, highlight/summary, closing statement/re-emphasis, a vote of thanks, and invitation to questions.

Introduction

The introduction to a presentation does the job of the preface to a book. It catches the attention (attention grabber) of the audience, tells them the topic and purpose (topic and thesis), develops in them a trust for the presenter and the presentation (credibility), kindles their interest in what the presenter is going to speak in the minutes to come (preview), and takes them slowly into the main body of the speech (transition). Having gone through the sample introduction, let us look into its components in a little more detail:

Greeting

We can start with good morning/good afternoon, etc., or can begin by (a) extending a compliment to our audience—I feel good to present before an intelligent/august gathering like yours/It is refreshing to look at your bright faces this morning; (b) referring to the location or occasion—I hope you all had a good time at the river cruise last evening; On the occasion of World Education Day, let me wish all of you to have lifelong learning.

Attention grabber

This catches the attention of our audience and prepares them to listen to the rest of our presentation. Depending on the topic, we can use a question, a quotation, a startling statement, an anecdote, or even a video or audio clip to grab the attention of the audience. For example, as in the introduction to ‘Effective use of DDT-based insecticides’ given above, you can begin your presentation with a series of questions: ‘How often do you use insecticides? Are you aware of their harmful effects?’ or with the statement, ‘You would be shocked to know that thousands of people die every day by the careless use of insecticides’.

Imagine that you are giving a presentation on the topic ‘The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Developing Leadership Skills’. You can start your presentation with an anecdote similar to the one given below:

On Friday, when I was attending a meeting, I could barely control my open appreciation of Ms Veena, the Chairperson. You may wonder why. I will tell you now. She was able to resolve the conflict between two participants amicably simply by using intelligence to understand their emotions. Yes, friends, in today’s business world, emotional intelligence plays a very important role in cultivating various skills—leadership skill is one of them.

After catching the attention, state clearly and precisely the purpose of your presentation. For

instance, it can be as pointed as this—‘One reason brings me here today—to inform you about our new performance appraisal system’.

Topic and thesis statement

As the topic is very important, we need to include it in our visual aid (PowerPoint slide or overhead transparency) and project the same. Then our specific purpose can be stated in the form of a thesis statement as previously discussed under the heading ‘Thesis’.

Credibility

Many factors may help us develop trust in the audience’s minds for us and our presentation matter. While the audience may believe us because of our power/status/experience, we may need to speak out explicit statements in order to establish credibility in their minds if we are young or inexperienced. We can achieve this goal by stating our interest in the topic, by quoting some relevant statement from a recent newspaper or magazine, or by informing them how much research we have done on the topic.

Preview

We can tell our audience what is coming ahead in our presentation. We can also give a brief idea about the issues we are going to cover in the given time. This can be done by showing the slide containing the main topics and subtopics in the presentation outline.

Rules for question and answer session

Good presenters always anticipate questions and prepare their answers as well during the preparation stage. It is better to inform the audience in the beginning itself whether they can ask questions during or after the presentation.

Transition

Before going to the slide containing the first main point, we can speak out a phrase or ask a question to provide a link between the introduction and the main body of the presentation—‘now that you know what are the issues I am going to discuss today, let me begin with the first point, that is, ...’; ‘So, what are the characteristics of a reputed university?’—It is better to adopt a uniform style to state the main points of a presentation; that is, all the points are in the form of phrases, questions, etc. Do not mix different formats.

A good introduction creates interest and leads the audience effectively into the main body of the speech.

Main Body

The main body, the discussion, or the text part follows the introduction and supports the aim or specific purpose of a presentation. The major points we highlight in our opening section will be expanded here. Depending on the topic, and the introduction part, we can choose from any of the following patterns to organize the main body of a presentation.

Chronological This pattern can be used for organizing points that can be arranged sequentially (in the order in which the events occurred or appeared before us). The entire presentation can be arranged chronologically. This method is useful for topics such as ‘the profile of our institute’,

‘the changing face of the earth’, and ‘history of sports’.

Categorical This is one of the easiest and most commonly adopted patterns for many topics. The entire presentation can be divided into various topics and subtopics arranged on the basis of subordination and coordination. This can be used for topics such as ‘the role of advertising’, ‘environmental protection’, ‘importance of professional presentation’, etc.

Cause and effect This method can be adopted whenever a ‘cause and effect’ relationship exists. Here, we have to illustrate and explain the causes of the situation and then focus on the effects. It is relevant for topics such as ‘impact of cinema on children’, ‘Internet—boon or bane’, ‘global warming’, etc.

Problem–solution Here, we divide the presentation into two parts. In the first part, we describe and analyse the problem. After the analysis we move on to the main objective of the presentation to suggest or propose a solution to the problem. It is a very helpful and effective way for persuasive presentation. For topics such as ‘population explosion’, ‘addiction to gaming’,

etc., this method can be used.

We can strengthen our argument or ideas by providing examples, illustrations, statistics, testimonies, analogies, or definitions.

Supporting material Solid ideas do not always impress our audience. We need to back up our well-organized points in a way that makes the audience notice, understand, and accept our message. In other words, we need to use plenty of supporting material or develop our core points adequately.

Definitions When we deliver a presentation on a topic that we feel that the audience is not too familiar with, we can use a definition to develop our idea.

Conclusion

The conclusion of a presentation provides yet another opportunity for us to impress the audience. Hence, the conclusion should be prepared and presented with the same interest as we take for the introduction. We can conclude our presentation by reviewing the main points. A signal such as to sum up, to conclude, to review, in the end, etc. to indicate the end of the presentation must be used. As we conclude, we should remind the audience briefly about the purpose of our presentation, which could be either to persuade them or to inform them. We should tell them

what we want them to do, think, or remember based on the presentation. The temptation to wrap up in haste or add something new in this part of the speech should be avoided. We can also conclude with a quotation or can recall the earlier story, joke, anecdote with which we

commenced our presentation to bring it to a full circle. Some presenters bring in a change in the pace or pitch of their voice. They slow the rate and speak in a lower pitch so as to mark the difference between the main body and conclusion of their presentation.

Modes of Delivery

What is it that makes our presentation hold the attention and interest of the audience? Our manner of presentation, our vocal inflections, our perfectly timed pauses, our facial expressions, and our gestures—all these are part of an expert delivery. Even a dull and drab topic will turn out to be more interesting if presented well, whereas a really interesting topic may appear to be dull because of poor delivery. So one thing becomes clear—having something to say is not enough; you must also know how to say it. Good delivery does not call attention to itself. It conveys our ideas clearly, interestingly, and without distracting the audience. Most audiences prefer delivery that combines a certain degree of formality with the best attributes of good conversation—directness, spontaneity, animation, vocal and facial expressiveness—and a lively sense of communication. The following discussion provides some suggestions so as to enable one to select the best mode of delivery for a presentation. There are four modes of delivery that can be used for making presentations:

- Extemporaneous
- Manuscript
- Impromptu
- Memorization

Extemporaneous mode

Extemporaneous presentation is by far the most popular and effective method when carefully prepared. When speaking extempore we must prepare the notes beforehand and rehearse our presentation. There is no need to learn every word and line by rote. Our presentation will sound quite spontaneous to the audience, as after thorough preparation, we are speaking while thinking. Careful planning and rigorous practice enable one to collect the material and organize it meticulously. Let us look at some of the positive and negative aspects of this mode of presentation.

Advantages

- As we have enough time to prepare for the presentation, we work hard on the theme/central idea. We can present the theme in the best possible structured way.
- Thorough preparation on our part makes us feel secure and we carry out our responsibility with self-confidence and assurance. Adaptation is also possible if the need arises. In other words, the language of any written text does not bind us. We can be flexible in our use of language.
- Supporting material helps to present our points clearly and also adds weight to our

agreement. Appropriate selection of quotations, illustrations, statistics, etc., helps us to substantiate our point.

- Our delivery sounds natural and spontaneous to the audience as it allows us to establish a rapport with the audience through more eye contact.
- It enables us to move freely, with ease.

Disadvantages

- If preparation is inadequate, we can get lost and find ourselves uncomfortable.
- If we rely too much on note cards and start reading out from them instead of just consulting them for reference, then the speech will lose its spontaneity

Manuscript mode

In manuscript presentation, material is written out and we are supposed to read it out aloud verbatim. We are not supposed to memorize the speech and then recollect it. It is there in front of us to read. But, we should be wise enough not to attempt to read a speech until we have become a proficient reader. Unfortunately most speakers are not good readers. They make it uninteresting by reading in a dull and monotonous way. However, we can overcome this problem with consistent efforts. We could maybe rehearse with a friend or colleague.

For effective use of this mode, we should go through the material several times beforehand until we become absolutely familiar with the text. We should strive to choose material designed to achieve understanding. We should know what is written where.

Advantages

- It is a permanent and accurate record of whatever we have to say.
- There is no chance of tampering with the facts and figures.
- The material is organized systematically. We just have to keep in mind the step-by-step development of main points.
- Language gets polished because we can write and rewrite our material until we feel satisfied on all counts.

Disadvantages

- Since we will be reading from the manuscript, we get less time for making proper eye contact, which is essential to feel the pulse of our audience.
- Since we will be reading to the audience, we cannot talk to them. There is not much scope either for non-verbal communication.
- Adaptation is rather difficult, if the need arises, to give a different twist to our material.
- In the absence of effective reading skill, we fumble

Impromptu mode

The impromptu mode, as the word suggests, is what we use when we have to deliver

an informal speech without preparation. For example, at a formal dinner party you may be invited to deliver a vote of thanks. Do not panic and babble something in an unmethodical way. Instead, calmly state your topic and then preview the points you are to make. Support your points with whatever examples, quotes, and anecdotes you recall at that time. Then briefly summarize or restate your points and end with a smile. Remember, it is not difficult for you to anticipate certain occasions where you may be asked to speak a few words. Be as brief as possible during your impromptu presentations.

Advantages

- We sound very natural because we do not get enough time to make any elaborate preparation.
- We get a chance to express our thoughts irrespective of what others think or say about that particular topic.
- We are spontaneous as we say what we feel, not what we ought to say.

Disadvantages

- The presentation lacks organized development of ideas because of the shortage of time.
- There is no supplementary material (no data, no statistics, no illustrations, no figures) to substantiate the speech.
- Chances of rambling are very high. Various points may hang loose.
- There is frequent use of vocalized pauses.
- The presentation may turn out to be a failure if the speaker has inadequate proficiency in the language he/she uses.

Gaining a reputation for being a good impromptu speaker can do a great deal for our career aspirations. It has been shown that there is a positive correlation between communication effectiveness and upward mobility.

Memorization mode

This method of presentation is very difficult for most of us. Probably only a handful of us can actually memorize an entire speech. Usually we memorize only the main parts and are in the habit of writing key words on cards to help us out through the actual presentation. In some cases, if we wish to quote somebody or narrate an anecdote or a joke, it is better to memorize

these for our presentations.

This type of delivery stands somewhere between extemporaneous and manuscript presentation. Speech is written out beforehand, then committed to memory, and finally delivered from memory.

Advantages

- It is very easy for such speakers to maintain an eye contact with the audience throughout the presentation.
- The speaker can easily move and make use of appropriate non-verbal communication to add extra value to the speech.
- It is possible to finish the speech in allotted time.

Disadvantages

- Memorization requires too much of time.
- There are chances of making it a dull and monotonous presentation because we go exactly by whatever we have memorized.
- Even our memory skills may fail us if we have not rehearsed adequately.
- No flexibility or adaptation is possible during the speech.
- The speaker gets flustered if he/she forgets a word, sentence, or a whole paragraph.

Among all the four modes of delivery, extemporaneous is the best because of its flexible nature and its effectiveness. Hence, it is always better to use this mode to make presentations more lively, effective, and memorable.

Guidelines for Effective Delivery

Success of any presentation also depends on the various elements—verbal, non-verbal (body language), vocal, and visual—used during a presentation.

Verbal elements

Word pictures We may give our speech a graphic quality by painting word pictures that allow the audience's imagination to take over. Specific details allow an audience to see the scenes we are describing. Our major job as a speaker is to tell somebody something. We should present our point clearly and just enough so that the listener clearly understands the intended message. The task is not merely to get words out of our mouth, but to transfer ideas into the listeners' minds.

Warm words Cold words leave us uneasy and unsure while warm words make us feel secure and comfortable. Words are powerful. They conjure images, evoke emotions, and trigger responses deep within us and we react, often without knowing the reason. In the early days of instant coffee, advertisers got off to a bad start by stressing words such as 'quick', 'time-saving', and 'efficient'. All these words are without warmth and feeling. Makers of fresh coffee fought

back with warm, happy, and appetizing words such as 'aroma', 'fresh', and 'tasty'. The instant coffee industry learnt the lesson and its product became 'delicious', 'rich', and 'satisfying'. Sales soon boomed.

Words also suggest whether something is good or bad. We should use those words that strengthen our arguments and weaken those of our opponents.

Similes and metaphors Although technical presentations do not require the use of similes and metaphors, we cannot deny that they not only add flavour to a speech but also make abstract ideas imaginable. Reach for vivid comparisons your listeners can understand and remember. Try the following metaphors in your speeches:

- As inflexible as an epitaph
- As cold as outer space
- Building a business is like building an empire
- As profitable as a gold mine
- Delay is the deadliest form of denial

Impact words ‘We’ and ‘you’ are the most important words of all. We cannot stir the audience up if we do not address them directly and relate them to us and our topic. Remember the five-to-one rule: Every time you use the singular ‘I’, try to follow it with five plurals. Given below are some words that you may use in your presentations or speeches to get desired results:

discovery, guarantee, love, proven, safely, easy, health, vigour, money, results, save, protect, interest, challenge, opportunity, excitement, enthusiasm, flourish, progress, favourable, adaptation, circumstances.

Smooth flow

We can also make our speech flow smoothly and gracefully from beginning to end by using some transitional devices. They promote clarity, emphasize important ideas, and sustain our listeners’ interest. Some transitional devices are discussed below:

- **Bridge:** A bridge is a word that alerts the audience that we are changing direction or moving to a new thought. Some examples are:

- (a) We completed the project in January. Meanwhile other developments were taking place.
- (b) That was bad enough. However, there was even worse to come.

- **Number item:** A number item keeps the listeners informed about where we are in a presentation, which covers several points such as:

The first advantage of the new plan is ...

The second benefit of the plan is ...

- **Trigger:** A trigger is a repetition of the same word or phrase to link one topic with another, such as:

That was what the financial situation was like in March. Now I will tell you what it is like today.

- **Interjection:** An interjection is a word or phrase inserted in a commentary to highlight the importance or placement of an idea, such as:

So what we have learned—and this is important—is that, it is impossible to control personal use of office telephones.

Now here is another feature—perhaps the best of all—that makes this such a terrific plan.

- **Internal summary:** Internal summary helps our audience stay oriented by providing a one-sentence summary during the course of delivering the main text of our presentation, such as:

Now, you can see that the problem grew from several causes: a shortage of parts, inexperienced maintenance people, and the overload of opening a new warehouse.

- **Internal preview:** An internal preview, like an internal summary, orients the audience by alerting them to the upcoming points, such as:

You are probably wondering how all these changes will affect you. Well, some of them will make

life much easier, and others will present some challenges. Let us look at three advantages first, and then we will look at a couple of those challenges I mentioned.

- **Signpost:** Signposts tell our audience where we are in our presentation. When we say, 'There are four advantages, as I had already said. Having discussed the first two of them, let me move on to the third advantage', the statement would serve as a signpost to tell the audience that we have completed two and there are two more to go.

- **Rhetorical question:** A rhetorical question can subtly change the direction of the discussion, such as:

That is what a change of image can do to a company. So how can we improve our image?

- **Flashback:** A flashback is a sudden shift/reference to the past, and breaks what seems to be a predictable narrative. For example:

Today, we are the market leader. However, three years ago, this was not the case.

- **List:** A list is a very simple way of combining apparently unrelated elements, such as: We made four attempts to solve the problem.

- **Pause:** A pause is a non-verbal method of showing our audience that we have finished a section of our speech and we are about to move on to another.

- **Physical movements:** Physical movements towards a visual aid, such as a black/white board, flip chart, or screen, suggest that we are moving on to something new.

- **Quotations, anecdotes, and jokes:** A quotation, anecdote, or joke can serve as an excellent

link. We may see a joke like the one given below as a good link to the idea that one may wish to take up next:

The Chairman told me a story of a job applicant who said, 'I like the job, sounds fine, but the last place I worked at, paid more, gave more overtime, more bonuses, subsidies, travel allowances, holidays with pay, and generous pension schemes.'

The Chairman said, 'Why did you leave?' The applicant answered, 'The firm went broke.'

Non-verbal elements

Our appearance, facial expressions, eye contact, postures, gestures, and the space we share with our audience, all communicate our interest, enthusiasm, dynamism, intention, and confidence

to our audience. Whatever the occasion, the following tips will help you to use body language effectively during your presentation.

- Wear a formal dress and use simple accessories; take care of your personal hygiene
- Use facial expressions to exhibit your enthusiasm and interest; do not show your irritation or anger even when someone interrupts you or asks a question that appears to be silly to you; be polite in answering them
- Make eye contact with all sections of the audience (avoid staring at somebody) to observe their reactions and also to show your sincerity and interest
- Use well-timed gestures; avoid monotonous gestures
- Stand tall and straight with shoulders upright; walk/move swiftly; avoid too many and monotonous movements
- Do not come very close to the audience; maintain a distance of at least 4–12 feet
 - While using blackboard, raise your voice and look at the audience in between
 - Avoid fiddling with key ring or tie while presenting
 - Avoid looking outside even if there is some external noise. Try to concentrate on your ideas and audience

Vocal elements

Our voice can serve as an important tool to support our verbal message. How we sound is as important as how we look or what we say. Our vocal elements, namely the tone, pitch, rate, and volume, reflect our attitude about ourselves, our message, and our audience. Try the following tips to help you use your vocal elements to enhance the impact of your presentation: • Speak with enthusiasm and sincerity • Avoid fast delivery • Adjust the volume of your voice • Use silence and pauses effectively • Avoid monotones or vocalized pauses • Articulate each word clearly • Use your optimal pitch

Visual elements

Our audience will remember facts easily if the ideas are connected to the right-brain stimulation. The way to stimulate the right side of the brain is to show pictures. Visual stimuli are more effective than verbal stimuli. We often recall the colour of the cover of a book rather than its title and subtitle.

Advantages

People find our message more interesting, grasp it more easily, and retain it longer when we use visual support along with our words. Besides increasing the clarity of the message, visuals

make presentations more interesting. For example, investment brokers often use an array of well-prepared charts, tables, models, and so on, to add variety to information that would be dull without them.

Graphics can also boost our image in ways that extend beyond the presentation. They add a professional flavour to our presentation. Finally, our audience remembers a visual message longer than the verbal message.