

Business Communication Essentials

Chapter 12 Developing and Delivering Business Presentations

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Chapter 12 - 1

Learning Objectives

1. Highlight the importance of presentations in your business career and explain how to adapt the planning step of the three-step process to presentations.
2. Describe the tasks involved in developing a presentation.

Learning Objectives

3. Describe the six major design and writing tasks required to enhance your presentation with effective visuals.
4. Outline three special tasks in completing a presentation.
5. Describe four important aspects of delivering a presentation in today's social media environment.

Planning a Presentation

(LO 12.1) Highlight the importance of presentations in your business career and explain how to adapt the planning step of the three-step process to presentations.

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Presentations offer you important opportunities to put all your communication skills on display—not only in research, planning, writing, and visual design, but also in interpersonal and nonverbal communication. Oral presentations can also provide you a chance to demonstrate your ability to think on your feet, grasp complex issues, and handle challenging situations—all attributes that executives look for when searching for talented employees to promote within the organization. Perhaps best of all, oral presentations let your personality shine through in ways that even the best-written reports can't provide.

The Three-Step Process for Oral and Online Presentations

1 Plan → 2 Write → 3 Complete

Analyze Situation

Gather Information

Choose Medium and Channel

Get Organized

Adapt to the Audience

Compose the Message

Revise Message

Master Delivery

Prepare to Speak

Overcome Anxiety

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You can take control of the situation by using the three-step writing process to prepare for the challenge of planning, creating, and delivering oral and online presentations. In addition, you must understand that creating a high-quality presentation for an important event can take many days, so be sure to allow enough time.

Planning oral presentations is much like planning any other business message: you analyze the situation, gather information, select the right medium, and organize the information. Gathering information for oral presentations is essentially the same as it is for written communication projects. The other three planning tasks have some special applications when it comes to oral presentations; they are covered in the following sections.

Analyzing the Situation

- Defining Your Purpose

- Developing an Audience Profile

- Considering the Circumstances

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As with written communications, analyzing the situation involves defining your purpose, developing an audience profile, and considering the circumstances.

The purpose of most of your presentations will be to inform or to persuade, although you may occasionally need to make a collaborative presentation, such as when you're leading a problem-solving or brainstorming session.

The more you know about your audience, their needs, and their expectations, the more effectively you'll be able to communicate with them. In addition, try to anticipate the likely emotional state of your audience members.

As you analyze the situation, also consider the circumstances. Is the audience in the room or online? How many people will be present, and how will they be seated? Can you control the environment to minimize distractions? What equipment will you need? Such variables can influence not only the style of your presentation but also the content itself.

Selecting the Best Media and Channels

Controlled Methods

- Specific Software
- Conference Room
- Company's Online Media

Your Choice of Methods

- In-Person Presentations
- Webcasts or Screencasts
- Twitter and Web-Based

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For some presentations, you'll be expected to use whatever media and channels your audience, your boss, or the circumstances require. For example, you might be required to use specific presentation software and a conference room's built-in display system or your company's online meeting software.

For other presentations, though, you might be able to choose from an array of choices for presentations: from live, in-person presentations to webcasts (online presentations that people either view live or download later from the web), screencasts (recordings of activity on computer displays with audio voiceover), or twebinars (the use of Twitter as a backchannel for real-time conversation during a web-based seminar).

Organizing a Presentation

The Linear Presentation Approach

- Outlined like conventional messages
- Presenter follows point-by-point flow

The Nonlinear Presentation Approach

- Doesn't flow in any particular direction
- Presenter moves within and between topics

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The possibilities for organizing a business presentation fall into two basic categories: *linear* or *nonlinear*.

Linear presentations are outlined like conventional messages and follow a predefined flow from start to finish. The linear model is appropriate for speeches, technical, and financial presentations, and other presentations in which you want to convey your message point by point or build up to a conclusion following logical steps. Most presenters use Keynote or PowerPoint to design and present linear presentations.

Prezi is the best-known nonlinear presentation software. A nonlinear presentation doesn't flow in any particularly direction; instead, it gives the presenter the option to move back and forth between topics, and up and down in terms of level of detail. Nonlinear presentations can be useful when you want to be able to show complicated relationships between multiple ideas or elements, to zoom in and out between the “big picture” and specific details, to explore complex visuals, or to have the flexibility to move from topic to topic in any order.

Choosing an Approach and Presentation Software

Match the Tool to the Task

Focus on the Story, not on Software

Rethink Software “Limitations”

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Keep several points in mind if you have a choice of which approach to take and which software to use.

First, match the tool to the task, not the other way around. A detailed technical discussion might need a linear presentation, whereas a freeform brainstorming session might benefit from a nonlinear approach, for example.

Second, if they are used well, software features can help you tell your story, but your story is what matters—not the software. If they are used poorly, software features only get in the way. (Overuse of zooming in Prezi is a good example of this.)

Third, Prezi is sometimes viewed as being a more dynamic, engaging way to deliver a presentation. However, PowerPoint and Keynote aren't limited to creating boring, linear flows of bullet points. Such limitations are usually a result of how the tools are used, rather than limitations in the software itself. For more information, refer to “Choosing Structured or Free-Form Slides” in this chapter.

Defining Your Main Idea

Subject

Purpose

Audience

One-Sentence Summary
of What You Want to
Share with Your
Audience

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Regardless of which overall approach you take, a successful presentation starts with a clear *main idea* that you want to share with your audience. Start with a one-sentence summary that links your subject and purpose to your audience's frame of reference. By focusing on your audience's needs and using the "you" attitude, you help keep their attention and convince them your points are relevant.

Limiting Your Scope

Work Within
Time Constraints Hold Audience's
Attention

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Limiting the scope is important for two reasons. First, for most presentations, you must work within strict time limits. Second, the longer you speak, the harder it is to hold the audience's attention, and the more difficult it is for your audience to retain your key points. Use time constraints as a creative challenge to help you focus on the message points that are most important to your audience.

Choosing Your Approach

- Shorter Presentations:
 - Direct approach for routine information or good news
 - Indirect approach for bad news or persuasion
- Longer Presentations:
 - Direct approach to motivate or inform
 - Indirect approach to analyze, persuade, or collaborate

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If you have 10 minutes or less, organize your message much as you would any other brief message. Use the *direct approach* if the subject involves routine information or good news; use the *indirect approach* if the message involves bad news or persuasion.

Longer presentations are often organized more like reports. If the purpose is to motivate or inform, you'll typically use the direct approach and a structure imposed naturally by the subject. If your purpose is to analyze, persuade, or collaborate, organize your material around conclusions and recommendations or around a logical argument. Use the direct approach if the audience is receptive and the indirect approach if you expect resistance.

Preparing Your Outline

- State the purpose and main idea.
- Organize points and sub-points.
- Identify major points throughout.
- Plan transitions between sections.
- Prepare bibliography or source notes.
- Choose a compelling title.

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A presentation outline performs the same all-important function as an outline for a written report: helping you organize the message in a way that maximizes its impact on your audience. Prepare your outline in several stages:

- State your purpose and main idea, then use these to guide the rest of your planning.
- Organize your major points and sub-points in logical order, expressing each major point as a single, complete sentence.
- Identify major points in the body first, then outline the introduction and close.
- Identify transitions between major points or sections, then write these transitions in full sentence form.
- Prepare your bibliography or source notes; highlight those sources you want to identify by name during your talk.
- Choose a compelling title. Even if the title won't be published, it will help you focus your thoughts around your main idea.

Creating a Speaking Outline

Simplify the
Planning Outline

Condense Points
and Transitions

Add Delivery
Cues

Arrange Your
Notes

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Many speakers like to prepare both a detailed *planning outline* and a simpler *speaking outline* that provides all the cues and reminders they need to present their material. To prepare an effective speaking outline, follow these steps:

- Start with the planning outline, then strip away anything you don't plan to say to your audience (statement of general purpose, main idea, bibliography, and so on).
- Condense points and transitions to keywords or phrases, choosing words that will prompt you to remember what each point is about.
- Add delivery cues, such as places in your outline where you plan to pause for emphasis or use a visual.
- Arrange your notes on cards (or sheets of paper, if you prefer); number your cards (or sheets of paper) so that you can keep them in order. If you plan to use PowerPoint or other presentation software, you can also use the “notes” field on each slide for speaking notes.

Summary of Discussion

- In this section, we discussed the following:
 - The Three-Step Process for Oral and Online Presentations
 - Analyzing the Situation
 - Selecting the Best Media and Channels
 - Organizing a Presentation
 - Choosing an Approach and Presentation Software

(Continued on Next Slide)

Summary of Discussion

- Defining Your Main Idea
- Limiting Your Scope
- Choosing Your Approach
- Preparing Your Outline
- Creating a Speaking Outline
- The next section will cover *Developing a Presentation.*

Developing a Presentation

(LO 12.2) Describe the tasks involved in developing a presentation.

Although you usually do not write out a presentation word for word, you still engage in the writing process—developing your ideas, structuring support points, phrasing your transitions, and so on.

Adapting to the Audience

Small Groups

Large Audiences

Casual Style
Conference Room
Invite Participation

Formal Style
Auditorium
Limit Participation

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Your audience's size, your subject, your purpose, your budget, and the time available for preparation all influence the style of your presentation. If you're speaking to a *small group*, particularly people you already know, you can use a casual style that encourages audience participation. A small conference room, with your audience seated around a table, may be appropriate. Use simple visuals and invite your audience to interject comments. Deliver your remarks in a conversational tone, using notes to jog your memory if necessary.

If you're addressing a *large audience* or if the event is important, establish a more formal atmosphere. During formal presentations, speakers are often on a stage or platform, standing behind a lectern and using a microphone so that their remarks can be heard throughout the room or captured for broadcasting or webcasting.

Developing Your Presentation

Distinct Elements

The
Introduction

The Body

The Close

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Like written documents, oral presentations are composed of distinct elements: the introduction, the body, and the close.

Presentation Introduction

- Getting the Audience's Attention

- Establishing Your Credibility

- Previewing Your Presentation

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A good introduction arouses the audience's interest in your topic, establishes your credibility, and prepares the audience for what will follow.

Getting Your Audience's Attention. If your audience members aren't already interested in your subject, your introduction needs to grab their attention. No matter which technique you choose, make sure you can give audience members a reason to care about your presentation and to believe that the time they're about to spend listening to you will be worth their while.

Building Your Credibility. Audiences tend to decide within a few minutes whether you're worth listening to, so establishing your credibility quickly is vital. If you're not a well-known expert or haven't already earned your audience's trust in other situations, you'll need to build credibility in your introduction.

Previewing Your Message. A good introduction gives your listeners a preview of what's ahead. Summarize the main idea of your presentation, identify major supporting points, and indicate the order in which you'll develop those points.

Presentation Body

- Presenting Your Main Points

- Connecting Your Ideas

- Holding the Audience's Attention

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The bulk of your speech or presentation is devoted to a discussion of **the main points** in your outline.

Connecting Your Ideas. In written documents, you can show how ideas are related with a variety of design clues: headings, paragraphs, white space, and lists. However, with oral communication—particularly when you aren't using visuals for support—you have to rely primarily on spoken words to link various parts and ideas. When you shift topics, stress the connection between ideas by summarizing what's been said and previewing what's to come.

Holding Your Audience's Attention. A successful introduction will have grabbed your audience's attention; now the body of your presentation needs to hold that attention. Here are a few tips for keeping the audience tuned into your message:

- Keep relating your subject to your audience's needs.
- Anticipate—and answer—your audience's questions as you move along.
- Use clear, vivid language and throw in some variety.
- Show how your subject is related to ideas that audience members already understand, and give people a way to categorize and remember your points.
- If appropriate, encourage participation by asking for comments or questions.
- Illustrate your ideas with visuals.

Presentation Close

- Restating Your Main Points

- Providing a Clear Wrap-Up

- Ending on a Strong Note

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The close of a speech or presentation has two critical jobs to accomplish: making sure your listeners leave with the key points from your talk clear in their minds, and putting your audience in the appropriate emotional state.

Restating Your Main Points. Repeat your main idea, emphasizing what you want your audience to do or think, and stress the key motivating factor that will encourage them to respond that way. Repetition of key ideas improves the chance that your audience will hear your message in the way you intended.

Some presentations require the audience to reach a decision or agree to take specific action, in which case the close should **provide a clear wrap-up**. If the audience reached agreement on an issue covered in the presentation, briefly review the consensus. If they didn't agree, make the lack of consensus clear. Then be ready to suggest a method of resolving the differences.

End on a strong note that confirms expectations about any actions or decisions that will follow the presentation—and to bolster the audience's confidence in you and your message one final time. Make sure your final remarks are memorable and expressed in a tone that is appropriate to the situation.

Summary of Discussion

- In this section, we discussed the following:
 - Adapting to the Audience
 - Developing Your Presentation
 - Introduction, Body, Close
- The next section will cover *Enhancing Your Presentation with Effective Visuals.*

Enhancing Your Presentation with Effective Visuals

(LO 12.3) Describe the six major design and writing tasks required to enhance your presentation with effective visuals.

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Visuals can improve the quality and impact of your oral presentation by creating interest, illustrating points that are difficult to explain in words alone, adding variety, and increasing the audience's ability to absorb and remember information.

You can select from a variety of visuals to enhance oral presentations. Don't overlook "old-school" technologies such as overhead transparencies, chalkboards, whiteboards, and flipcharts—they can all have value in the right circumstances. However, the medium of choice for most business presentations is an electronic presentation using Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, Google Documents for linear presentations, and Prezi for nonlinear presentations.

Using Presentation Slides

Disadvantages

Advantages

Conception

Delivery

Simplicity

Authenticity

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Presentation slides are practically universal in business today, but their widespread use is not always welcome. You may have already heard the expression “death by PowerPoint,” which refers to the agonizing experience of sitting through too many poorly conceived and poorly delivered presentations.

That’s the bad news. The good news is that both linear and nonlinear presentations can be an effective communication medium, and an experience that is satisfying and enjoyable for presenters and for audience members. Start with the mindset of *simplicity* (clear ideas presented clearly) and *authenticity* (talking with your audience about things they care about, rather than talking at them or trying to be a “performer”), and you’ll be well on your way to becoming an effective presenter.

Choosing Structured Slides

Advantages

Fast and Easy Creation

Complex Data and Ideas

Standalone Sense

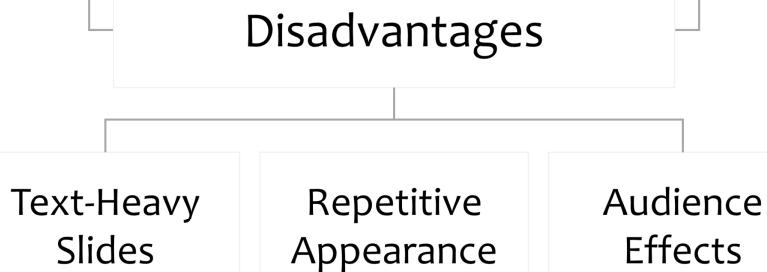
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Structured slides have the advantage of being fast and easy to create; you simply choose an overall design scheme for the presentation, select a template for a new slide, and start typing your information. Also, because more information can usually be packed on each slide, structured slides may be more effective at conveying complex ideas or sets of interrelated data. Finally, structured slides can be more effective as standalone documents that people can read on their own, without a presenter.

Given the speed and ease of creating them, structured slides can be a more practical choice for routine presentations, such as status updates for projects.

Choosing Structured Slides



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The primary disadvantage of structured design is the mind-numbing effect of text-heavy slides that all look alike. Slide after slide of dense, highly structured bullet points can put an audience to sleep, particularly if the presenter puts too many bullet points on a slide, writes the bullet points as complete sentences, or simply reads the bullet points to the audience.

Choosing Free-Form Slides

Advantages

- Offer Complementary Information
- Prevent Cognitive Overload
- Identify Priorities and Connections

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The goal of free-form slide design is to overcome the drawbacks of text-heavy structured design by fulfilling three criteria for successful presentations:

1. Providing complementary information through both textual and visual means
2. Managing the amount of information delivered at any one time to prevent cognitive overload
3. Helping viewers process information by identifying priorities and connections

Given their ability to excite and engage, free-form designs are particularly good for motivational, educational, and persuasive presentations—particularly when the slides will be used multiple times and therefore pay back the extra time and effort required to create them.

Choosing Free-Form Slides

Disadvantages

- Demanding and Time Consuming
- Additional Speaker Responsibility
- Hard to Present Complex Subjects

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Free-form slides have several potential disadvantages.

First, effectively designing slides with both visual and textual elements is more creatively demanding and more time-consuming than simply typing text into preformatted templates.

Second, because less textual information tends to be displayed on screen, the speaker is responsible for conveying more of the content of the presentation—which can present a problem for novice speakers or speakers not entirely comfortable with the material.

Third, if not handled carefully, dividing information into such small chunks can make it difficult to present complex subjects in a cohesive, integrated manner.

Designing Effective Slides

Ineffective Slide Design

- Lack of Awareness
- Inadequate Training
- Schedule Pressures
- Habitual Responses
- Slideument Hybrids

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Presentation software such as PowerPoint, Prezi, or Keynote are tools that can be used effectively or ineffectively.

Lack of design awareness, inadequate training, schedule pressures, and the habitual response of doing things the way they've always been done can lead to ineffective slides and lost opportunities to really connect with audiences.

Another reason for ineffective slides is the practice of treating slide sets as standalone documents that can be read on their own, without a presenter. These "slideument" hybrids that try to function as both presentation visuals and printed documents don't work well as either: they often have too much information to be effective visuals and too little to be effective reports.

The ideal solution is to create an effective slide set and a separate handout document that provides additional details and supporting information. An alternative is to use the notes field in your presentation software to include your speaking notes for each slide. However, if creating slideuments is your only option for some reason, be sure to emphasize clarity and simplicity.

Designing Slides Around a Key Visual

Structuring

Organizing

Explaining

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With both structured and free-form design strategies, it is often helpful to structure specific slides around a key visual that helps organize and explain the points you are trying to make. For example, a pyramid suggests a hierarchical relationship, and a circular flow diagram emphasizes that the final stage in a process loops back to the beginning of the process.

Writing Readable Content

Effective
Slide Text

- Highlights Key Points
- Summarizes and Previews
- Signals Major Shifts
- Illustrates Concepts
- Creates Interest

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One of the most common mistakes beginners make—and one of the chief criticisms leveled at structured slide designs in general—is stuffing slides with too much text. Effective text slides supplement your words and help the audience follow the flow of ideas. Use them to highlight key points, summarize and preview your message, signal major shifts in thought, illustrate concepts, or help create interest in your spoken message.

Creating Charts and Tables for Slides

Reduce the Level of Detail in Each Visual

Break Information Into More Than One Visual

Use Handouts to Provide Detailed Versions

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Charts and tables for presentations need to be *simpler* than visuals for printed documents. Remember that your audience members will view your visuals from across the room—not from a foot or two away, as you do while you create them. Start by *reducing* the level of detail, minimizing anything that is not essential. If necessary, break information into more than one illustration. It may also be useful to provide detailed versions of charts and tables in a handout.

Selecting Design Elements

Color as a Critical Design Element

Background Designs and Artwork

Foreground Designs and Artwork

Typefaces and Type Styles

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As you create slides, pay close attention to the interaction of color, background and foreground designs, artwork, fonts, and type styles:

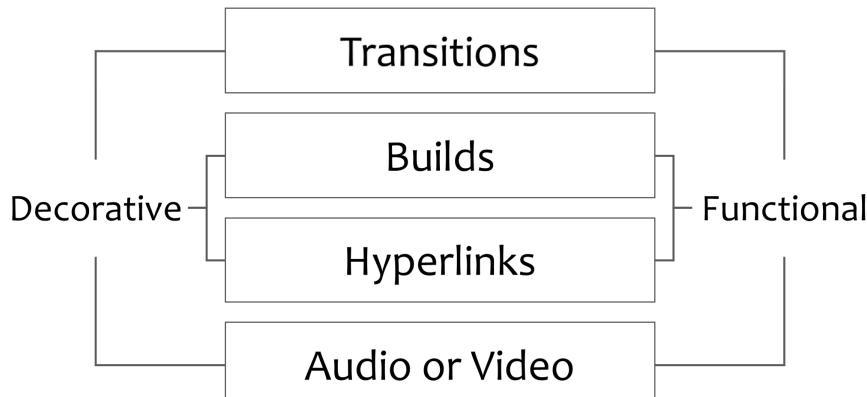
Color. As a critical design element that can grab attention, color can emphasize important ideas, and create contrast. Keep in mind that contrasting colors increase readability, whereas colors closer in hue, such as brown on green or blue on purple, decrease readability. Remember that colors may have a different meaning in certain cultures.

Background designs and artwork. Electronic slides have two layers or levels of graphic design: the background and foreground. The background is the equivalent of paper in a printed report; as a rule, the less your background does, the better.

Foreground designs and artwork. The foreground contains the unique text and graphic elements that make up each individual slide. In the foreground, artwork can be either functional or decorative. *Functional* artwork includes photos, technical drawings, charts, and other visual elements containing information that's part of your message. In contrast, *decorative* artwork is there simply to enhance the look of your slides.

Typefaces and type styles. Type is harder to read on screen than on the printed page. Choose fonts and type styles with care. Use uppercase and lowercase letters, use plenty of space between lines of text, limit the number of fonts to one or two per slide, and choose font sizes that are easy to read from anywhere in the room.

Adding Animation and Multimedia



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Today's presentation software offers many options for livening up your slides. Use only those special effects that support your message.

Functional animation involves motion that is directly related to your message. In contrast, *decorative animation*, such as having text cartwheel in from off-screen, doesn't add any functional value and easily distracts audiences.

Transitions control how one slide replaces another. Subtle transitions ease your viewers' gaze from slide to slide; distracting transitions should be avoided.

Builds control the release of text, graphics, and other elements on individual slides. With builds, you can make key points appear one at a time rather than having all of them appear on a slide at once, thereby making it easier for you and the audience to focus on each new message point.

A **hyperlink** instructs your computer to jump to another slide in your presentation, to a website, or to another program entirely. Using hyperlinks is also a great way to build flexibility into your presentations so that you can instantly respond to audience feedback.

Multimedia elements offer the ultimate in active presentations. Using audio and video clips can be a great way to complement your textual message. Keep these elements brief and relevant, as support for your presentation, not as replacements for it.

Integrating Mobile Devices in Presentations

- Viewing the Screen:
 - Overcome viewing problems
 - Broadcast to tablets and phones
- Attending the Presentation:
 - Include mobile users
 - Broadcast to tablets and phones

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Smartphones and tablets offer a variety of ways to enhance presentations for presenters as well as audience members. For example, you can get around the problem of everyone in the audience having a clear view of the screen with systems that broadcast your slides to tablets and smartphones. In fact, these systems can eliminate a conventional projection system entirely; everyone in the audience can view your slides on their mobile devices. You can also broadcast a live presentation to mobile users anywhere in the world. Each time you advance to a new slide, it is sent to the phone or tablet of everyone who is subscribed to your presentation.

Summary of Discussion

- In this section, we discussed the following:
 - Using Presentation Slides
 - Choosing Structured or Free-Form Slides
 - Designing Effective Slides
 - Designing Slides Around a Key Visual
 - Writing Readable Content

(Continued on Next Slide)

Summary of Discussion

- Creating Charts and Tables for Slides
- Selecting Design Elements
- Adding Animation and Multimedia
- Integrating Mobile Devices into Presentations
- The next section will cover *Completing a Presentation.*

Completing a Presentation

(LO 12.4) Outline three special tasks involved in completing a presentation.

The completion step for presentations involves a wider range of tasks than most printed documents require. Make sure you allow enough time to test your presentation slides, verify equipment operation, practice your speech, and create handout materials. With a first draft of your presentation in hand, revise your slides to make sure they are readable, concise, consistent, and fully operational (including transitions, builds, animation, and multimedia). Complete your production efforts by finalizing your slides and support materials, choosing your presentation method, and practice your delivery.

Finalizing Your Slides



- Title Slides
- Agenda and Details
- Navigation Slides

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At this point, you've created the slides that will deliver the content of your presentation. In addition to using content slides, you can help your audience follow the flow of your presentation by creating slides for your title, agenda and program details, and navigation:

Title slides. Make a good first impression on your audience with one or two *title slides*, the equivalent of a report's cover and title page.

Agenda and program details. These slides communicate both the agenda for your presentation and any additional information that your audience might need.

Navigation slides. To tell your audience where you're going and where you've been, you can use a series of *navigation slides* based on your outline or agenda. This technique is most useful in longer presentations with several major sections.

Creating Effective Handouts

Integral Part of Presentation Strategy

Supporting Your Main Idea

Conveying Information

Providing Essential Details

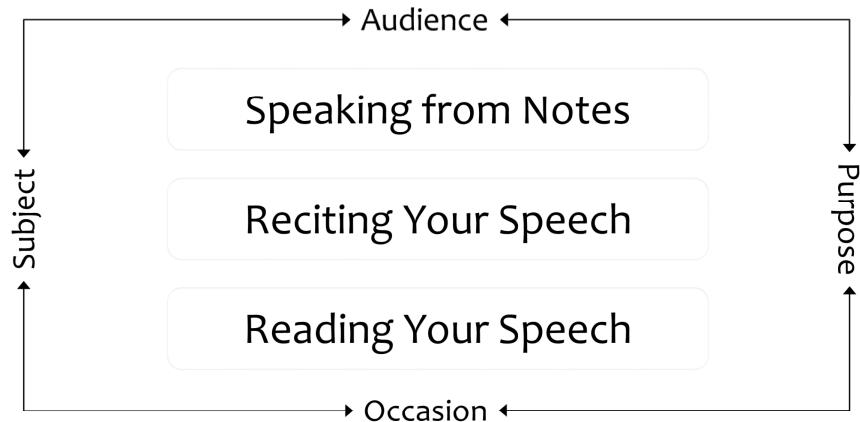
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Handouts are any printed materials you give the audience to supplement your talk. They should be considered an integral part of your presentation strategy. Handouts can include detailed charts and tables, case studies, research results, magazine articles, and anything else that supports the main idea of your presentation.

Plan your handouts as you develop your presentation so that you use each medium as effectively as possible. Your presentation should paint the big picture, convey and connect major ideas, set the emotional tone, and rouse the audience to action (if that is relevant to your talk). Your handouts can then carry the rest of the information load, providing the supporting details that audience members can consume at their own speed, on their own time.

Choosing Your Presentation Method



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You can choose from several delivery methods. The best choice will depend on the subject of your talk, the purpose you hope to obtain, your relationship to the audience, and the speaking occasion.

Speaking from notes (rather than from a fully written script) is nearly always the most effective and easiest delivery mode. This approach gives you something to refer to as you progress while still allowing for plenty of eye contact, a natural speaking flow, interaction with the audience, and improvisation in response to audience feedback.

In contrast, **reciting your speech** from memory is nearly always a bad idea. Even if you can memorize the entire presentation, you will sound stiff and overly formal because you are “delivering lines,” rather than talking to your audience. However, memorizing a quotation, an opening statement, or a few concluding remarks can bolster your confidence and strengthen your delivery.

Reading a speech is necessary in rare instances, such as when delivering legal information, policy statements, or other messages that must be conveyed in an exact manner. However, for all other business presentations, reading is a poor choice because it limits your interaction with the audience and lacks the fresh, dynamic feel of natural talking.

Another important consideration is where you will speak. In many cases, you will not have a choice; however, if you do have some control over the environment, think carefully about seating for the audience, your position in the room, and lighting.

Practicing Your Delivery

- Can you present your material naturally?
- Could you present without using slides?
- Is the equipment working?
- Is your timing on track?
- Can you pronounce the words you'll use?
- Are you ready for questions or objections?

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Practicing your presentation boosts your confidence, gives you a more professional demeanor, and lets you verify the operation of your visuals and equipment. If you're addressing an audience that doesn't speak your language, consider using an interpreter. In addition, you may need to adapt the content of your presentation.

A day or two before you're ready to step on stage for an important talk, make sure you and your presentation are ready:

- Can you present your material naturally, without reading your slides?
- Could you still make a compelling and complete presentation if you experience an equipment failure and have to proceed without using your slides at all?
- Is the equipment working, and do you know how to work it?
- Is your timing on track?
- Can you easily pronounce all the words you plan to use?
- Have you anticipated likely questions and objections?

Summary of Discussion

- In this section, we discussed the following:
 - Finalizing Your Slides
 - Creating Effective Handouts
 - Choosing Your Presentation Method
 - Practicing Your Delivery
- The next section will cover *Delivering a Presentation.*

Delivering a Presentation

(LO 12.5) Describe four important aspects of delivering a presentation in today's social media environment.

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It's show time. This section offers practical advice on four important aspects of delivery: overcoming anxiety, handling questions responsively, embracing the backchannel, and giving presentations online.

Overcoming Anxiety

- Stop worrying about being perfect.
- Know what you're talking about.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Visualize your success.
- Remember to breathe.
- Be ready with your opening line.

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Even seasoned pros get a little nervous before a big presentation—and that is a good thing. Nervousness is an indication that you care about your audience, your topic, and the occasion. These techniques will help you convert anxiety into positive energy:

Stop worrying about being perfect. Successful speakers focus on making an authentic connection with their listeners, rather than on trying to deliver a note-perfect presentation.

Know your subject. The more familiar you are with your material, the less panic you'll feel.

Practice, practice, practice. The more you rehearse, the more confident you will feel.

Visualize success. Visualize mental images of yourself in front of the audience, feeling confident, prepared, and able to handle any situation that might arise. Remember that your audience wants you to succeed, too.

Remember to breathe. Tension can lead people to breathe in a rapid and shallow fashion, which can create a lightheaded feeling. Breathe slowly and deeply to maintain a sense of calm and confidence.

Be ready with your opening line. Have your first sentence memorized so you don't have to improvise your opening.

Overcoming Anxiety

- Be comfortable.
- Take a three-second break, if you need it.
- Focus on your message and audience.
- Connect with friendly audience members.
- Keep going.

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Be comfortable. Dress appropriately but as comfortably as possible. Drink plenty of water ahead of time to hydrate your voice. (Bring a bottle of water with you, too.)

Take a three-second break if you need to. If you sense that you're starting to race, pause and arrange your notes or perform some other small task while taking several deep breaths. Then start again at your normal pace.

Concentrate on your message and your audience, not on yourself. When you're busy thinking about your subject and observing your audience's response, you tend to forget your fears.

Maintain eye contact with friendly audience members. Eye contact not only makes you appear sincere, confident, and trustworthy, but can give you positive feedback as well.

Keep going. Things usually get better as you move along, with each successful minute giving you more and more confidence.

Handling Questions Responsively

Establishing Ground Rules

Preparing to Answer Questions

Noticing Nonverbal Signals

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The question-and-answer period is one of the most important parts of an oral presentation. During this time, do the following:

Whether or not you can establish *ground rules* for Q&A depends on the audience and the situation. If you're presenting to a small group of upper managers or potential investors, for example, you will probably have no say in the matter. If you are presenting to your peers or a large public audience, establish some guidelines.

Don't assume that you can handle whatever comes up without some *preparation*. Learn about your audience and think through tough questions.

When people ask questions, pay attention to *nonverbal signals* to help determine what each person really means. Repeat the question to confirm your understanding, or ask for clarification. Then offer a simple, direct answer.

Handling Questions Responsively

Responding to Difficult Questions

Controlling Your Presentation

Controlling Your Emotions

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If you are asked a difficult or complex question, avoid the temptation to sidestep it without answering. Instead, respond *honestly*. Offer to talk to the questioner after the presentation, if the answer would not be relevant to the rest of the audience or if the answer would take too long. If you don't know the answer, offer to get a complete answer as soon as possible.

Be on guard for audience members who use questions to make impromptu speeches or to take control of your presentation. Without offending anyone, find a way to stay in control.

If a question ever puts you on the hot seat, respond honestly but keep your emotions under control. Defuse hostility by paraphrasing the question and asking the questioner to confirm that you've understood it correctly. Maintain a businesslike tone of voice and a pleasant expression.

Embracing the Backchannel

The Audience Creates This Line
of Communication

Challenges

- Risk of Criticism
- Loss of Control

Opportunities

- Audience Support
- Valuable Feedback

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Many business presentations these days involve more than just the spoken conversation between the speaker and his or her audience. Using Twitter and other electronic media, audience members often carry on their own parallel communication during a presentation via the **backchannel**, which presentation expert Cliff Atkinson defines as “a line of communication created by people in an audience to connect with others inside or outside the room, with or without the knowledge of the speaker.”

The backchannel presents both risks and rewards for business presenters. On the negative side, for example, listeners can research your claims the instant you make them and spread the word quickly if they think your information is shaky. The backchannel also gives contrary audience members more leverage, which can lead to presentations spinning out of control. On the plus side, listeners who are excited about your message can build support for it, expand on it, and spread it to a much larger audience in a matter of seconds. You can also get valuable feedback during and after presentations.

Working the Backchannel

- Integrate social media into the presentation.
- Set expectations with the audience.
- Monitor and ask for real-time feedback.
- Tweet key points during your presentation.
- Review comments after presentation ends.

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By embracing the backchannel, rather than trying to fight it or ignore it, presenters can use this powerful force to their advantage.

Integrate social media into the presentation process. You can set up your own formal backchannel, create a website for the presentation, create a Twitter hashtag that everyone can use when sending tweets, or display the Twitter-stream during Q&A so that everyone can see the questions and comments.

Establish expectations with the audience. Explain that you welcome audience participation, but to ensure a positive experience for everyone, comments should be civil, relevant, and productive.

Monitor and ask for feedback. Monitor in “real time” what the people in the audience are writing about. To avoid trying to monitor the backchannel while speaking, you can schedule “Twitter breaks,” during which you review comments and respond as needed.

Automatically tweet key points from your presentation while you speak. Add-ons for presentation software can send out prewritten tweets during a presentation. By making your key points readily available, you make it easy for listeners to re-tweet and comment on your presentation.

Review comments point by point to improve your presentation. After a presentation is over, review comments on audience members’ Twitter accounts and blogs to see which parts confused them, which parts excited them, and which parts seemed to have little effect.

Giving Presentations Online

Advantages

Cost Savings

Disadvantages

“Digital Divide”

Convenience

“Human Moments”

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In some companies, online presentations have already become a routine matter.

The benefits of online presentations are considerable, including the opportunity to communicate with a geographically dispersed audience at a fraction of the cost of travel, and the ability for a project team or an entire organization to meet at a moment's notice. However, the challenges for a presenter can be significant, thanks to the “digital divide” between you and your audience. Many of those “human moments” that guide and encourage you through an in-person presentation will not translate well across the layer of technology between you and your audience.

Tips for Giving Presentations Online



Sending Preview Materials



Keeping the Presentation Simple



Seeking Frequent Feedback

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To ensure successful online presentations, keep the following advice in mind:

Consider sending preview study materials ahead of time. Doing so allows audience members to familiarize themselves with any important background information. You can distribute your presentation slides to either public or private audiences, and you can record audio narrative to make your presentations function on their own.

Keep your presentation as simple as possible. Break complicated slides down into multiple slides if necessary and keep the direction of your discussion clear so that no one gets lost.

Ask for feedback frequently. You won't have as much of the visual feedback that alerts you when audience members are confused, and many online viewers will be reluctant to call attention to themselves by interrupting you to ask for clarification. Setting up a backchannel via Twitter or as part of your online meeting system will help in this regard.

Tips for Giving Presentations Online



Considering Audience Viewpoint



Helping Audience Get Connected



Keeping Tools in Perspective

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Consider the viewing experience from the audience members' points of view.

Will they be able to see what you think they can see? For instance, webcast video is typically displayed in a small window on-screen, so viewers may miss important details.

Allow plenty of time for everyone to get connected and familiar with the screen they're viewing. Build extra time into your schedule to ensure that everyone is connected and ready to start.

Don't get lost in the technology. Use these tools whenever they'll help, but remember that the most important aspect of any presentation is getting the audience to receive, understand, and embrace your message.

Summary of Discussion

- In this section, we discussed the following:
 - Overcoming Anxiety
 - Handling Questions Responsively
 - Embracing the Backchannel
 - Working the Backchannel
 - Giving Presentations Online
- This concludes our discussion of **Chapter 12: Developing and Delivering Business Presentations.**

Business Communication Essentials

Chapter 12 Developing and Delivering Business Presentations

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