Giving Talks

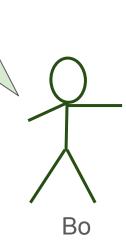
EC Mentoring Workshop, 2024

Speaker: Bo Waggoner, University of Colorado

Outline

- How to approach giving talks
- General principles
- Planning the talk
- Nuts and bolts
- Delivery

"Every act of communication is a Trojan horse. You hide what you want to say inside what the audience wants or expects to hear."



Context, Constraints, and Expectations

Where, when, and how?

Venue? Length? Q&A? Screen size? Before lunch?

Who is the audience?

Background knowledge? Interest level?

"Every act of communication is a Trojan horse. You hide what you want to say inside what the audience wants or expects to hear."

Context, Constraints, and Expectations

- Where, when, and how?
- Who is the audience?
- Logistics?

 - Show up early

- Venue? Length? Q&A? Screen size? Before lunch?
- Background knowledge? Interest level?
- Computer, adapter, clicker, access to slides

Suggestion: have PDF slides available at a memorized URL

"Every act of communication is a Trojan horse. You hide what you want to say inside what the audience wants or expects to hear."

Context, Constraints, and Expectations

- Where, when, and how?
 - Venue? Length? Q&A? Screen size? Before lunch?
- Who is the audience?
 - Background knowledge? Interest level?
- Logistics?
 - Computer, adapter, clicker, access to slides
 - Show up early
 - Suggestion: have PDF slides available at a memorized URL

General principles

Have a goal

• The audience will remember 1-2 things at best

General principles

Have a goal

• The audience will remember 1-2 things at best

Respect your audience

- Assume they are very smart, very busy ... and very lazy
- Don't "dumb things down", but do make life easy on the audience

General principles

Have a goal

• The audience will remember 1-2 things at best

Respect your audience

- Assume they are very smart, very busy ... and very lazy
- Don't "dumb things down", but do make life easy on the audience

Guide audience attention

- Introduce and focus on one thing at a time
- Look at the audience or at something they can see (not your own screen)

Build and refine an outline.

- E.g: motivation, outline, model, results, intuition/proof/example, future work.
- Brainstorm and get feedback at the outline stage

Build and refine an outline.

- E.g: motivation, outline, model, results, intuition/proof/example, future work.
- Brainstorm and get feedback at the outline stage
- What do you have time for? Can you focus on a special case?
- Does the audience have context for each statement?

Build and refine an outline.

- E.g. motivation, outline, model, results, intuition/proof/example, future work.
- Brainstorm and get feedback at the outline stage
- What do you have time for? Can you focus on a special case?
- Does the audience have context for each statement?
- End early or on time.
 - Be prepared to skip, not sprint.

Build and refine an outline.

- E.g: motivation, outline, model, results, intuition/proof/example, future work.
- Brainstorm and get feedback at the outline stage
- What do you have time for? Can you focus on a special case?
- Does the audience have context for each statement?
- End early or on time.
 - Be prepared to skip, not sprint.

A talk is not a paper!

- Should not be comprehensive
- Need not even be fully correct (tell the audience why)
- Should advertise and inspire as well as inform

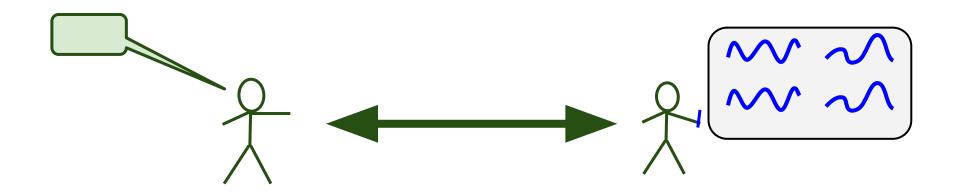
Build and refine an outline.

- E.g. motivation, outline, model, results, intuition/proof/example, future work.
- Brainstorm and get feedback at the outline stage
- What do you have time for? Can you focus on a special case?
- Does the audience have context for each statement?
- End early or on time.
 - Be prepared to skip, not sprint.

A talk is not a paper!

- Should not be comprehensive
- Need not even be fully correct (tell the audience why)
- Should advertise and inspire as well as inform

Plan audio and visual together

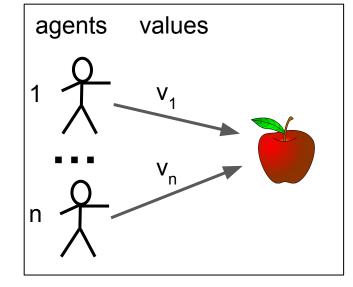


Plan audio and visual together

Minimize notation; replace text with images

There is a set N of agents with |N| = n.

Each agent $i \in N$ has a valuation $v_i \in R$



Plan audio and visual together

Minimize notation; replace text with images

Ensure the audience knows what is happening and why

Give an outline; return to it with enough time to read

Plan audio and visual together

Minimize notation; replace text with images

Ensure the audience knows what is happening and why

Everything should have a specific purpose

- e.g. what about the related work is important to the talk?
- slide content should be useful, not distracting

Plan audio and visual together

Minimize notation; replace text with images

Ensure the audience knows what is happening and why

Everything should have a specific purpose

Use a simple, consistent design; prioritize visibility

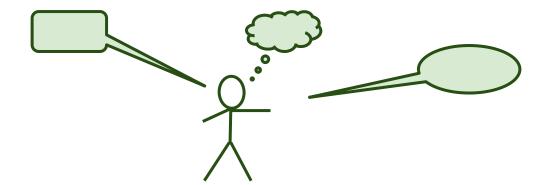
- Consistent: capitalization, grammar, colors, layout, bullet points, ...
- Give colors meaning, e.g. definitions versus theorems

Delivery

Practice decide exactly what you want to say; write a script if necessary (but don't use it)

Practice check your timing

Practice hesitation at transitions or explanations ⇒ need to re-think



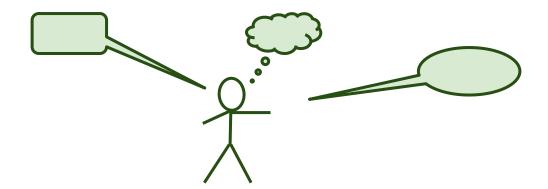
Delivery

• **Practice** decide exactly what you want to say; write a script if necessary (but don't use it)

• **Practice** check your timing

• **Practice** hesitation at transitions or explanations ⇒ need to re-think

Slow down, add pauses



Delivery

• **Practice** decide exactly what you want to say; write a script if necessary (but don't use it)

Practice check your timing

• **Practice** hesitation at transitions or explanations ⇒ need to re-think

- Slow down, add pauses
- Variation! Vary your tone, volume, speed, where you look



Final tip

Tell the audience when you're done.

Questions?

Reach me: Bo Waggoner

bwag@colorado.edu>