

The eight-step approach to prepare for a presentation

The ability to prepare and deliver authentic and impactful presentations to clients and colleagues is key to success as a consultant, at any level. In this reading, we'll cover the following topics:

- Preparing for a presentation
- Verbal communication
- Non-verbal communication

Preparing for a presentation

To present well you need to prepare well. Even if you are presenting at short notice, the eight-step approach will help you plan and deliver an effective presentation.

Step 1	Know your audience .
Step 2	Know your purpose .
Step 3	Structure the body of your presentation.
Step 4	Plan how you will start your presentation.
Step 5	Plan how you will end your presentation.
Step 6	Prepare your visual aids .
Step 7	Anticipate the questions you may be asked.
Step 8	Practice your presentation.

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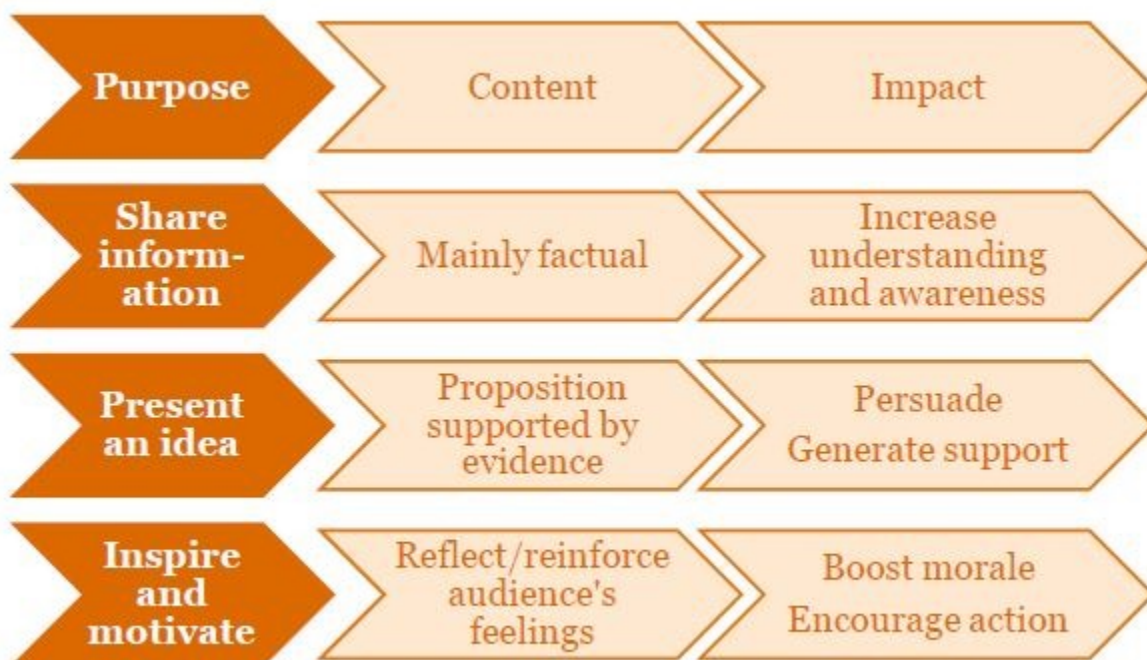
1. Audience

Knowing your audience will help you capture their attention and get your point across. To understand your audience, ask yourself:

- Who is my audience?
- What are the relevant characteristics of my audience?
- What are their needs and expectations?

2. Purpose

What change in behaviour or attitude are you trying to create? The purpose of your presentation will shape the structure and content.



3. Structure

When organising your ideas, keep your purpose visible to ensure all messages are in line.

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4. Introduction

An effective start will capture your audience's attention and prepare them to hear what you have to say.

5. Conclusion

Leave your audience with a clear understanding of the key messages and benefits, and impart a call to action.

Winning conclusions:

- Ask for a decision or challenge the group
- Present facts and statistics
- Tell a "just imagine" scenario
- Summarise major points and indicate actions and next steps
- Present alternatives
- Use an example to tie everything together
- Query the audience to ensure they understood your message or ask for feedback

6. Visual aids

Visual aids can help bring your presentation to life. What points in your presentation require a visual aid or prop to explain or illustrate an idea, or reinforce a key message? Visual aids should be easy to understand, appropriate for the audience and venue, and integrated with your spoken presentation.

Tips for using visual aids:

- Display for long enough for understanding but not too long to be distracting.
- Using too many visual aids can reduce their impact on the audience.
- Don't use them as a refuge.
- Don't talk over them.
- Don't read the visual aid verbatim.

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7. Handling questions

The way questions are handled will impact not only the individual who contributed but also the amount of future participation you will receive from the other audience members.

Boost your confidence and credibility by:

- Taking time to anticipate what questions you may be asked, and considering your response.
- Keeping your answer simple, concise and relevant to the audience.
- Demonstrating active listening.
- Admitting when you don't know the answer.

8. Practice

Rehearsing helps bring your presentation to life, and provides a valuable opportunity to identify and correct areas for improvement. Practice with your notes and visual aids.

Seek feedback on your presentation:

- Ask a trusted colleague or friend to watch.
- Practice in front of a mirror.
- Record yourself and play it back.

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