Presentation Prep

Contact details

Lotte Jaspers

jaspers@yellowresearch.nl

1. ERC PRESENTATION

The average speaking pace is between 140 to 160 words per minute. But an ERC presenter may be slower because of the complex nature of the content of the topic, the field specific jargon, as well as not being a native English speaker[1]. Below is a table with a wide variation in speaking rates.

Speaker	Speaking Rate (words/minute)	Speaker	Speaking Rate (words/minute)
Al Gore	133 words / minute	Majora Carter	167 words / minute
Becky Blanton	153 words / minute	Ken Robinson	168 words / minute
Dan Pink	155 words / minute	Elizabeth Gilbert	187 words / minute
Steve Jobs	158 words / minute	Jacqueline Novogratz	188 words / minute
Hans Rosling	161 words / minute	Majora Carter	167 words / minute

Time yourself for one minute while speaking. Pick a slide that you know well and speak at a slower pace than you would normally do. Use this pace as your “average” when doing a words per minute calculation. This is a reasonable, but slightly fast pace and will allow you to slow down for the most important parts, as well as to take a calculated “pause” between slides. Such “slide pauses” take only a fraction of a second but are necessary for the listener to digest what has been said, and as a mental cue that the next slide/topic is about to open up.

In a 5 minute talk, every single word matters! This means that your presentation needs to have a good story line which allows a well-informed listener (panel member) to come with you on your scientific journey. It also means that you will probably need to write out your story in full to get a feel for the limitation of words that can be spoken in the allotted time. Then see how you can reduce words by visualising your story in the Powerpoint (see also section 1.1 Visualisation). For 10 minute talks this is too elaborate, so it is sufficient to make an outline based on ideas presented on the structure below.

1.1 Visualization

Maximize the potential of *Powerpoint* by creating assertion-evidence based slides. This forces you to see each slide as a separate story within the larger story of the project. Each slide should orient the audience quickly to the topic being discussed. Therefore each slide needs its own specific narration order and may therefore benefit from animation features to unfold the topic gradually to the audience. The slides provide a perspective on your project that could not be achieved with simple speech[2].

Each slide has a message: a specific focus and function in telling the story.

The idea behind the assertion-evidence based approach is to help your audience to understand much quicker what the technical, scientific, scholarly, engineering detail is of your project. Your audience consists of the decision-makers for your grant who have a good overview of the field but are not the in-depth expert.

1. http://sixminutes.dlugan.com/speaking-rate/ (date: 29/03/2018)
2. The Craft of Scientific Presentation, Michael Alley, 2006

Using this approach will help you to build your talk on the key scientific messages that together tell a coherent and compelling story about your ERC proposal. A picture is worth a thousand words – therefore your oral talk should focus on supplementing and complementing the presented visual information. Of course each picture must be explained –consider carefully how to guide the panel through the complications in the picture. By carefully selecting how you visualize your project, you can reduce the number of words needed to explain the topic.

Take into account that what is visually happening on the presentation screen absorbs the attention of your audience, in particular when there is anything that is moving / animated. Therefore your oral presentation should emphasize key issues of what is displayed. The visual translation of your proposal is underlined by the oral presentation. When possible animate your slides. The animation will help in directing the visual attention of your audience while at the same time guiding them.

The first written draft or outline will be the tool to help you to visualize the talk. After having designed the slides you have to revisit the written text/outline. Cut out any words / parts that have become redundant because of the visualisation. Repeat this cycle until you are able to get the full proposal presented at a great level of in-depth discussion within the allotted time.

1.2 Structure Excitement

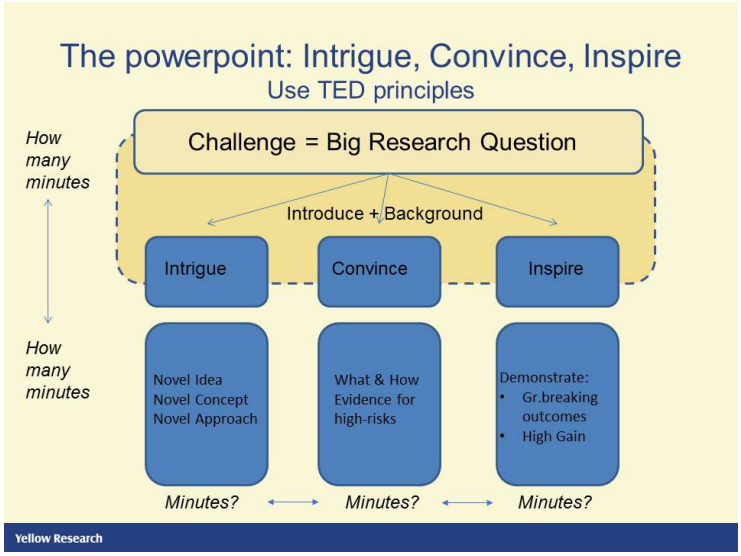
Your job during the presentation is to excite the reviewers about the ideas as expressed within your ERC proposal. We have learned over the years from ERC panel members that excitement can be broken down into 3 different aspects:

- **Intrigue:** The scientific hook, what is the novel idea, concept or approach that you are proposing that will advance the current understanding in the field
- **Convince:** Why can this be done, by you specifically, and in terms of the methodology used. So, what is your background and what is the workplan?
- **Inspire:** Why is the outcome important for the field. This is basically the mirror image of intrigue.

These 3 elements may be helpful in structuring your ideas for your presentation. In particular, a five- or ten minute talk requires a lot of strategy in order to achieve the level of scientific excitement with the panel members.

One of the most important things to bear in mind is that the purpose is not to educate the reviewers on the topic at hand, but to provide people, who already have a broad overview of the field, with the information that satisfies their scientific curiosity and mind set.

That is why we use the concept explained below:



The Blue blocks Intrigue, Convince and Inspire provide a frame for organizing the different aspects of your proposal. Be flexible in how you approach this. There are projects that need to show a lot of preliminary data to demonstrate that the novel concept and approach will work. Where in the B1 the focus of the evaluators was to understand why the scientific approach is potentially feasible, in this phase of the selection process the reviewers have received the insights of in-depth experts. Therefore you have to consider the audience, ie. the panel members who are not the in depth experts, but must still understand the details of your proposal, while simultaneously not losing them because the level of detail is beyond their zone of expertise. Avoid at all times to lecture your audience.

2. SH2 5 MINUTE – unlimited slides

SLIDE SET UP

INTRIGUE

Slide 1. Opening slide: Title + Key novelty

Your presentation is already on the screen when you enter the room. Therefore think carefully how to use this opening slide so that you can begin your talk immediately.

BUT open the talk with a standard sentence to get your audience acquainted with your speech patterns and speed. Therefore something basic like: “Good morning, thank you for the invitation to present my project. My name is…….and I work at ……”

Then introduce the key challenge/question (if possible directly followed by the explanation of the key concept driving the proposal).

Word count max 80; time: 0:30

***Time* 0:30**

INTRIGUE AND CONVINCE

Slide 2: Conceptual / Theoretical Framework

Explain the conceptual framework, if relevant. If not relevant then explain the key constructs or other fundamental building blocks of your proposal. What are variables that you want to correlate; why/how can you measure and contrast? What is special about your data versus other existing data?

Word count 280 max

Time 2:00

Slide 2a: Key Questions / Objectives

If necessary explain per Question the theoretical background and specific challenges, but be aware the panel members have read and accepted the B1. Therefore the focus may be more on How each Question or Objective will be achieved, meaning the focus may be more on the research design. Is this an effective design for answering your questions? Will it lead to the Big Picture (single big picture that is generalizable or more particularistic?). See also the next session “Convince and Intrigue”.

The number of slides is not the issue – the amount time is. Constantly remind yourself that the reviewers have read the B1 and the B2. So what is it that needs to be included in the talk?

Word count 140 max

***Time* 1:00**

CONVINCE AND INTRIGUE

Slide 3: Research Design: Methodology and Approach

PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE BEFORE GOING INTO SPECIFIC PARTS – but make sure when applicable that the conceptual framework has already been addressed before opening the project as a whole to the audience.

The best overview is a graphical overview where you provide the reviewers a graphical insight in the different parts of the project. The emphasis on graphical is also important in social sciences where it may be a bit more difficult to be so visual. Of further importance is that the reviewers at a glance can take in what the interlinkages and feedback mechanisms are to show that you do not get stuck if something does not immediately work out the way as planned.

This should be very brief because each part of the research design needs to be discussed.

Word count 140 max.;

***Time* 1 minute max?**

SLIDE 4 - 6, Convince & intrigue, Work package 1:

What are the methodological issues considering your conceptual framework / concepts / constructs. If mix methods approach – why appropriate

Case studies: how will data be generated, why will this allow cross comparison when relevant, how will these be analysed etc

Focus on Novelty and Synthesis

Words: …

Time: 50 seconds?

SLIDE 5, Convince & intrigue, Work package 2 (New evidence when relevant):

Se above

Words: …

Time: 50 seconds?

SLIDE 6, Convince & intrigue, Work package 3 (New evidence when relevant):

See above

Words: …

Time: 0:50 seconds?

CONVINCE – FROM DYNAMIC DESIGN TO SYNTHESIS

SLIDE 7, Synthesis :

Demonstrate that your project design allows you to revisit core principles and draw conclusions of a synthesizing nature or of a more particularistic nature. Already from slide 3 it should be clear how the different parts will lead to answering the Big Research Question addressed at the opening. Therefore made sure that the panel members can pick up how you will synthesize the outcomes of the different WPs (or how you will be able to generate the particularistic understanding).

Words: …

Time: 0:50 seconds?

CONVINCE

SLIDE 8, Team, Timescale and when relevant lab (no budget)

Consider the slide where you have presented the research design. Try to formulate a translation of this slide that makes it possible to introduce the team members, and how they are allocated to work on the different parts of the project. When appropriate, also explain what your existing resources are in terms of people and technical infrastructure. If there are interdisciplinary challenges embedded in your project, is this place to address that?

Words: …

Time: 0:50 seconds?

INSPIRE

SLIDE 9, INSPIRE (Why important for the field and for further exploitation)

Inspire the reviewers with the outcomes. Therefore dig once more into the background of the panel that has invited you to come to the interview. What kind of scientific disciplines to they represent, what kind of outcomes would inspire them in terms of opening up new research horizons. Therefore discuss how you will be able to synthesize the different parts of the project to the big picture that will open up new research horizons. But beside the Big Picture what outcomes would significantly advance the scientific field of the panel. So in case you are not able to achieve the Big Picture in full, that you still can inspire the panel with significant advances but not the big picture.

Thank you (Not as a slide but simply as a way of indicating that this is the end of the talk)

1 – Words: 70 time: 30 seconds?
Time 0.5 minute?