

# Persuasive Presentations

reading

When did you last go to a presentation? How effective was it?

- Why don't many presentations achieve the desired aim?  
Read the first part of the article to check your ideas.

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## How To Deliver Persuasive Presentations

When it comes to persuasive communication, if you wander, you are lost. Too often, presentations fail to deliver results because they don't follow a clear path to a concrete call to action.



- Have you been to any ineffective presentations? If you give presentations, do you find that you do not stay on track? How do you prepare presentations?

The first three headings in the article are *Know what you want*, *How to win over an audience* and *Benefits and obstacles*. What do you think each is going to say?

- Discuss these questions and then read the next part of the article to check your ideas:

- 1 What should you consider before thinking about the content of a presentation?
- 2 What is the enemy of a good presentation?
- 3 What should be the objective of a presentation?
- 4 What should be assumed about the audience?
- 5 What types of evidence can you use to support your arguments?
- 6 What can be done to prepare for possible barriers or obstacles the audience might have to taking action?



### 1. Know what you want

Before thinking about content, it is vital to know what outcome you want from your presentation. It is a good idea to start the planning process by writing, "When I have finished speaking, my audience will..." and finish that sentence with some specific action.

Vagueness is the enemy, so fuzzy statements like "my audience will understand more about my project" are out. Make the action tangible and compelling, and then build the content around what the audience needs to know, feel and believe about you in order to take action.

### 2. How to win over an audience

Remember that your goal is not to beat your audience into submission but to persuade them to take action.

● Always assume that your audience consists of good, thoughtful people who may not be as familiar with the

material as you are.

● Show your understanding of both sides of the argument. If necessary, explain the risks or obstacles of your message and how they can be mitigated or overcome.

● Use logical, ethical and emotional appeals, as well as a variety of evidence to support your argument. This could include expert testimony, statistics, real-life examples or personal experiences.

### 3. Benefits and obstacles

What are the audience's strategic, personal and business benefits of taking action? What obstacles or

barriers might prevent them from doing so?

Brainstorming the answers to these questions in advance will help to clarify

how you need to bring the audience on board. Once you have done this, choose the three most important themes – either benefits or obstacles

– for this audience. Then set about finding suitable expert testimony and statistics that support each theme.

Do you usually start preparing a presentation by identifying the outcome you want? Do you agree that vagueness is the enemy of an effective presentation? Would you talk about possible obstacles or risks? When giving a presentation, do you use logical, ethical and emotional arguments? Have you ever been involved in brainstorming answers to possible objections before a presentation?

The final two headings are *Build your argument* and *Delivering like a pro*. What do you expect each will talk about?

Discuss these statements about the remaining advice and decide which are true and then read the final part of the article to check your ideas:

- ☐ You should grab your audience's attention with a joke or a funny story.
- ☐ You should follow your opening with a short sentence that summarises the presentation.
- ☐ Signposting tells the audience what you want them to do after the presentation.
- ☐ 25% of the presentation should be dedicated to developing your three main points.
- ☐ To finish, you should sum up your main points in one sentence and give your call to action.
- ☐ Great conclusions to presentations reconnect with the beginning of the speech in some way.
- ☐ Giving presentations should be a performance.
- ☐ Writing a great opening joke and a little practice are the best ways to prepare.



## 4. Build your argument

Successful rhetoric is built on a well-defined and trusted structure:

**The Grabber** Grab your audience's attention with an anecdote, a question, a startling statistic or a thought-provoking quotation.

**The Message** Follow the grabber with a one-line statement that succinctly tells the audience what your presentation is about.

**Signposting** Signposting

lays out the skeleton of the argument for the audience and is as simple as saying, "There are three reasons why you must vote for me: knowledge, ability and passion."

**Benefits 1-3** Focus on benefits rather than features. At least 75% of your presentation should be dedicated to developing your three main points. Each benefit or theme should be supported with a careful selection of statistics, demonstrations, examples or personal experiences.

**Closure** Sum up your main points in one sentence and give your call to action. This could be a direct close such as "visit our website" or an indirect close that reminds people of the hardship they will endure if they don't take action. Really powerful

speeches also reconnect with the beginning of the speech in some way. This also avoids the embarrassment of having to tell the audience that you have finished. The challenge is to have a grabber that allows an easy referral back.

## 5. Delivering like a pro

Usain Bolt is not only the fastest man in the world; he is also the fastest man in the world when 80,000 people are watching in the stadium and a billion more are watching live on TV. Public speaking is a performance. Like Bolt, you need to be able to deliver well under pressure and not just under practice conditions. Having a clear structure and lots of practice are the best ways of helping to lighten the mental load.

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- ☞ What is the best opening to a presentation that you have heard? Do you use signposting in your presentations? Do you usually support your main points with some kind of evidence? Would you finish by referring back to your opening? Do you agree that public speaking is a performance? How much do you practise a presentation?
- 📖 The article concludes with eight tips for giving a good presentation. Rank them in order of importance in your opinion - with 1 the most important - and compare your ideas with the other members of the class.

## Top tips for delivery:

- Rather than memorize the whole speech, re-create it from five elements: The first 10 words, the message, the three benefits, the closing and the last 10 words.
- Use a webcam to practise gestures as well as phrasing.

- Gesture only to emphasize points.
- Make eye contact with the audience.
- Use facial expressions to convey your feelings.
- Enunciate clearly and vary your rate of speech.
- Don't speak too fast: it's not a race.

- Dress the part.



- ☞ Overall what do you think of the advice given in the article? Have you ever used a webcam to practise a presentation? If so, was it helpful? How would you dress to give a presentation in your industry? Would you add any other advice?

- ✍ Look back at the article to find words that match these definitions (they appear in the same order):

- 1 result, conclusion
- 2 deal with successfully, prevail over
- 3 very surprising, alarming
- 4 with concise and precise brevity
- 5 causes to remember
- 6 transmit, express

## Use the words from the article to complete these sentences:

- 1 Before giving a presentation, some people use deep breathing to \_\_\_\_\_ nervousness.
- 2 At the end of a presentation, it is important to \_\_\_\_\_ the audience of your main message.
- 3 Be clear on the \_\_\_\_\_ you want, before you think about what you are going to say.
- 4 A graph or photo can \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of information very quickly.
- 5 A \_\_\_\_\_ fact will usually get an audience's attention.
- 6 Try to deliver your message \_\_\_\_\_ - a big danger is talking too much.

## Write sentences of your own with the words.

- 👁 What useful expressions do you know for presentations? Look at the table on the next page and add some expressions under each heading.

<b>Welcoming your audience</b> Good morning.	<b>Outlining your structure</b> First I'm going to talk about ... Then I'll describe ... and finally ...
<b>Giving instructions about questions</b> I'll be delighted to answer any questions at the end of the talk.	<b>Introducing the subject</b> I'd like to begin by...
<b>Finishing one subject</b> So much for...	<b>Starting a new subject</b> Now I'd like to turn to...
<b>Ordering</b> First of all ... then ... after that ... finally ...	<b>Focusing on a point</b> Let's look at this more closely.
<b>Giving an example</b> For instance...	<b>Dealing with questions</b> That's a good question and I'll be dealing with that in a moment.
<b>Summarising and concluding</b> To sum up ...	
<b>Thanking your audience</b> I'd like to thank you for your attention this morning.	<b>Inviting questions</b> Does anybody have any questions?

**Role Play** Take a few minutes to prepare a short presentation based on one of the following situations or a subject of your choice. Use the advice from the article and some of the expressions above and then give your presentation to the class.

**A** Your company makes photocopiers and is one of the market leaders. Your new model, the Z100, is 20% faster and more reliable than your competitor's machines, but it is 10% more expensive.

**B** Your company provides payroll and accounting services to some of the biggest multinational businesses. Your clients can save money by outsourcing these functions as they save on salaries, office space and computer programs, although there have been some concerns about security in your company.