***POINTERS ON PRESENTATIONS***

Before working on your presentation, read the pages on “Project Report Guidelines” in this packet (immediately following the pages on presentations). It will answer many questions that may arise.

***Planning the Presentation***

1. Outline the areas to be covered.

Your presentation includes all the elements of the written report, although these elements are presented in less detail. It should include the following:

• a brief presentation of the problem and the research objectives of your study; be very specific when describing the objectives

• a description of the methods (data collection method, questionnaire, sample size, response rate, description of sample demographic characteristics--use bar graphs to show sample demographics)

• description of key results, including graphs for each research question covered. Note: you **MUST** include at least one difference research question.

• description of less important results if time allows

• limitations

• recommendations

2. Don’t cover too much in a single presentation; don’t cover too little.

You may not have time to cover all the research questions you studied. Identify the most important and most interesting parts of your project and plan to cover those. Use your rehearsals to determine if you include too much or too little for the time allowed. There will be a penalty for exceeding the time limit or for having a presentation shorter than the minimum required time.

3. Make sure your presentation stresses and clarifies important points.

The audience needs to be able to separate important information in your presentation from the details or supporting material. This can be accomplished in several ways. Visual aids may be used to list the important points. The speaker may present examples illustrating major concepts. The introduction and summary can emphasize major points.

Point to relevant parts of a visual to reinforce your words. Once you’ve displayed the visual to the audience, don’t just ignore it. Point to it periodically to connect what you are saying with what they are seeing. A laser pointer often is helpful for this purpose

4. Use Powerpoint effectively.

Graphic elements and images in your Powerpoint slides can increase audience interest. A catchy visual at the beginning of your part of the presentation is an effective way to direct the audience’s attention away from yourself to the visual aid, which can have a calming effect if you’re nervous.

Make sure the font on your slides is large enough. Default fonts usually are too small. Do a practice run-through in the same room using the same equipment that will be used during the presentation. People sitting in the back of the room should be able to read every word and every number on every visual. There will be automatic point deductions from your presentation grade if any part of a visual is illegible from the back of the room. This includes labels and legends on graphs.

Do not put your questionnaire on a visual because the print will be too small to read; if it’s important for the audience to see your questionnaire, make a handout.

Bring a printed set of your visuals for use on the document projector as a backup in case of unexpected equipment problems or failure.

A unified typeface, layout, and graphics style on all visuals give a professional appearance. Keep the slides simple and uncluttered, so they are easy for the audience to interpret.

A presentation containing only bar charts may seem boring to the preparer of the presentation but may be preferred by the audience. In a presentation, the audience only has a moment to grasp the meaning of a graph, and bar charts are the easiest to grasp quickly. A consistent graph format throughout the presentation also makes the material easier to understand. Do not use pie charts unless you have specific permission from the instructor. Put only one chart on a slide.

Turn the sound off on the computer for your presentation unless you specifically plan to have audio elements of your presentation. This will prevent unintended sounds from interrupting your presentation.

Don’t turn your back on the audience, either to read or to write on your visual. It is especially important not to turn your back when you are talking. You will lose important eye contact, and your audience will not be able to understand what you are saying. If you are using a whiteboard and must turn your back at least partially to write on it, don’t talk while your back is turned.

Don’t block your audience’s view of the visual. With some types of visual aids or some types of projection setups, you must move to avoid blocking someone’s view. During a talk, you should monitor your audience to ensure everyone has a clear view of each visual. If you see people craning their necks to see, move out of their way. This movement, if done purposefully, can add to the dynamism of your talk.

See the section in the course packet labeled “Effective Visual Aids” for additional suggestions.

5. Make your presentation memorable.

Business people may witness dozens of presentations in a month. To be effective, a presentation must be memorable. Be creative in finding something that will make your presentation stand out in a positive way from the rest. This is a chance to use your creativity to do something special or unique.

Don’t rush through the visual. Especially if it is a graph or other complex material, give the audience time to interpret the visual and absorb its meaning. It’s okay to pause for a few seconds while the audience looks at the graph. If the graph can’t be understood at first glance, describe the graph for the audience, explaining what’s on the x and y axes and what the bars or lines on the graphs represent. You may have looked at hat graph two dozen times, but it’s the audience’s first glimpse, so you need to give everyone a chance to absorb what the graph means.

End your presentation with a question for the audience to stimulate audience participation in the Q&A session following your presentation.

Visuals are there to reinforce you, not to replace you. Use blank slides in a PowerPoint presentation when you want the audience to focus on you, not a visual. On occasions, don’t be afraid to turn off your document camera or walk away from your flipchart to address the audience more directly. You should be the primary visual aid in a presentation.

6. Dividing the presentation among team members.

Each team member should be responsible for a cohesive subset of the material to be presented. For instance, one speaker may cover the intro and research questions, another the methodology, another the results. It’s best if a single speaker appears only once (e.g., don’t have the same person give the intro, then come back and do the summary). When each speaker finishes with his/her part of the presentation, he/she briefly introduces the next speaker. (For instance, “Now Susan Williams will discuss the methods we used to collect our data.")

7. Practice the presentation using the classroom computer and projection equipment.

Check out the presentation equipment in the classroom to make sure your files are compatible with the installed software and to familiarize yourself with the equipment. You are responsible for making sure your presentation goes smoothly. If your presentation includes audio or video components, you should check in advance that these work properly on the classroom equipment. When practicing your presentation, do not use a copy stored online. Instead, bring a copy on a jump drive or CD to closely mimic the conditions of your actual presentation.

***Executing the Presentation***

1. Dress appropriately.

This is a business presentation. Hence, business casual is expected. An exception may be granted in some cases where attire is related to the creative aspects of the presentation; consult the instructor in advance.

2. Don’t speak too rapidly. Speak loudly enough. Look at your audience.

For most people, it’s natural to speak rapidly when nervous. Make conscious efforts to slow down your speech if you think you’re going too fast: use deliberate pauses, deep breaths between sentences, etc. Pause every once in a while to look at your audience and get nonverbal feedback from them. Is anyone nodding his/her head in agreement, looking especially interested, smiling at your jokes? Choose a couple of friendly faces and talk to them. If you’re too nervous to look people in the eye, look at their throat.

3. Don’t read your presentation.

You may wish to refer to notes but do not read them. Some presenters use a slide to list the outline of their presentation and use this outline as a form of notes.

4. Practice, Practice, Practice!

Do several run-throughs of your presentation alone and in the presence of a small, friendly audience. Get feedback on your speaking style, your visuals, and the clarity of your presentation. Check the timing and adjust the content accordingly. Get used to working with your visual aids. Run through your presentation in an empty classroom and use the equipment to become familiar with it. For a team presentation, the team needs to rehearse together once or twice. Each team member should know what other members are covering. The transition in speakers from one team member to another should be practiced and handled smoothly.