

Presenting Rapport: How to impress and influence your audience



Presenting: How to communicate your message to the maximum effect

1. Rhetorical questions

The advantage of presenting your ideas as questions rather than direct statements is that questions involve the audience, make your presentations sound more conversational and create anticipation in the minds of the audience.

- So, how can we account for this?
- Why is it so difficult to?

2. Rhetorical questions and the repetition of key words

You can make a rhetorical question much more powerful by repeating key words.

- *(Statement)* The advantages of Model X are ... and *(Rhetorical questions)* **But what are the DISADVANTAGES?** *(Answer)* **The DISADVANTAGES** are numerous. To start with

Notice the repetition of “disadvantages” linking question and answer.

3. Tripling

Good presenters frequently chunk important points in threes. Mention the point you find most important last.

- I **came**, I **saw**, I **conquered**. (Julius Caesar)
- This is how the project is to be **planned**, **organised** and **managed**.
- “If there is anyone out there **who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy**, tonight is your answer.” (Obama, victory speech 2008)

4. Dramatic contrast

Contrast is a very common presentation techniques.

- That’s one small step for man. One giant leap for mankind. (Neil Armstrong)
- “I know **you didn't do this just to** win an election and I know **you didn't do it** for me. **You did it** because you understand the enormity of the task that lies ahead. (Obama, victory speech 2008). *(Tripling and dramatic contrast: the third item in the list is contrasted with the first two.)*

Tip: use dramatic contrast to reinforce the point you are making.

- While **most studies** have ignored X, **our study** does indeed address X.
- While **most studies** have concentrated on X, **some recent studies** have begun to explore Y.

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5. Creating rapport

Building up a good relationship or rapport with your audience is important, especially in the early stage of your presentation. These are some techniques you could use:

- Use personal pronouns (“you”, “we”, “us”, “our”)
- Refer to common knowledge (“As you may all well know, ...; As I’m sure you’re all aware of ...)
- Use words and phrases that will make your presentation less formal and more friendly: “Well; you know; actually; as a matter of fact; ok, so ...”)
- Use an attention grabber: anecdote, amazing fact, staggering statistic, problem, cartoon, ...
- Pose (rhetorical) questions to the audience
- Use tag questions (Interesting, *isn’t it?*)
- Make eye contact
- Pay attention to voice patterns
- Crack a joke
- Pay attention to body language / posture
- Smile ☺

(From: Powell, M. (2002), Presenting in English: How to give successful presentations)