

# Formal Presentations

## OBJECTIVES

You should study the chapter to know

- the importance of face-to-face presentations
- how to be clear with your purpose in your presentation
- how to plan, structure, begin, develop, end, and use effective body language, voice, and visual aids in your presentation
- how to handle questions and criticism
- how to control nervousness and stage fright while making a presentation
- how to use MS PowerPoint to create impressive presentations

## INTRODUCTION

Successful and inspiring speakers are remembered not only because they were eloquent, humorous, or had a good style, but primarily and principally because their messages and ideas caused a change in their audience's actions, attitudes, lives, or made the purpose clear to them. This is true for all types of presentations—professional presentations, business speeches, classroom lectures, and so on, especially in an age of instantaneous communication via telephone, computer, and fax. Face-to-face business presentations are enormous time consumers—from scheduling a date when everyone can attend, to making every arrangement necessary for the presentation, it takes much more time and effort than it would have taken to send the same message as an attachment in an email, in the form of a memorandum, circular, or notice. Nevertheless, presentations still play an important role in business for obvious and good reasons.

Throughout our career, we are bound to encounter innumerable situations that require professional presentations to be made. To mention a few, a team leader may have to present before the corporate body about a product that his/her team has brought out; a top administrator of an institution may have to present the goals, activities, and achievements of the institution to an important visitor; a project manager may have to present before a committee the results of a project recently undertaken by the company; a college student may have to attend seminars or may have to present project reports to fellow students and

faculty members. These situations call for effective, memorable presentations. Although these circumstances differ in purpose, the strategies in making good presentations do not differ much.

The more successful our career, the more often will we be called upon to make presentations for a variety of

'Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.'

*—Robert Frost*

situations and audiences. Constant practice is the key to acquiring this skill. The following points are to be attended to when preparing for a professional presentation.

- Planning: Occasion, audience, purpose, thesis, and material
- Outlining and structuring: Introduction, main body, and conclusion
- Choosing the mode of delivery
- Guidelines for effective delivery
- Body language and voice
- Visual aids

## PLANNING

Preparing and delivering the first business presentation or public speech in our life can be daunting. We may find it difficult to decide what we want to say and how to say it, or perhaps the thought of speaking before an audience scares us. It is true that some people are naturally talented at public speaking. However, with some helpful guidance, anyone can prepare and deliver a successful speech that will be remembered for all the right reasons.

When preparing a presentation, the first instinct may be to sit down with a pen and paper and charge ahead into the first line of the speech. However, devoting some time to careful planning of the speech will save a lot of time and effort later on. Effective preparation enables us to answer all the questions and doubts about our speech before they arise. The contents of our speech, and how we deliver it, are based on five important factors:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasion</li> <li>• Audience</li> <li>• Purpose</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thesis</li> <li>• Material</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

### Occasion

Occasion refers to the factors such as the facilities available for our presentation, time, and context of our presentation. *Facilities* include the venue or locale along with the projection equipment, lighting, seating, ventilation, etc. Every location has its unique physical environment. We may present in magnificently large auditoriums or oppressively small conference rooms. We need to know the physical setting; find out whether we will have a podium or a table, whether we will have a public address system, and so on. Also, attention should be paid to the physical conditions prevalent in the venue such as seating, room temperature, and lighting. We should try to understand whether the audience will be seated on hard metal chairs for an hour in a freezing room, whether the lighting will be too powerful to render our slide presentation ineffective, etc. If we identify such problems in advance, we can either ask for alternative arrangements or modify our materials, visual aids, and style to suit the environment.

*Time* refers to both the time of the day of presentation and the duration of the talk. Straightforward and factual presentations may work well during the morning hours, but in case of an after-dinner speech, we may need to adapt our remarks to the occasion. Remembering the fact that most professional presentations are brief, we should present the important points in the first few minutes.

*Context* refers to the events surrounding our presentation. When we are presenting in a team, for example, we need to consider the team members. They might have left a positive or negative impression in the minds of the audience and, hence, we would need to adapt ourselves to the existing situation just before presenting our part. Besides these immediate events, the recent

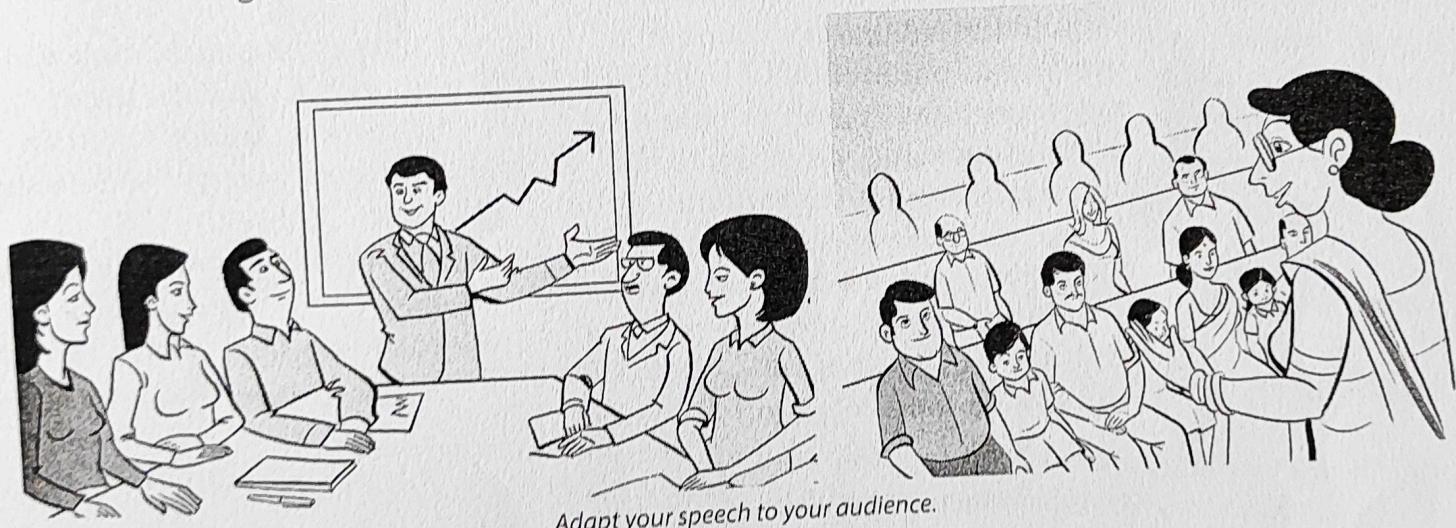
happenings in our company can also affect the presentation. For example, if you are about to present a new proposal on budget just after your company has suffered a financial loss, you should emphasize on those features of your budget that focus on reducing the costs.

The occasion dictates not only the content of our speech, but also the duration, the tone, and the expectations of the audience. For example, humour may be inappropriate during a serious sales presentation, while it may be welcome during a wedding speech, or a sports event. We should also be aware of our role and any observations that we might make during our speech. For example, if you are presenting the final report of your project to a group of professors or senior colleagues, you need to take care of the short duration, firm but polite tone, and also their expectations.

## Audience

All audiences have one thing in common. They are at the receiving end of our communication. They may be our friends, clients, colleagues, sometimes unfamiliar faces, or a combination of all these. The nature of our audience has a direct impact on the strategy we devise for our presentation. Hence, it is necessary to have some prior knowledge of the audience.

- What are their interests, likes, and dislikes?
- Are they familiar with the topic?
- Is their attitude hostile or friendly?
- What is the size of the group?
- Age range? Gender distribution?



For instance, people from a particular culture may feel uncomfortable asking questions or may not reveal their feelings through facial expressions. If we know in advance how our audience is likely to react, we can structure our presentation and adapt our style to help them feel comfortable. We are also less likely to feel distressed by their reactions.

'It is a remarkable observation that the more learned and respected the researcher, the simpler their talks often seem to be.'

-Mike Grimble

If we are going to speak before an unknown group, we can ask our host or the organizer for help in analysing the audience and supplement their estimates with some intelligent guesstimates of our own. Whether we present locally or in a foreign country, we can expect at least some members to have linguistic or cultural backgrounds different from our own. Those who are not very conversant with English or with our accent will appreciate



## Tips for Creating an Impact on the Audience

- Before beginning your presentation, look at all the sections of the audience.
- Always begin with a smile and greet them in pleasant tone.
- Give the impression that you are not lecturing but sharing your views with them.
- Modify your tone/material according to the reaction of your audience. For instance, if you find them bored or not understanding your point, soften your tone, ask them if they have any difficulty and give one more clearer example.
- Choose examples that are familiar to the major section of the audience (e.g., if you are presenting on 'Meditation' you can give example of a student who has found a significant improvement in his power to concentrate by regularly practising meditation).
- Choose words as per your audience's background (e.g., if you are giving a technical presentation to your professors or classmates, you can use specialized terms. When you are presenting to non-technical audience, simplify or define terms such as 'lean manufacturing', 'mach 2', etc.).
- Do not get annoyed if there is a slight disturbance among the audience (say, two people at the back are whispering something).
- Concentrate on your ideas and be with the topic rather than thinking on what impression you are making in the audience's minds.
- Inform the audience at the start of your presentation whether you would prefer to answer their queries at the end or you would not mind being interrupted.

relatively slow speech and visual aids designed to aid their understanding. We should also adjust our style to accommodate cultural differences.

While speaking on a controversial topic, we ought to keep aside some time to tackle any opposition from audience. For example, if your topic is on 'Criteria for selection of projects' you may face a lot of opposition from those teams which do not conform to certain criteria. So, you need to be patient in listening to them and then only should react. Give the impression to your audience that you want to share your views with them.

The structure of a presentation can further be skilfully emphasized by pauses, through interactions with the audience, and through changes in delivery techniques.

If we are going to speak about something controversial or if we have to break some bad news perhaps, we can set aside some time before our presentation to chat with those who will be affected. This will help to:

- Build support
- Anticipate problems
- Consider strategies

Testing the waters beforehand, so to speak, will help to fine-tune the approach. Speak with confidence and conviction. Make your points crystal clear and easy to understand. Maintain an attitude of alertness and confidence. Encourage questions from the audience. Audience participation gives the opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding.

### Purpose

There can be three different purposes of a presentation: to inform, to analyse, or to persuade. The purpose of a presentation not only decides the content and style but also affects the amount of audience interaction. For instance, when our purpose is to provide information or to analyse a situation, we generally interact with the audience in a limited manner. Examples of typical

presentation forms with an informative purpose can be a presentation at the new employee-orientation programme or an explanation of our project status.

On the other hand, when our purpose is to persuade people to take a particular action, collaborate with them in solving a problem, or making a decision, the interaction would be more. We generally begin by providing facts and figures that increase our audiences' understanding of the subject; we may also offer arguments in defence of certain conclusions and recommendations. In addition, we invite them to participate by expressing their needs, suggesting solutions, and formulating conclusions and recommendations. However, this would need a lot of 'on-the-spot' thinking skills and in-depth knowledge of the subject. Sales presentations, speeches by political leaders during election, etc., come under the category of persuasive presentations.

At times, our goal may be to help the audience have a good time. When we welcome the gathering at a conference, we are cheering and gearing them up for the coming sessions. Likewise, when we give an after-dinner speech at a company gathering or an awards dinner, our purpose is to leave the group in a jovial mood. Depending on the purpose, we should be flexible enough to adjust to new inputs and unexpected audience reactions.

### Thesis Statement

The thesis statement is very important in a presentation because it spells out the subject and establishes its impact among the audience. It is also the central idea of a presentation. Using a question or a sentence fragment should be avoided. Simple language should be used to frame a complete, declarative statement. Let us look at the following versions of thesis statement written by a student for a presentation on *Choosing a reputed university for higher education*. We can observe that the first two are ineffective for the reasons mentioned in parentheses, while the third is an effective thesis statement.

- Why should we be careful in choosing a reputed university? (question: does not reflect the content)
- Choosing a reputed university for higher education (fragment: does not tell anything specific; repetition of the topic of presentation)
- Choosing a reputed university for higher education has five significant advantages (tells the audience that they will know these benefits after listening to the presentation)

Begin to formulate your thesis statement as soon as you select your topic and decide on your purpose. Then allow yourself enough time to explore and develop your ideas. Shown below are the steps to arrive at your thesis statement:

*Topic:* Choosing a reputed university for higher education

*Topic area:* Advantages of a reputed university

*General purpose:* To inform

*Specific purpose:* I wish to tell my audience about the benefits they will reap by choosing a reputed university

*Thesis statement:* Choosing a reputed university for higher education has five significant advantages.

### Material

Once we complete formulating our thesis, we need to develop the information that elaborates it. Collecting material requires some research. For example, when we are explaining a process or procedure, the main text of our presentation will include a series of steps involved. Similarly,

when we are giving a product presentation, besides the complete information about the product, we may have to collect information pertaining to the competing products and their features. For most of the professional presentations, we may have to consult the library, Internet, magazines, newspapers, organizational records, statistics, and publications. Sometimes, we may even have to collect information through surveys or interviews. We may also have to contact external organizations to procure information for some of our presentations. Once we finish collecting material and ideas for our presentation, we should assemble them at one place. We may list all the ideas on a piece of paper and then organize them.

## OUTLINING AND STRUCTURING

An outline is a framework in which bits and pieces of the presentation material are fitted. It serves as a guide to show us the right path for our presentation. Hence, spending time in developing an outline never goes waste. In fact, we can use an outline as our 'script', but should be prepared to deviate in response to audience feedback.

Suppose we are planning to deliver a presentation on 'Graduate study in the USA' to the graduating students of a college. This may be a thirty-minute presentation about the steps and requirements to pursue an MS or PhD programme in the US universities. The outline can be in the form of words, phrases, or sentences:

- Introduction
- Decision-making
- Basics of US higher education
- Graduate study programmes
  - MS
  - PhD
- Application forms
- Admission procedure
- Requirements
  - Statement of purpose
  - Academic aptitude
  - Professional development
  - Personal qualities
  - Presentation skills
  - Recommendation letters
- Conclusion

We may have to revise the subheadings under each or some of these main topics. But, as already said, we should be ready to skip or add some topics if the audience wants us to do so. We will learn more about outlining in Chapter 13 on reports.

Structuring or organizing the material clearly is vital for an effective presentation. A well-organized presentation can make our messages more comprehensible, create the desired effect on our audience, and boost our image as a speaker. On the other hand, rambling or taking too long to get to the point, including irrelevant material in the speech, omitting necessary information, or messing up the ideas can lead to a chaotic structure. Even experienced speakers get into trouble if their material is not organized appropriately and end up confusing their audience.

The key to all these problems is to organize our ideas into a well-known pattern. First, we need to tell our audience what we want to tell them; then, we should tell them the ideas; and finally, we should repeat what we have already said. In other words, a presentation should have the following format:

- *Introduction* should grab attention, introduce topic, contain a strategy for establishing credibility, preview the speech, establish rules for questions, and have a smooth transition to the main text.
- *Main body* should contain all the main points and supporting material; the entire matter should be organized into a logical sequence.
- *Conclusion* should contain signal, highlight/summary, closing statement/re-emphasis, a vote of thanks, and invitation to questions.

## Introduction

Look at the following introduction to a presentation on 'Effective use of DDT-based Insecticides'.

### Sample introduction

Good morning friends and wish you all a happy World Environment Day! (Greeting and reference to the day)

Before starting my presentation, let me ask you a few questions: How often do you use DDT-based insecticide in your homes or offices? Do you find them effective? Have you heard of their misuse? Are you aware of their harmful effects and how to control them? (Attention grabber)

Well, I am glad that you find them useful and you use them in your homes and offices. But today I am here to talk about the measures you need to take in order to optimize the benefits of such insecticides. Yes, my topic is 'Effective use of DDT-based insecticides'. DDT, a chemical compound present in insecticides is dangerous when misused, but you can prevent serious health problems by carefully following directions. (Revealing topic and thesis statement)

I would like to tell you that I have been doing research on various kinds of insecticides—their production, distribution, effects, hazards, remedies, etc., for the last several years and have come up with a number of recommendations for their effective use. (Credibility statement)

We will first define and discuss the effects of DDT, then the types of DDT-based insecticides and their effects, the inappropriate way in which people use them and finally suggestions to use them effectively. (Preview)

If you want to ask any questions or give any comments please do so when the presentation gets over. I'll complete my presentation in twenty minutes and you will have the next ten minutes for the question and answer session. (OR) Please feel free to interrupt me by raising your hands if you have any query. (Rules for Q&A)

So let me begin with the first point, what is DDT? (Transition from introduction to main body)

Compare this with an introduction that starts like:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, today I am going to talk on effective use of DDT-based insecticides...

and then straight away goes to the first main point. Think over, which one, according to you, may catch the attention of your audience so as to persuade them to listen to the rest of your speech?

The introduction to a presentation does the job of the preface to a book. It catches the attention (attention grabber) of the audience, tells them the topic and purpose (topic and thesis), develops in them a trust for the presenter and the presentation (credibility), kindles their interest in what the presenter is going to speak in the minutes to come (preview), and takes them slowly into the main body of the speech (transition). Having gone through the sample introduction, let us look into its components in a little more detail:

#### Greeting

We can start with good morning/good afternoon, etc., or can begin by (a) extending a compliment to our audience—I feel good to present before an intelligent/august gathering like yours/It is refreshing to look at your bright faces this morning; (b) referring to the location or

occasion—I hope you all had a good time at the river cruise last evening; On the occasion of World Education Day, let me wish all of you to have lifelong learning.

### ***Attention grabber***

This catches the attention of our audience and prepares them to listen to the rest of our presentation. Depending on the topic, we can use a question, a quotation, a startling statement, an anecdote, or even a video or audio clip to grab the attention of the audience. For example, as in the introduction to ‘Effective use of DDT-based insecticides’ given above, you can begin your presentation with a series of questions: ‘How often do you use insecticides? Are you aware of their harmful effects?’ or with the statement, ‘You would be shocked to know that thousands of people die every day by the careless use of insecticides’.

Imagine that you are giving a presentation on the topic ‘The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Developing Leadership Skills’. You can start your presentation with an anecdote similar to the one given below:

On Friday, when I was attending a meeting, I could barely control my open appreciation of Ms Veena, the Chairperson. You may wonder why. I will tell you now. She was able to resolve the conflict between two participants amicably simply by using intelligence to understand their emotions. Yes, friends, in today’s business world, emotional intelligence plays a very important role in cultivating various skills—leadership skill is one of them.

After catching the attention, state clearly and precisely the purpose of your presentation. For instance, it can be as pointed as this—‘One reason brings me here today—to inform you about our new performance appraisal system’.

### ***Topic and thesis statement***

As the topic is very important, we need to include it in our visual aid (PowerPoint slide or overhead transparency) and project the same. Then our specific purpose can be stated in the form of a thesis statement as previously discussed under the heading ‘Thesis’.

### ***Credibility***

Many factors may help us develop trust in the audience’s minds for us and our presentation matter. While the audience may believe us because of our power/status/experience, we may need to speak out explicit statements in order to establish credibility in their minds if we are young or inexperienced. We can achieve this goal by stating our interest in the topic, by quoting some relevant statement from a recent newspaper or magazine, or by informing them how much research we have done on the topic.

### ***Preview***

We can tell our audience what is coming ahead in our presentation. We can also give a brief idea about the issues we are going to cover in the given time. This can be done by showing the slide containing the main topics and subtopics in the presentation outline.

### ***Rules for question and answer session***

Good presenters always anticipate questions and prepare their answers as well during the preparation stage. It is better to inform the audience in the beginning itself whether they can ask questions during or after the presentation.

## Transition

Before going to the slide containing the first main point, we can speak out a phrase or ask a question to provide a link between the introduction and the main body of the presentation—‘now that you know what are the issues I am going to discuss today, let me begin with the first point, that is, ....’; ‘So, what are the characteristics of a reputed university?’—It is better to adopt a uniform style to state the main points of a presentation; that is, all the points are in the form of phrases, questions, etc. Do not mix different formats.

A good introduction creates interest and leads the audience effectively into the main body of the speech.

## Main Body

The main body, the discussion, or the text part follows the introduction and supports the aim or specific purpose of a presentation. The major points we highlight in our opening section will be expanded here. Depending on the topic, and the introduction part, we can choose from any of the following patterns to organize the main body of a presentation.

**Chronological** This pattern can be used for organizing points that can be arranged sequentially (in the order in which the events occurred or appeared before us). The entire presentation can be arranged chronologically. This method is useful for topics such as ‘the profile of our institute’, ‘the changing face of the earth’, and ‘history of sports’.

**Categorical** This is one of the easiest and most commonly adopted patterns for many topics. The entire presentation can be divided into various topics and subtopics arranged on the basis of subordination and coordination. This can be used for topics such as ‘the role of advertising’, ‘environmental protection’, ‘importance of professional presentation’, etc.

**Cause and effect** This method can be adopted whenever a ‘cause and effect’ relationship exists. Here, we have to illustrate and explain the causes of the situation and then focus on the effects. It is relevant for topics such as ‘impact of cinema on children’, ‘Internet—boon or bane’, ‘global warming’, etc.

**Problem–solution** Here, we divide the presentation into two parts. In the first part, we describe and analyse the problem. After the analysis we move on to the main objective of the presentation to suggest or propose a solution to the problem. It is a very helpful and effective way for persuasive presentation. For topics such as ‘population explosion’, ‘addiction to gaming’, etc., this method can be used.

We can strengthen our argument or ideas by providing examples, illustrations, statistics, testimonies, analogies, or definitions.

**Supporting material** Solid ideas do not always impress our audience. We need to back up our well-organized points in a way that makes the audience notice, understand, and accept our message. In other words, we need to use plenty of supporting material or develop our core points adequately.

As demonstrated by the examples given in Table 7.1, supporting material not only clarifies the main ideas, but also makes them more vivid and meaningful to the audience. In addition, they help establish and prove our main statement. Let us now discuss the various categories of supporting material (Table 7.2).

**Definitions** When we deliver a presentation on a topic that we feel that the audience is not too familiar with, we can use a definition to develop our idea.

TABLE 7.1 Examples of supporting material

Main statement	Supporting statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Replacing the lens in the laser projector is not as complicated as it seems</li> <li>We could increase sales by extending the store timings until late in the evening</li> <li>A reputed university always has an excellent placement record</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let me show a diagram that demonstrates how to do it</li> <li>An article in <i>Business Today</i> cites statistics showing that shops that extended their working hours to 10 p.m. boost profits by more than 20% of the direct overheads involved with longer business day</li> <li>In an interview with ABC channel, the VC of XYZ university said, '99 per cent of our students have got offers from IT, manufacturing, consultancy, healthcare, and other industries'</li> </ul>

TABLE 7.2 Kinds of supporting material

Type	Definition	Function	Speech occasions	Tips
Definition	Explaining difficult term(s) with the help of simple terms	To clarify	Used in informative/technical presentations	Use easy and known terms
Example	A brief reference that illustrates a point	To clarify and add interest	Used in all types of presentations	Use situations with which your audience may be familiar
Statistics	Quantification of the main point	To clarify, prove, and add interest	Used widely in presentations where sales figures, survey results, etc., are to be explained	Round off the numbers, support with visuals, and explain adequately
Analogy	Process that shows how one idea resembles another	To clarify, add interest, and prove	Make the comparisons vivid: select familiar analogies	Used in business presentations involving products, processes, and procedures
Testimony	Opinion of experts, peers, or celebrities	To clarify, add interest, and prove	Used in sales presentations	Memorize/paraphrase/read verbatim, cite source, use sources credible to your audience, and follow up with re-statement of explanation

For example, we can start the main body of a presentation on 'Artificial Intelligence' with the definition:

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the intelligence of machines and the branch of computer science that aims to create it. John McCarthy at MIT coined this term in 1956.

**Examples** Examples are the most commonly used supporting material in presentations. They give life to our ideas and make them immediately comprehensible to the audience. Almost all effective speakers use examples in their presentations.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has a wide range of applications such as computer games, neural networks, robotics, and many other areas of technology. For instance, by using AI, you can study the human behaviour. You can assign human characteristics to several characters, program them, allow them to behave in various situations, and then study them.

**Statistics** Engineers, scientists, and business professionals use statistics that represent numerical data relating to groups of individuals or experiments to substantiate their ideas and strengthen the understanding of their audience. Statistics help to make certain arguments more convincing. They are used in presentations related to sales trends, trends in epidemic, experimental results, size of market segments, and the like. Most statistics are collections of examples reduced to numerical form for clarity and easy comprehension of a complex idea. When handled well, statistics are an especially strong proof, because they are firmly based on facts and because they show that the speaker is well informed. Consider the excerpt from the speech of Aditya Vikram Birla, 'Let the Competition be Afraid of Us', delivered at a conference organized by *Euromoney* in New Delhi.

We also have a vast bank of talent, with over 3.5 million scientific and technical personnel, trained in the English language, of a quality and at a cost unmatched. India has a well-developed capital market. We have 21 stock exchanges with over 2,000 actively traded scripts, compared with 220 in Indonesia, 354 in Thailand, 423 in Malaysia, 235 in Singapore, and 181 in the Philippines.

Statistics are best presented using visual aids. When presenting statistics, the statistics should be explained completely. Unless we are presenting statistics developed or collected by ourselves, we need to cite the source in the slide and also to mention it while presenting.

**Analogy** An analogy can make a point by showing how one idea resembles another. Analogies compare items from an unfamiliar area with items from a familiar area.

When we want to talk about the basics of electronics, we can compare the components with the elements of hydraulics. We can say, 'current is measured in amperes and is equivalent to the volumetric quantity of flowing water over time'. As 'flowing of water' is understood by everybody, this analogy may be understood by all.

Whenever we propose adopting a policy or using an idea because it works well somewhere else, we can use comparisons. Presenters mostly use literal comparisons that link similar items from two categories. Look at how N. R. Narayananmurthy, the founder and former Chairman and CEO, Infosys Technologies Ltd, uses comparison as a device to explain his idea pertaining to professionalism in India and the western countries:

'Yet another lesson to be learnt from the West is about their professionalism in dealings. The common good being more important than personal equations, people do not let personal relations interfere with their professional dealings. For instance, they don't hesitate to chastise a colleague, even if he is a personal friend, for incompetent work. In India, I have seen that we tend to view even work interactions from a personal perspective. Further, we are the most 'thin-skinned' society in the world—we see insults where none are meant. This may be because we were not free for most of the last thousand years.'

(Excerpt from a lecture delivered at the Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management, New Delhi, on 1 October 2002.)

The strength of an analogy lies in the choice of the points of comparison and the effectiveness with which we deliver it to our audience. An analogy should always be short and simple, and use of a wrong analogy that may confuse the audience should be avoided.

**Testimony** Testimonies are remarks made by others who are authoritative or articulate and could make a point more effectively than we could, on our own. For instance, when the chairman of Steel Authority of India Limited says something about the production

technology of steel, people will accept it without a question because he is an authority in the field of steel production. Same is the case with Sachin Tendulkar quoting something on cricket. Therefore, to add punch to our talk on team effectiveness in cricket, we can quote Sachin Tendulkar:

'Isn't cricket supposed to be a team sport? I feel people should decide first whether cricket is a team game or an individual sport.'

(Source: [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/s/sachin\\_tendulkar\\_2.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/s/sachin_tendulkar_2.html))

Other testimonies include: remarks made by a celebrity who may be a non-expert in the field, an article written by a relatively unknown person in a journal or newspaper, some good arguments put forth by our colleagues/relatives/professors, etc. Testimonies also help build a persuasive case. Whenever we use a testimony in a presentation, we should cite the source and quote verbatim if it is short. If it is lengthy or confusing, we should try to paraphrase.

The temptation to include too many points in the body of a speech should be resisted. We should restrict ourselves to four or five main points. We can help the audience follow our presentation by summarizing the points as we go along. Every main point is a unit of thought and an essential part of the speech. Each point should be clearly stated, independent of the other main points. Hence, we need to balance the time devoted to each point accordingly. We should plan on bridging the main points so that we can move smoothly from one part of our presentation to the next. We can make use of transitional expressions such as 'therefore', 'because', 'in addition to', 'apart from that', 'on the contrary', 'next', etc.

### Conclusion

The conclusion of a presentation provides yet another opportunity for us to impress the audience. Hence, the conclusion should be prepared and presented with the same interest as we take for the introduction. We can conclude our presentation by reviewing the main points. A signal such as *to sum up*, *to conclude*, *to review*, *in the end*, etc. to indicate the end of the presentation must be used. As we conclude, we should remind the audience briefly about the purpose of our presentation, which could be either to persuade them or to inform them. We should tell them what we want them to do, think, or remember based on the presentation. The temptation to wrap up in haste or add something new in this part of the speech should be avoided.

We can also conclude with a quotation or can recall the earlier story, joke, anecdote with which we commenced our presentation to bring it to a full circle. Some presenters bring in a change in the pace or pitch of their voice. They slow the rate and speak in a lower pitch so as to mark the difference between the main body and conclusion of their presentation.

### NUANCES OF DELIVERY

All of us have listened to more than our share of bad presentations. We have sat through presentations that were delivered so haltingly that we could not care what was being said. We would also have come across presentations that were delivered smoothly but had practically put us to sleep, as the presenter droned on endlessly. However, if delivered effectively and efficiently, presentations can capture the audience's attention without the risk of being shuffled aside. We can reveal our enthusiasm to the audience better than any other means of communication and can address their questions or objections directly.

## Modes of Delivery

What is it that makes our presentation hold the attention and interest of the audience? Our manner of presentation, our vocal inflections, our perfectly timed pauses, our facial expressions, and our gestures—all these are part of an expert delivery. Even a dull and drab topic will turn out to be more interesting if presented well, whereas a really interesting topic may appear to be dull because of poor delivery. So one thing becomes clear—*having something to say is not enough; you must also know how to say it.* Good delivery does not call attention to itself. It conveys our ideas clearly, interestingly, and without distracting the audience. Most audiences prefer delivery that combines a certain degree of formality with the best attributes of good conversation—directness, spontaneity, animation, vocal and facial expressiveness—and a lively sense of communication. The following discussion provides some suggestions so as to enable one to select the best mode of delivery for a presentation. There are four modes of delivery that can be used for making presentations:

- Extemporaneous
- Manuscript
- Impromptu
- Memorization

### **Extemporaneous mode**

Extemporaneous presentation is by far the most popular and effective method when carefully prepared. When speaking extempore we must prepare the notes beforehand and rehearse our presentation. There is no need to learn every word and line by rote. Our presentation will sound quite spontaneous to the audience, as after thorough preparation, we are speaking while thinking. Careful planning and rigorous practice enable one to collect the material and organize it meticulously. Let us look at some of the positive and negative aspects of this mode of presentation.

#### *Advantages*

- As we have enough time to prepare for the presentation, we work hard on the theme/central idea. We can present the theme in the best possible structured way.
- Thorough preparation on our part makes us feel secure and we carry out our responsibility with self-confidence and assurance. Adaptation is also possible if the need arises. In other words, the language of any written text does not bind us. We can be flexible in our use of language.
- Supporting material helps to present our points clearly and also adds weight to our argument. Appropriate selection of quotations, illustrations, statistics, etc., helps us to substantiate our point.
- Our delivery sounds natural and spontaneous to the audience as it allows us to establish a rapport with the audience through more eye contact.
- It enables us to move freely, with ease.

#### *Disadvantages*

- If preparation is inadequate, we can get lost and find ourselves uncomfortable.
- If we rely too much on note cards and start reading out from them instead of just consulting them for reference, then the speech will lose its spontaneity.

### **Manuscript mode**

In manuscript presentation, material is written out and we are supposed to read it out aloud verbatim. We are not supposed to memorize the speech and then recollect it. It is

there in front of us to read. But, we should be wise enough not to attempt to read a speech until we have become a proficient reader. Unfortunately most speakers are not good readers. They make it uninteresting by reading in a dull and monotonous way. However, we *can* overcome this problem with consistent efforts. We could maybe rehearse with a friend or colleague.

For effective use of this mode, we should go through the material several times beforehand until we become absolutely familiar with the text. We should strive to choose material designed to achieve understanding. We should know *what* is written *where*.

#### *Advantages*

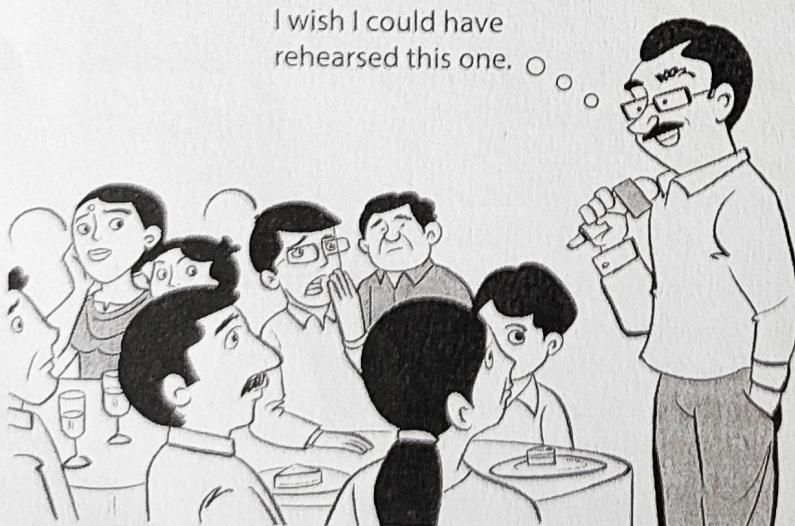
- It is a permanent and accurate record of whatever we have to say.
- There is no chance of tampering with the facts and figures.
- The material is organized systematically. We just have to keep in mind the step-by-step development of main points.
- Language gets polished because we can write and rewrite our material until we feel satisfied on all counts.

#### *Disadvantages*

- Since we will be reading from the manuscript, we get less time for making proper eye contact, which is essential to feel the pulse of our audience.
- Since we will be reading to the audience, we cannot talk to them. There is not much scope either for non-verbal communication.
- Adaptation is rather difficult, if the need arises, to give a different twist to our material.
- In the absence of effective reading skill, we fumble over words, lose our pace, and miss punctuation marks, etc. This adds up to an uninteresting speech and loss of audience attention.
- Conversational flavour along with vocal inflection takes a back seat here, which is a great asset for a speaker.

#### *Impromptu mode*

The impromptu mode, as the word suggests, is what we use when we have to deliver an informal speech without preparation. For example, at a formal dinner party you may be invited to deliver a vote of thanks. Do not panic and babble something in an unmethodical way. Instead, calmly state your topic and then preview the points you are to make. Support your points with whatever examples, quotes, and anecdotes you recall at that time. Then briefly summarize or restate your points and end with a smile. Remember, it is not difficult for you to anticipate certain occasions where you may be asked to speak a few words. Be as brief as possible during your impromptu presentations.



Mr Naidu was called upon after dinner to give an impromptu speech.

### *Advantages*

- We sound very natural because we do not get enough time to make any elaborate preparation.
- We get a chance to express our thoughts irrespective of what others think or say about that particular topic.
- We are spontaneous as we say what we feel, not what we ought to say.

### *Disadvantages*

- The presentation lacks organized development of ideas because of the shortage of time.
- There is no supplementary material (no data, no statistics, no illustrations, no figures) to substantiate the speech.
- Chances of rambling are very high. Various points may hang loose.
- There is frequent use of vocalized pauses.
- The presentation may turn out to be a failure if the speaker has inadequate proficiency in the language he/she uses.

Gaining a reputation for being a good impromptu speaker can do a great deal for our career aspirations. It has been shown that there is a positive correlation between communication effectiveness and upward mobility.

### *Memorization mode*

This method of presentation is very difficult for most of us. Probably only a handful of us can actually memorize an entire speech. Usually we memorize only the main parts and are in the habit of writing key words on cards to help us out through the actual presentation. In some cases, if we wish to quote somebody or narrate an anecdote or a joke, it is better to memorize these for our presentations.

This type of delivery stands somewhere between extemporaneous and manuscript presentation. Speech is written out beforehand, then committed to memory, and finally delivered from memory.

### *Advantages*

- It is very easy for such speakers to maintain an eye contact with the audience throughout the presentation.
- The speaker can easily move and make use of appropriate non-verbal communication to add extra value to the speech.
- It is possible to finish the speech in allotted time.

### *Disadvantages*

- Memorization requires too much of time.
- There are chances of making it a dull and monotonous presentation because we go exactly by whatever we have memorized.
- Even our memory skills may fail us if we have not rehearsed adequately.
- No flexibility or adaptation is possible during the speech.
- The speaker gets flustered if he/she forgets a word, sentence, or a whole paragraph.

Among all the four modes of delivery, extemporaneous is the best because of its flexible nature and its effectiveness. Hence, it is always better to use this mode to make presentations more lively, effective, and memorable.

## Guidelines for Effective Delivery

Success of any presentation also depends on the various elements—verbal, non-verbal (body language), vocal, and visual—used during a presentation.

### *Verbal elements*

**Word pictures** We may give our speech a graphic quality by painting word pictures that allow the audience's imagination to take over. Specific details allow an audience to see the scenes we are describing. Our major job as a speaker is to tell somebody something. We should present our point clearly and just enough so that the listener clearly understands the intended message. The task is not merely to get words out of our mouth, but to transfer ideas into the listeners' minds.

**Warm words** Cold words leave us uneasy and unsure while warm words make us feel secure and comfortable. Words are powerful. They conjure images, evoke emotions, and trigger responses deep within us and we react, often without knowing the reason. In the early days of instant coffee, advertisers got off to a bad start by stressing words such as 'quick', 'time-saving', and 'efficient'. All these words are without warmth and feeling. Makers of fresh coffee fought back with warm, happy, and appetizing words such as 'aroma', 'fresh', and 'tasty'. The instant coffee industry learnt the lesson and its product became 'delicious', 'rich', and 'satisfying'. Sales soon boomed.

Words also suggest whether something is good or bad. We should use those words that strengthen our arguments and weaken those of our opponents. For example, look at the following words:

- | <i>Good</i>  | <i>Bad</i>  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent</li> <li>• Well-regulated</li> <li>• Free-thinking</li> <li>• Appropriately rewarded</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unaccountable</li> <li>• Red tape</li> <li>• Wishy-washy</li> <li>• Fat cat</li> </ul> |

**Similes and metaphors** Although technical presentations do not require the use of similes and metaphors, we cannot deny that they not only add flavour to a speech but also make abstract ideas imaginable. Reach for vivid comparisons your listeners can understand and remember. Try the following metaphors in your speeches:

- As inflexible as an epitaph
- As cold as outer space
- Building a business is like building an empire
- As profitable as a gold mine
- Delay is the deadliest form of denial

**Impact words** 'We' and 'you' are the most important words of all. We cannot stir the audience up if we do not address them directly and relate them to us and our topic. Remember the five-to-one rule: Every time you use the singular 'I', try to follow it with five plurals. Given below are some words that you may use in your presentations or speeches to get desired results:

discovery, guarantee, love, proven, safely, easy, health, vigour, money, results, save, protect, interest, challenge, opportunity, excitement, enthusiasm, flourish, progress, favourable, adaptation, circumstances

**Smooth flow** We can also make our speech flow smoothly and gracefully from beginning to end by using some transitional devices. They promote clarity, emphasize important ideas, and sustain our listeners' interest. Some transitional devices are discussed below:

- **Bridge:** A bridge is a word that alerts the audience that we are changing direction or moving to a new thought. Some examples are:
  - (a) We completed the project in January. *Meanwhile* other developments were taking place.
  - (b) That was bad enough. *However*, there was even worse to come.
- **Number item:** A number item keeps the listeners informed about where we are in a presentation, which covers several points such as:
  - The first advantage of the new plan is ...
  - The second benefit of the plan is ...
- **Trigger:** A trigger is a repetition of the same word or phrase to link one topic with another, such as:
  - That was what the financial situation was *like* in March. Now I will tell you what it is *like* today.
- **Interjection:** An interjection is a word or phrase inserted in a commentary to highlight the importance or placement of an idea, such as:
  - So what we have learned—*and this is important*—is that, it is impossible to control personal use of office telephones.
  - Now here is another feature—*perhaps the best of all*—that makes this such a terrific plan.
- **Internal summary:** Internal summary helps our audience stay oriented by providing a one-sentence summary during the course of delivering the main text of our presentation, such as:
  - Now, you can see that the problem grew from several causes: a shortage of parts, inexperienced maintenance people, and the overload of opening a new warehouse.
- **Internal preview:** An internal preview, like an internal summary, orients the audience by alerting them to the upcoming points, such as:
  - You are probably wondering how all these changes will affect you. Well, some of them will make life much easier, and others will present some challenges. Let us look at three advantages first, and then we will look at a couple of those challenges I mentioned.
- **Signpost:** Signposts tell our audience where we are in our presentation. When we say, 'There are four advantages, as I had already said. Having discussed the first two of them, let me move on to the third advantage', the statement would serve as a *signpost* to tell the audience that we have completed two and there are two more to go.
- **Rhetorical question:** A rhetorical question can subtly change the direction of the discussion, such as:
  - That is what a change of image can do to a company. So *how can we improve our image?*
- **Flashback:** A flashback is a sudden shift/reference to the past, and breaks what seems to be a predictable narrative. For example:
  - Today, we are the market leader. However, *three years ago*, this was not the case.
- **List:** A list is a very simple way of combining apparently unrelated elements, such as:
  - We made *four* attempts to solve the problem.
- **Pause:** A pause is a non-verbal method of showing our audience that we have finished a section of our speech and we are about to move on to another.

- *Physical movements:* Physical movements towards a visual aid, such as a black/white board, flip chart, or screen, suggest that we are moving on to something new.
- *Quotations, anecdotes, and jokes:* A quotation, anecdote, or joke can serve as an excellent link. We may see a joke like the one given below as a good link to the idea that one may wish to take up next:

The Chairman told me a story of a job applicant who said, 'I like the job, sounds fine, but the last place I worked at, paid more, gave more overtime, more bonuses, subsidies, travel allowances, holidays with pay, and generous pension schemes.'

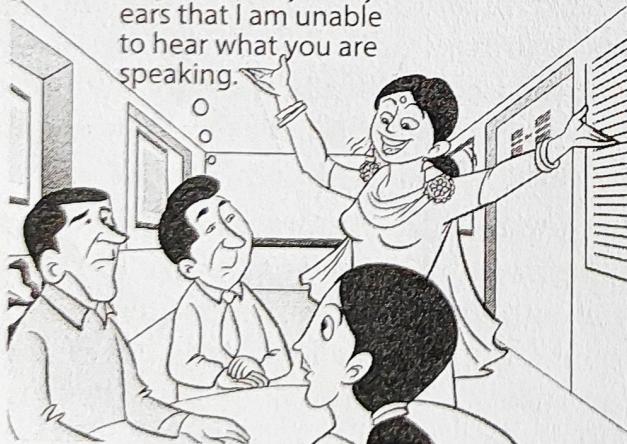
The Chairman said, 'Why did you leave?' The applicant answered, 'The firm went broke.'

### **Non-verbal elements**

Our appearance, facial expressions, eye contact, postures, gestures, and the space we share with our audience, all communicate our interest, enthusiasm, dynamism, intention, and confidence to our audience. Whatever the occasion, the following tips will help you to use body language effectively during your presentation.

- Wear a formal dress and use simple accessories; take care of your personal hygiene
- Use facial expressions to exhibit your enthusiasm and interest; do not show your irritation or anger even when someone interrupts you or asks a question that appears to be silly to you; be polite in answering them
- Make eye contact with all sections of the audience (avoid staring at somebody) to observe their reactions and also to show your sincerity and interest
- Use well-timed gestures; avoid monotonous gestures
- Stand tall and straight with shoulders upright; walk/move swiftly; avoid too many and monotonous movements

What you are doing rings so loudly in my ears that I am unable to hear what you are speaking.



- Do not come very close to the audience; maintain a distance of at least 4–12 feet
- While using blackboard, raise your voice and look at the audience in between
- Avoid fiddling with key ring or tie while presenting
- Avoid looking outside even if there is some external noise. Try to concentrate on your ideas and audience

### **Vocal elements**

Our voice can serve as an important tool to support our verbal message. How we sound is as important as how we look or what we say. Our vocal elements, namely the tone, pitch, rate, and volume, reflect our attitude about

## **Ways to Improve Body Language**

Try and videotape a part of your presentation. Play it back and identify one aspect of your body language you want to improve. After making conscious efforts for improvement, record this part again and see if there is any improvement. You can also practise in front of a mirror to improve on facial

expressions. When you have worked through your entire presentation, and feel sufficiently confident, invite a friend to watch your performance. Ask your friend for comments on aspects of your body language that are good or that need improvement.

ourselves, our message, and our audience. Try the following tips to help you use your vocal elements to enhance the impact of your presentation:

- Speak with enthusiasm and sincerity
- Adjust the volume of your voice
- Avoid monotones or vocalized pauses
- Use your optimal pitch
- Avoid fast delivery
- Use silence and pauses effectively
- Articulate each word clearly

### **Visual elements**

Our audience will remember facts easily if the ideas are connected to the right-brain stimulation. The way to stimulate the right side of the brain is to show pictures. Visual stimuli are more effective than verbal stimuli. We often recall the colour of the cover of a book rather than its title and subtitle.

### **Advantages**

People find our message more interesting, grasp it more easily, and retain it longer when we use visual support along with our words. Besides increasing the clarity of the message, visuals make presentations more interesting. For example, investment brokers often use an array of well-prepared charts, tables, models, and so on, to add variety to information that would be dull without them.

Graphics can also boost our image in ways that extend beyond the presentation. They add a professional flavour to our presentation. Finally, our audience remembers a visual message longer than the verbal message.



## **Tips for Effective Presentations and Speeches**

- Be clear with your purpose.
- Know your audience.
- Keep enough time for preparation.
- Develop interest in the topic; know more about it by reading books, newspapers, etc., listening to and discussing with people.
- Collect adequate material and then select what to present according to the purpose and time given.
- Organize and make an outline with the main points and sub-points.
- Structure your presentation into three parts: beginning, middle, and end.
- Prepare the PowerPoint slides with care keeping in mind the *one minute, one slide rule*.
- Keep animations to minimum.
- Prepare illustrations, such as graphs, maps, drawings, tables, etc., accurately. Ensure that they are visible to everybody in the audience.
- Familiarize yourself with the venue and the available equipment.
- Arrive early and check the arrangements and your PowerPoint slides.
- Be excited about your presentation. Think all positive qualities in you and feel confident.
- On reaching the stage, look at the audience for a few seconds before you start speaking.
- See to it that your introduction goes smooth. You have won half the battle if this is done.
- Use transitions effectively so as to provide a smooth flow to your speech.
- Give a feeling to your audience that you are not dictating but sharing information.
- Explain each slide adequately. Do not just flip slides. Give time for the audience to grasp its contents.
- Maintain eye contact with all sections of your audience.
- Exhibit your enthusiasm, excitement, sincerity, and interest through appropriate facial expressions.
- Use well-timed gestures to substantiate your points.

(Contd)