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Toolkit Review Question 8

Due to my many failures and successes while presenting, I’ve learned several do’s and don’ts of presenting along the way. There is no one key to success, but rather a culmination of factors that makes a presentation great.

One of the most impactful things to bring to any good presentation is to be prepared! I’ve done many presentations that were rushed and thrown together at the last minute – I have rarely had a positive experience during those. I personally am not a PowerPoint presentation savant and can’t completely improvise everything I do. That’s a limit that I must acknowledge. I know this because my greatest success ever while giving a presentation, was the opposite of rushed. I spent a week reviewing my content and went into it knowing my PowerPoint/talking points front to back. I engaged my audience and didn’t use my PowerPoint as a crutch, but rather a tool to drive home my points.

Reflecting more on why I’ve done badly on presentations in the past, I think it’s worth mentioning that passion for your topic can be an influential factor in success. If you’ve ever seen a great TED talk or keynote speaker at some sort of event, you probably left that presentation all stirred up inside. People can feed off of passion and excitement. If you present on something you truly care about or are fascinated by, there’s a good chance you’ll be able to transfer that energy to your audience. If you present on something you couldn’t care less about, you’re most likely going to be boring, and your audience will suffer through the entire thing. I’ve learned I’m the type of person who wants to find meaning in anything I do, and I lack the motivation to prep for a presentation that I could care less about. So passion for a topic is absolutely something that can make a PowerPoint stronger.

My last point might go without saying, but confidence is key in my experience presenting. By maintaining confidence, you can hit your talking points with a much clearer mind. I’ve been in situations where I was not confident in myself or my work, and they were disastrous. Without a clear mind, I was vulnerable to my anxieties and fear of failure. This fear was so intense it controlled the entire presentation, and my hard work was for nothing.

In closing, there is no ultimate way to nail a PowerPoint presentation, but there are many things you can do to make things work in your favor.