

USEFUL TIPS ON GIVING GREAT PRESENTATIONS

Plan your Presentation

A popular wisdom suggests that whoever fails to plan also plans to fail. For you to deliver an outstanding presentation that will generate positive feedbacks from your audience, it is crucial to plan beforehand.

These tips will set you on your way to success.

a) Identify your audience's knowledge level

What do they know? What don't they know? Do your research, find out if you are presenting to an experienced audience, an inexperienced audience or a mixed audience. For an inexperienced audience, you should take your time to explain difficult or "insider" concepts and acronyms.

b) Why should your audience care? (So what?)

During your research, learn about what drives your audience. What's in it for them? (profit, value, productivity? etc.) If possible, ask your audience beforehand what they hope to gain from your presentation. Doing this will help you tailor your message specifically to cater for their needs.

c) Prepare for your audiences' reaction

Your audience will be either Ready, Resistant or Apathetic. For a ready audience, show your depth of knowledge and research about the topic. For a resistant audience, show empathy about their concerns and ease their nerves. For an apathetic audience, grab their attention from the beginning and communicate early what they will gain from the presentation i.e. the "so what?"

d) Know their communication style

Does your audience prefer hearing stories that links to the main points? or do they prefer straight up facts and figures? Are they native English speakers? For non-native English speakers, simplify your language and pronounce words clearly.

From the above points, it is clear that the planning stage is all about your audience. Planning adequately for the audience you are going to be addressing is an important step in ensuring that your presentation exceeds their expectations and delivers value to them.

Design Your Presentation

Your goal in this stage is to generate a presentation outline that flows seamlessly from point to point. It also deals with the manner with which your presentation will be delivered.

a) Brainstorm Quietly

Make a list of what you think is important for your audience to know. After that, **narrow your scope** to few crucial points to help your audience get the overall message. Remember the 80-20 principle, less is more!

In this stage, it will be beneficial to look for articles, stories, statistics and industry specific information to improve the credibility of your main points.

b) Create a Logical Flow of Points

See this as creating a **roadmap** of your message. It is important that your audience knows what the final destination of your message is and how they will get there. A presentation can be broken down into three parts:

Introduction

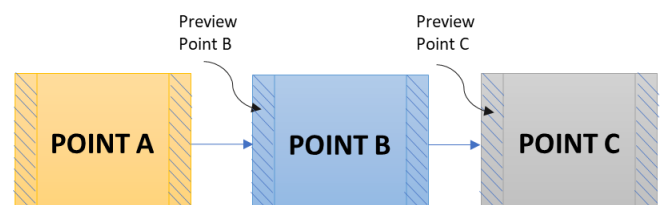
Body

Conclusion

Here are some questions to keep in mind

- Does my introduction tie back to the conclusion?
- Are my main points logically sequenced with smooth transitions?
- Do all the main points have solid evidence?
- Have I included stats, graphs and surveys all with relevant sources?

TIP: To create a logical flow, preview succeeding points to give your audience a taste of what is to come. See image below:



See your presentation as a present or gift to your audience, you want to make it memorable for them.

c) Organize your content

To make your presentation memorable for your audience, do the following

- i. Open your introduction with a **bang**: Hook your audiences' attention and give them a reason to listen.

At this point, think back to the needs of your audience, you may find a relevant statistic or quote that will be of interest to them. Use this to capture their attention!

Note: Your energy and conviction are crucial when delivering your hook. Don't speak like you are unsure or unconvinced about the topic!

- ii. **Reveal the main theme of your presentation and what is to come.** See this as a sort of premiere of the main points

Think about this; why do movie producers release a premiere before the actual movie? They are basically trying to whet your appetite! Use this same concept in your presentations.

- iii. **Connect the dots:** Transit seamlessly from one point to another. Make sure you preview the succeeding point at the end of every point.
- iv. **Wrap up with Confidence:** In your conclusion, tie the close back to the hook (introduction). Transit to the Q & A section.

Your close can be an answer to an open-ended question you asked in the introduction or a quote that emphasizes the importance of your topic. Whatever you decide make sure its something that will resonate with your audience

d) Use emotion

It is generally uninteresting to listen to a monotone speaker. So please don't be one!

- i. **Use body language and maintain eye contact with your audience**
- ii. **Vary your voice when speaking**
- iii. **Speak with conviction and confidence**
- iv. **Be passionate about your topic**
- v. **Tell stories if time will permit**
- vi. **Use facial expressions and visually engaging words**

Design Your Slides

Notice that so far, I haven't talked about slides! This is because your slides should be the last thing you create. You want to make sure that you have created a proper outline before designing your slides. Take note of the following points when designing your slides:

- i. **Use a template:** This could be either a predefined template by your organization or conference. If you have the free will then create your own template.
- ii. **Avoid too much text:** balance the use of text and images.
- iii. **DON'T CAPITALIZE ALL YOUR TEXT!!**

Having too much text in your slides is a recipe for disaster, trust me! No one is ever interested in reading a bunch of text. Keep it short and simple. Make sure there is sufficient white space with conspicuous text.

- iv. Use animations purposefully
- v. Hyperlink your slides. This will come handy in the Q&A session where you may need to refer to relevant parts of your slide.
- vi. Ask for feedback from a trusted colleague

Practice, Practice, Practice!

Practice your designed presentation and slides before the D-day. Practice both formally and informally.

- **Informal Practice:** Here you practice in front of colleagues and family (maybe during dinner).
- **Formal Practice:** Here you record yourself presenting with an actual audience (could be your friends or colleagues). It's a good idea to practice with the same computer, projector and remote control you will be using on that day.

Time yourself during your practice and ensure that you leave ample time for Q&A. Before the actual day, remember to get enough rest and nutrition. Don't beat yourself up if you are feeling nervous or stressed, it is perfectly normal especially with an unfamiliar audience.

Finally, remember that you are giving your audience a present, work hard to make sure that you are giving them a memorable one. Because in the end, it is all about your audience.