

Presentations Plus – A Guide

Introduction

Presentations can be like the British Broadcasting Corporation, whose charter is to entertain, inform and educate..... Alternatively, they can be a source of stress for the presenter..... and, worse still, dull and boring for the audience!

I based this guide on many years of practical, international experience as a sales trainer and presenter, which I have gained from delivering many hundreds of presentations for audiences from two to more than two hundred.

Surveys show, that for many people, public speaking is their biggest fear, greater even than more common phobias such as spiders, mice and drowning!

No wonder then, that it can be the source of anxiety. I wrote this guide to give some practical help on how to minimise this anxiety, prepare, and deliver excellent presentations that are memorable – for all the right reasons.

Tip 1 Preparation

Good presentations start days or even weeks before you give them. Decide what you wish to achieve and what the audience would enjoy and benefit from hearing. Understand what you can practically deliver in the time you have and decide your objectives for the presentation. What value are you bringing?

If someone asked you how would you measure the success of the presentation, how would you answer? If you have no answer, then you need more preparation.

Examples of good objectives

e.g. I want to share my experience in international marketing and give the audience five practical ideas to improve their Internet sales revenue.

e.g. I am delivering a report on last years business results so that everyone can take pride in our shared success and see what we need to focus on and improve in the coming 12 months.

e.g. I want to explore how the classified business might develop over the next five years and share 10 Best Practices from within my group.

Bad examples – Have you ever heard a presenter say any of the following, when they take the stage?

‘How long have I got to speak for?’

‘Please bear with me, this isn’t actually my presentation’

‘Excuse me, but I haven’t seen all these slides before’

These are examples of bad (or zero) preparation and lack respect for the audience.

Tip 2 – Physical Technique

You may feel physically stressed when they have to do presentations. Dry mouth, 'butterflies in the stomach' and a tremor in the hands and voice are all common symptoms that can be easily overcome with a few simple relaxation techniques.

- Take a few slow deep breaths before you go on stage.
- Then, clench all the muscles in your body as tightly as you can and then relax them all just before you walk on stage.
- Have a glass of water available on stage and sip as required.
- Make a conscious effort to vary the tone and pace of your voice as you speak. Presenting to any audience of more than a few people requires a completely different tone and pace from regular speech. If you speak as you would 1-to-1, then people will perceive you as dull or 'flat' when speaking to a larger group. Exaggerate your voice pitch and vary the pace of delivery. If you feel that you are almost 'going over the top' with pitch and pace variations, then you probably have it right!

Tip 3 – Introduction

Although some of the audience may know a little about you and even if the compere has introduced you by name and job title, you should establish your credentials and say a little to justify why you are speaking and what knowledge, skills or experience you have to take peoples time to listen to you.

You should also confirm how long you plan to speak and how you wish to handle questions.

e.g. Thank you, my name is John Smith and for the last 4 years I have been Managing Director of ABC Classifieds Inc. This is a business of about 20.5 million Euros, which operates in 3 countries. During this time, although we have seen many changes in our industry, we have achieved substantial double-digit revenue growth. I would like to speak to you for the next 45 minutes to explain just how we achieved these results. I am happy to take questions during the presentation and there will also be some time at the end.

Tip 4 – Structure

I believe that you should tell the audience your presentation objectives and the areas that you plan to cover at the beginning. Be realistic. Three or four reasonable 'chunks' of structured information are a good basis for a presentation of 45-60 minutes.

e.g. Today I plan to talk about 4 areas:

- Firstly, I will give you a brief history of the company's performance over the last year.
- I will share our 3-year plan and show you our strategy for business development.

- I will explain how we have managed to grow our print revenue despite pressure on circulation.
- I will conclude with an overview of our plans to grow the contribution we will get from the Internet in the future.

I also recommend that you explain when you reach the end of each section and then introduce the next section.

e.g. So that concludes the summary for last year's results. Now let us move on to the next section, our business development strategy for the next 3 years.

The principle is:

- Tell them what you are going to tell them.
- Tell them it.
- Tell them what you told them.

Trust me, this really works!

Tip 5 – Rhetoric (Every great speaker's secret toolkit)

If you look at outstanding speakers, orators and presenters, they almost all use a number of basic rhetorical techniques – most of these were developed by the ancient Greeks.

(Don't worry – this isn't going to be dull, academic theory – if you just master one or two of these it can improve your presentations by an enormous amount. You will soon see politicians and public speakers in a new light and quickly identify these great techniques. They have been used extensively in every famous speech in the 20th and 21st century.)

- *Ask a Question and Answer it* – Simple as that

e.g. So what are the most important developments in the market today? I believe they are: Internet, Internet, Internet.

- *Use Opposites or Contrasts* – It's not one thing it's another.

e.g. In business today it is not past success that secures the future but the ability to adapt quickly to future opportunities.

- *Take a position* – State what lots of people think or say, then state your position.

e.g. Many companies today look for mass-market opportunities to deliver one-size-fits-all products to as many customers as possible. I say that this is a flawed strategy. The future does not consist of one market of a million customers....but of a million markets of one customer.

(See how I managed to use opposites too!!!)

- *Pose a puzzle* – Ask a ‘puzzle’ question to make the audience stop and think, then give the solution. Here are some examples from my recent presentations.

e.g. Many people think that Charles Darwin, the father of evolution, said success was all about ‘survival of the fittest’. In fact he never said that.....

e.g. You need to think of your Internet site in the same way as you might think of a nightclub.....

e.g. Most companies that I deal with today completely miss the most important business metric and also have no idea how to measure it.....

(If you would like the answers to these ‘puzzles’ then you’ll have to contact me and let me know!)

- *Alliteration* – Use several words of phrases that start with the same letter or sound.

e.g. The basic recipe for growth is Strategy, Systems and Skills.

(Note: alliteration is very, very popular with marketers and in marketing theories, simple folk that we are. Be careful not to overuse it, as you can sound stilted, showy and stupid....See what I mean?)

- *Make a list* – There are several versions of this.

The most basic is just a list.

e.g. there are three reasons for this failure: an over reliance on the past, a lack of focus on competition and the inability to recognise the importance of the Internet.

You can often use a list combined with another technique.

e.g. use a list with opposites – or to answer a puzzle question – or to explain your position – or using alliteration.

The most powerful list is the list of 3! Listen out for just how often this is used by great speakers, politicians and presenters.
(There was another list of three for you...and you’ll find many lists of three throughout this document ☺)

Lists of 3 just seem emotionally ‘right’ when communicated. Two is too short, four seems too long. Note, it’s usually best to put the longest point as the last one.

- *Mix and Match* – You can combine all these rhetorical techniques.

e.g. You can pose a ‘puzzle’ question then answer it with a list of alliterations.

e.g. you can state a position and give your view as a contrast.

Tip 6 – Relax and Look at Someone

The audience has come to listen to what you have to say, they are on your side and they want you to do well. (List of 3!). So relax and remember, unless you are a politician, people are 99.999% on your side. You are doing what many of them hate to do – presenting. They respect you for this.

Always try to look up and out at your audience. Have eye contact with a ‘section’ of the room whenever you are talking, finish your sentence or section and then shift your eyes to look at the next ‘section’ of the room. Try to cover all the ‘sections’ of the room as you speak. Look at them all, roughly equally during your presentation.

If you find yourself in a very large room or with lights on you and the audience in darkness, then ‘scan’ your gaze back and forth just above the top of the back row and you will seem to be speaking to everyone in the room. (This is the Mona Lisa technique, beloved by politicians and professional speakers the world over.)

If you need to look down at notes or the PC, **stop** talking while you do so. Remember, the audience will not notice these pauses that seem huge to you. (Trust me on this!!)

Stop talking for 1 or 2 seconds between slides, it adds ‘air’ to the presentation and allows the audience to keep up. Remember, you have seen the presentation before (hopefully), they have not.

Tip 7 – A picture tells a thousand words

Try to make your presentations interesting with graphs, pictures, diagrams, boxes, photos and video. Otherwise, it is boring! Consider also the colours and backgrounds and don’t try to cram too much information or too many concepts onto each slide. Better to use build-ups and animations to explain or develop complex ideas that show a highly detailed ‘finished’ picture.

Please avoid pages of lists of text bullets (see Tip 8) ...and PLEASE avoid tables of eight point type excel data sheets that no one can read!

Tip 8 – NEVER, EVER DO THIS

There is one awful and terrible thing that we have all seen (sometimes very senior) presenters do...I don’t know why they do it....it makes me want to weep.....it sends me to sleep...it is deeply insulting to the audience and it is a

total waste everyone's time....and yet time after time the world over
presenters keep on doing it.

Ready.....

**NEVER, EVER PRESENT SLIDE AFTER SLIDE OF LISTS OF TEXT
BULLETS AND JUST STAND AND READ IT TO THE AUDIENCE!**

This adds no value, please just email it to me and I will read it to myself.

If we can avoid presentations like this, the world will be a better place!

Finally.....

I hope that you find this a useful and practical guide, with real world advice to help you prepare and deliver exciting and interesting presentations.

If you have any comments or if I, or my company, can provide further marketing help or support for you and your business, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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