
Presentations ... beyond the technology



Techniques, tips and strategies for creating and delivering effective presentations

This section will provide you with a few brief tips on the following topics :

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Possessing the technical skills to produce and run a PowerPoint slide show goes a long way towards delivering an effective presentation; visual and audio materials help to –

- make your ideas clearer
- focus audience attention,
- emphasise certain points
- and help people to remember your talk.

However, you can increase the effectiveness of your slide show by adhering to a few basic principles for successful communication.

The advice in this section is applicable to all kinds of messages whether they are aimed at selling a product or service, changing behaviour, providing information or asking people to make a decision.

This is designed to give you a very brief, but helpful, insight into a number of presentation topics. It will help to raise your awareness of the areas discussed and give some useful suggestions. There are further courses and many publications on this subject for anyone wishing to study this in greater depth.

Prepare for the Presentation

Clarify your objective

- Be clear in your mind
- who the presentation is being given to
 - what is the central point of your message
 - what you want to say
 - what action you expect the audience to take as a result
 - *Make a decision*
 - *Buy a product or service*
 - *Change their behaviour*
 - *or, you may simply be providing new information.*

Much of what you say may not be remembered – make sure what you say counts!

Identify the audience

- It is important to understand your audience to ensure the material is pitched at the correct level and tone for them
- To do this it is necessary to assess whether the audience is likely to be
 - Hostile
 - Respectful
 - Neutral
 - Indifferent
 - Interested
- Different presentation structures will apply to
 - a sales presentation
 - a lecture
 - communicating news to a workforce
 - a job interview etc etc

Once you know your audience you can then develop a strategy, and include points, to take account of their needs, expectations, interests and views.

Carry out your research

- This is a necessary next step to ensure you have all the data, information and knowledge required. A good presentation is founded on the value of the substance – not the sound effects you include in your slide show!
- You may already have most of the required material but should ensure it is accurate and up-to-date.
 - Use facts to develop your point of view – do not look for selective facts to support a pre-conceived view!
 - Without factual evidence your central message may be no more than uninformed opinion rather than a well-considered, logical, sound argument.
 - The research process could be quite short or lengthy depending on factors such as the complexity of the topic, the sources available, the work previously carried out etc – so ensure you give yourself sufficient time.

Your research may produce a large amount of evidence – select evidence for your slide show that would be most relevant and of most interest to your audience. Keep the rest for your notes, and for questions and answers.

Decide on the content

- Ensure you include sufficient evidence to –
 - *sell your product or service, or*
 - *change behaviour, or*
 - *provide the required information or*
 - *enable people to make a decision, etc etc*
- Content can be included / excluded from a particular presentation depending on the audience.

Slides can be hidden in PowerPoint

Construct the PowerPoint Presentation

Arrange your material

Although many principles remain constant, the precise structure and arrangement of your material largely depends on its purpose. Be clear about the audience and the type of presentation as mentioned in "Identify the Audience".

Taking account of the above -

- Identify your main points
- List evidence that supports each point
- Assess the strength of your supporting evidence
- Arrange the material in a structure that suits the topic –
 - A distinct topic broken into sub-topics
 - An issue with sub-points in chronological order
 - Identifying a problem and listing solutions
 - Highlighting an issue and assessing how, why, when, where and who etc etc

A sales presentation, for example, be structured as follows -

- Introduce yourself and the subject
- Explain the objectives
- Outline audience needs and requirements
- Show how service/product meets their needs
- List main benefits
- Summarise main issues and benefits
- Answer questions.

Carrying out this step in Outline View may be helpful.

Arrange your material into slides

- Arrange your written material into an order that takes account of the factors mentioned above
- Each slide should make one main point

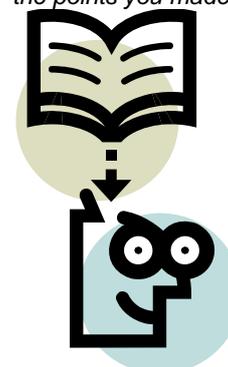
Slide legibility

- If you are unable to read the slide on your laptop screen from four paces away, the content is probably too small.
- Recommend font size at least 36 for headings and 28 for most other text.

Slide Contents

- Use as little text as possible.
- Make statements clear and succinct.
- The most effective slides do not have more than 6 lines
- Where possible, use pictures, charts, cartoons and visual illustrations etc rather than lists of words and figures.
- It is good practice to restrict fonts to two different sizes and two different styles.
- Do not overdo the use of **bold**, *italics* and underlining.
- Ensure there is sufficient contrast between text colours and the background.
- Use your own drawings, pictures and artwork whenever possible (avoid images used by everyone with the same software package!)
- Make the slides colourful – it adds to the effect
- Check the time required for your slide show and adhere to times allocated.

a picture says a thousand words! ... and, they help people to remember the points you made.



Slide Show effects

- Good use of audio and visual transitions and animations can help emphasise points and make the presentation interesting and slick
- Overuse of animations, sounds and special effects can become irritating and detract from your message.

animate with care

Deliver the Presentation

Personal style

- Be yourself – do not try to be someone else!
- Be sincere - mean what you say.
- Speak clearly (see Vocals below)
- Relate to your audience – try to connect with them.

Audiences are often sensitive to these and will usually see through an act!

How to start

- Say who you are and why you are there.
- Let your audience know what's in it for them!
- Show the first slide and set the scene by giving a verbal overview of what is on the slide and explain the central point of the presentation (usually referred to on the title slide).

Give the audience some reason for listening to you!

Position yourself

- Do not block the slide.
- Usually stand next to the projected image. Standing at the audience's right of the screen is best due to effect of people reading from left to right – you remain in the centre of their field of view.
- Look at the audience when you are discussing a slide – do not stand with your back to them studying the slide
 - *a glance to refresh your memory should be enough or use your PowerPoint notes.*

Notes

- PowerPoint notes are often a useful aid.
- They should contain a few key points that you wish to make about a topic on a slide. It is not necessary to produce a slide for every point – making points verbally is often sufficient.
- Get used to blanking out the screen using B or W – sometimes forcing the audience to focus on you whilst you make a point has great effect.
- Turn over to your next note as you click over to the next slide.

A little prompt about what you were going to say about a slide is sometimes helpful

Body language

The following is a very brief introduction into body language topics but may be enough to give to an insight into the main topics.

About 80% of language is non-verbal!

- Posture
 - Drooping shoulders could suggest low motivation
- Facial expressions
 - Smile! Look enthusiastic! Communicate feelings.
- Hands
 - *Where do you put them?*
 - *on waist – can look authoritarian*
 - *in pockets – can be distracting!*
 - *arms folded? – shutting yourself off from audience*
 - Best to start with hands by your sides or with one used for holding papers or equipment. Use hands for gestures or to emphasise a point – using some explosive gestures can even be effective!!!
 - *Do not point at the audience with one finger.*
 - *Use a pointer or a paper to hold one hand steady.*
 - *Coordinate your gestures with your words!*
- Feet
 - *Shoulder-width apart with weight slightly more on heels gives a well-grounded, balanced and centred look that you can easily move from.*
- Eyes
 - Eyes have the greatest influence.
 - Do not -
 - *continually scan the room, look at the ceiling, to the wall at the back of the room or continually read your notes.*
 - *make eye contact look like intimacy or intimidation – involvement will do fine!*
 - Do –
 - *make eye contact with people in the audience*
 - *Continue looking at a person until you have completed a thought*
 - *Pause and move on to another person but do not have a set pattern of people to make contact with.*
- Vocals
 - The voice is next to the eyes in influence
 - *Displaying enthusiasm and energy is important.*
 - *Avoid monotone but do not apply excessive modulation in your pitch.*
 - *Inflecting the voice to a slightly lower pitch at the end of a sentence is preferable (going up sounds like a question is being asked).*
 - *Place emphasis on the correct word in a sentence.*
 - *Raise and lower voice level for emphasis*
- Dress
 - *Ensure it is appropriate and works in your favour. Occasionally, it may be wise to consider any protocol or cultural implications.*

Your audience will make a judgement about you as a presenter in the first minute.

Reading the audience's body language may tell you a few things – are their eyelids half-shut? or are they nodding in agreement?

It is not just what you say – it's the way that you say it!

Pointers

- Lasers can be useful, but use sparingly. Can prevent effective use of gestures, but can be useful for helping to keep a hand occupied. Will also show nervousness if your hands are shaking!

Handouts

A hard copy of your slides can be produced in PowerPoint but consider the following before deciding whether to distribute them before or after the presentation.

- Can be useful having handouts during the meeting to allow audience to take notes against each slide.
- May be better distributing them after the meeting to prevent –
 - *the audience reading the handouts instead of watching you*
 - *the audience reading ahead and asking questions on a point before you have dealt with it.*

The Setting

- Make up a checklist with all the material and equipment required for your presentation.
- Make sure you know how to get to the location, and gain entry!
- Ensure the room is laid out in a suitable style and arrange for any changes to be made if required.
- Do you need extra time to set up the room the way you want when you arrive?
- Run a few slides before the presentation starts
- Bring along a spare projector bulb and another copy of your slide show on a CD-ROM or floppy disk.

A little advanced planning could avoid last-minute hitches.

The Web

- You can put an edited version on the web before the meeting to whet people's appetite for the full show.
- You can put the full version on the web after the meeting for anyone who missed the presentation.



See our Effective Presentations Course at [Presentations](#)

For information about training courses contact us at:

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