

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD PRESENTATION

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- **Think about the presentation beforehand.** It is short-changing the organisers of the event and your audience if you only think about what you're going to say the day before or while travelling to the event. If necessary, clarify with the organisers exactly what is required of you and what facilities you will require.
- **Do use PowerPoint** if the facilities are available. Although some speakers seem to have taken an aversion to PowerPoint, it is so convenient and ensures that your presentation has a clear structure and something for your listeners to take away.
- **Face your audience at all times** even though the screen to which you are speaking is behind you. So that you know what your audience is viewing at any given time in the presentation, either have a computer screen on a desk in front of you showing the presentation or print off the slides and use the paper copies as a speaking aid.
- **Be very clear about how much time you have** - and stick to that time in preparing and delivering your presentation. It's very difficult to 'cut' a PowerPoint presentation at the event itself, so it's a great mistake to run out of time. Most presenters prepare too much material; but nobody ever complains that a presentation was too short (it always allows more time for questions).
- **Be very clear about your key message** - and ensure that everything in your presentation is both consistent with, and supportive of, that key message. You should be able to articulate the message in a phrase or a sentence and indeed you might want to use that phrase or sentence in one of your first slides, or one of your last, or even both.
- **E-mail your presentation to the event organisers in advance.** Ask them to load it onto a laptop, run it through, check that it looks fine, and confirm that with you. Then you don't have to worry about the technology when you arrive at the venue; you can concentrate on the delivery of your material. Also it enables the event's organisers to run off copies of your slides, so that they are available to them in good time.
- **Make copies of your slides available.** It is a matter of preference whether you do this at the beginning of your presentation or at the end. If your listeners have copies at the beginning, they can take notes simply by annotating the slides, instead of having to note down all the information on the slides. On the other hand, you might feel that, if they can see in advance the slides you are going to use, you lose the element of control or surprise. It might depend on the content of the presentation: if you are going to show detailed tables or graphs with lots of figures, your audience will probably find it easier to have a copy on their lap. It might depend on the circumstances of the presentation: if there is a large audience, people at the back may not be able to see the screen clearly and would really appreciate having copies of the slides.
- **Ensure that the slides look good.** This does not necessarily mean that they look flashy - although suitable pictures or illustrations are very effective - but it does mean using a consistent format and typeface and readable colours plus giving each slide the logo of the organisation you are representing and a chronological number.

- The **first slide should announce the title of your presentation**, the event and date, and your name and position. This may seem terribly obvious, but many speakers miss off some of this basic information and then weeks later listeners (or their colleagues back at the organisation) are not clear who made the presentation or when. You should try to make the title catchy, so that you immediately have the interest of your audience. A challenging question works well - for instance, a presentation on the global economic crisis might ask: *"Is this the end of capitalism as we've known it?"* Or a play on words works too - for example, a presentation on next generation broadband could be titled *"The Slow Arrival Of Fast Broadband"*.
- The **second slide should seize the attention of your audience** for your presentation. It could be the central proposition of your presentation or a conventional wisdom that you wish to challenge or a relevant or witty quote from a leader in your field. If it is amusing or controversial or both, so much the better.
- The **third slide should set out the structure of your presentation**. The default structure should consist of three themes that you intend to examine. For a very short presentation, there might only be time for two; if you want to look at more than five areas, write a book instead.
- **Each theme should be the subject of a small number of slides**. Again, a good working assumption is that three slides for each theme is about right. Less than two and it isn't substantial enough to be a separate theme; more than five and it should probably be broken up into two themes.
- **Each slide should have a clear heading**. A question is often a good way of winning attention - but, in that case, make sure you answer the question in the body of the slide.
- **Each slide should normally contain around 25-35 words**, unless it is a quote (when you might use more) or contains an illustration (when you will probably use less). Too many words and your audience will have trouble reading the material; too few words and you're likely to be flashing through the slides and spending too much time clicking the mouse.
- **Each bullet point should consist of an intelligible phrase**, rather than merely a word or two that is meaningless on its own or conversely a complete sentence that is better delivered orally. So, for instance, do use *"Focus on profitable and growing markets"* rather than simply *"Focus"* or *"Markets"* or *"It is necessary to focus on those markets which are profitable and growing rather than those which are loss-making and declining"*. Consider this test: your slides should make sense and be useful to someone who was not present at your presentation.
- **Make appropriate use of pictures**. It's a good idea to break up text with illustrations and it is true that a picture is worth a thousand words.
- **Make appropriate use of anecdotes**. A very short story or case study or personal experience will act as an effective illustration of a point, add 'colour' to your presentation, and be remembered by listeners.
- The **last slide should set out all appropriate contact details**: certainly e-mail address and possibly snail mail address, plus the web site, Facebook page and Twitter address of your organisation and any personal website or blog if you have one.