Creating an Effective Presentation

Important:

At the end of this presentation, there is a link to a short Microsoft Forms quiz. You must score at least 80% on the quiz to pass.

We encourage you to study the module carefully before taking the quiz.

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Objectives

- Create effective presentation slides with structure

- Prepare to give a successful presentation

- Deliver a powerful and worthwhile presentation

Introduction to Presentations

What is a presentation?

A presentation is the act of presenting information or ideas to a group of people in a structured and deliberate manner, often with the use of visual aids like PowerPoint, Google Slides, or other multimedia tools.

Uses for presentations

Presentations can be used in a variety of contexts, including:

- **Education:** To teach new concepts or reinforce knowledge, making the learning experience easier through visual elements and structured explanations.
- **Business:** In the corporate environment, presentations are essential for presenting reports, proposals, products, or services to colleagues, partners, or potential clients.
- **Conferences:** Speakers at conferences use presentations to effectively illustrate their ideas, research findings, or experiences.
- **Training:** Presentations are crucial in employee training, helping to convey procedures, policies, and technical knowledge clearly and concisely.

The importance of presentations

Understanding what a presentation is and its uses is crucial for effective communication. It allows you to organize and convey ideas clearly, tailor your approach to different contexts, engage your audience, and build confidence and credibility as a presenter. This skill is essential for achieving success in both professional and academic settings.

What is a presentation slide?

The "presentation slide" is the building block of all academic presentations, whether they are journal clubs, thesis committee meetings, short conference talks, or hour-long seminars. A slide is a single page projected on a screen, usually built on the premise of a title, body, and figures or tables and includes both what is shown and what is spoken about that slide. Multiple slides are strung together to tell the larger story of the presentation.

Rules for Effective Presentation Slides

Rule 1: Include only one idea per slide

Each slide should have one central objective to deliver—the main idea or question. Often, this means breaking complex ideas down into manageable pieces. If you are presenting a complex computational approach in a large flow diagram, introduce it in smaller units, building it up until you finish with the entire diagram. The progressive buildup of complex information means that audiences are prepared to understand the whole picture, once you have dedicated time to each of the parts.

Rule 2: Spend only 1 minute per slide

When you present your slide in the talk, it should take 1 minute or less to discuss. This rule is really helpful for planning purposes—a 20-minute presentation should have somewhere around 20 slides. Also, frequently giving your audience new information to feast on helps keep them engaged. During practice, if you find yourself spending more than a minute on a slide, there's too much for that one slide—it's time to break up the content into multiple slides or even remove information that is not wholly central to the story you are trying to tell.

Rule 3: Make use of your heading

When each slide conveys only one message, use the heading of that slide to write exactly the message you are trying to deliver. Use this landmark signpost to ensure that all the content on that slide is related exactly to the heading and only the heading. Think of the slide heading as the introductory or concluding sentence of a paragraph and the slide content the rest of the paragraph that supports the main point of the paragraph. An audience member should be able to follow along with you in the "paragraph" and come to the same conclusion sentence as your header at the end of the slide

Rule 4: Include only essential information

While you are speaking, audience members' eyes and minds will be wandering over your slide. If you have a comment, detail, or figure on a slide, have a plan to explicitly identify and talk about it. If you don't think it's important enough to spend time on, then don't have it on your slide. This is especially important when faculty are present. Be sure to only put the shiny baubles on slides that you want them to focus on. Clear and concise slide design will go a long way in helping you corral easily distracted faculty members.

Rule 5: Give credit, where credit is due

An exception to Rule 4 is to include proper citations or references to work on your slide. When adding citations, names of other researchers, or other types of credit, use a consistent style and method for adding this information to your slides. Your audience will then be able to easily partition this information from the other content. A common mistake people make is to think "I'll add that reference later," but it is highly recommend you put the proper reference on the slide at the time you make it, before you forget where it came from. Finally, in certain kinds of presentations, credits can make it clear who did the work.

Rule 6: Use graphics effectively

As a rule, you should almost never have slides that only contain text. Build your slides around good visualizations. It is a visual presentation after all, and as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words. However, on the flip side, don't muddy the point of the slide by putting too many complex graphics on a single slide. A multipanel figure that you might include in a manuscript should often be broken into 1 panel per slide (see Rule 1). One way to ensure that you use the graphics effectively is to make a point to introduce the figure and its elements to the audience verbally, especially for data figures.

Rule 7: Design to avoid cognitive overload

The type of slide elements, the number of them, and how you present them all impact the ability for the audience to intake, organize, and remember the content. As presentations are an exercise in listening, and not reading, do what you can to optimize the ability of the audience to listen. Use words sparingly as "guide posts" to you and the audience about major points of the slide. Finally, in addition to the use of short text, white space, and the effective use of graphics/images, you can improve ease of cognitive processing further by considering color choices and font type and size.

Rule 8: Design slide so that distracted person gets main takeaway

It is very difficult to stay focused on a presentation, especially if it is long or if it is part of a longer series of talks. Audience members may get distracted by an important email, or they may start dreaming of lunch. So, it's important to look at your slide and ask "If they heard nothing I said, will they understand the key concept of this slide?" With each slide, step back and ask whether its main conclusion is conveyed, even if someone didn't hear your accompanying dialogue. Importantly, ask if the information on the slide is at the right level of abstraction.

Rule 9: Improve slide design through practice

Well-designed slides that follow the first 8 rules are intended to help you deliver the message you intend and in the amount of time you intend to deliver it in. The best way to ensure that you nailed slide design for your presentation is to practice. The most important aspects of practicing a new presentation, with an eye toward slide design, are the following 2 key points: (1) practice to ensure that you hit, each time through, the most important points and (2) practice to ensure that as you conclude the end of one slide, it leads directly to the next slide. Slide transitions, what you say as you end one slide and begin the next, are important to keeping the flow of the "story."

Rule 10: Design to mitigate disaster

The real presentation almost never goes as we planned in our heads or during our practice. Maybe the speaker before you went over time and now you need to adjust. Maybe the computer the organizer is having you use won't show your video. Maybe your internet is poor on the day you are giving a virtual presentation at a conference. Technical problems are routinely part of the practice of sharing your work through presentations. Hence, you can design your slides to limit the impact certain kinds of technical disasters create and also prepare alternate approaches. A few examples that help you avoid disaster are saving the presentation as a PDF, creating backup slides when using videos, and avoiding animations.

Effective Presentation Skills

Effective Presentation Skills

When preparing your presentation, in addition to evaluating the technical content needed, you need to understand:

1. What type of speaker are you?

2. Facts and fears of public speaking.

3. Your blueprint for delivery.

Identify what type of speaker are you:

- *Avoider*—You do everything possible to escape from having to get in front of an audience.

- *Resistor*—You may have to speak, but you never encourage it.

- *Accepter*—You'll give presentations but don't seek those opportunities. Sometimes you feel good about a presentation you gave.

- *Seeker*—Looks for opportunities to speak. Finds the anxiety a stimulant that fuels enthusiasm during a presentation.

Develop blueprint for delivery:

Information by itself can be boring, unless it's unique or unusual. Conveying it through stories, gestures and analogies make it interesting. A large portion of the impact of communications rests on how you look and sound, not only on what you say. Having good presentation skills allows you to make the most out of your first impression, especially at conferences and job interviews. As you plan your presentation, put yourself in the shoes of the audience.

Analyze the audience

- *Values*: What is important to them?

- *Needs*: What information do they want?

- *Constraints*: Understand their level of knowledge on the subject and target them appropriately.

- *Demographics*: Size of audience and location may influence the presentation. For example, a large auditorium may be more formal and less personal than a presentation to your team or lab mates in a less formal setting.

3 key components of a good presentation:

1. Structure—Introduction, Content and Conclusion

2. Body Language and Movement

3. Verbal Delivery

Structure: Introduction

- Build rapport with audience (easier in a smaller less formal setting).

- State preference for questions—during or after?

- Set stage: provide agenda, objective and intended outcomes

Introduce yourself providing your name, role and function. Let the audience know the agenda, your objectives and set their expectations. Give them a reason to listen and make an explicit benefit statement, essentially what's in it for them. Finally, let them know how you will accomplish your objective by setting the agenda and providing an outline of what will be covered.

Structure: Content

- Deliver your message logically and structured.

- Use appropriate anecdotes and examples.

- Illustrate and emphasize key points by using color schemes or animations.

- Establish credibility, possibly citing references or publications.

Transition well through the subject matter and move through your presentation by using phrases. Be flexible and on course. If needed, use examples not in the presentation to emphasize a point, but don't get sidetracked. Occasionally, reiterate the benefits of the content and the main idea of your presentation.

Structure: Conclusion

- Restate the main objective and key supporting points

- For Q&A: 'Who wants more details?' (Not, 'any questions?')

- Prompting for questions: 'A question I often hear is…'

Summarize the main elements of your presentation as they relate to the original objective. If applicable, highlight a key point or crucial element for the audience to take away. Clearly articulate the next steps, actions or practical recommendations. Thank the audience and solicit final questions.

Body language and movement

Your non-verbal communications are key elements of your presentation. They are composed of open body posture, eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures, posture and space between you and the audience. This includes feet/body, hands, and eyes. Looking at their faces tells you how your delivery and topic is being received by the audience. The audience's body language may show interest, acceptance, openness, boredom, hostility, disapproval and neutrality. Read the audience and adjust where and if appropriate to keep them engaged.

Verbal Delivery

- Use active rather than passive verbs.

- Avoid technical terms, unless you know the audience is familiar with them.

- Always use your own words and phrases.

- Cut out jargon/slang words.

Look at your audience and use vocal techniques to catch their attention. Consider changing your pace or volume, use a longer than normal pause between key points, and change the pitch or inflection of your voice if needed. View the audience as a group of individual people.

Conclusion

Important Topics Discussed:

- Slide creation is important to the success of your presentation, so make sure to prepare and design accordingly

- Identify your strengths and weaknesses when presenting and develop an understanding of your audience.

- Establish a solid foundation and structure for your presentation, while also delivering with your verbal skills and body language.

References

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To conclude, click on the link to take the quiz and submit the report to your professor:

https://forms.office.com/r/HDrgvfDn7j

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