

## PLANNING FOR PRESENTATION

1. **A Good Presentation:** A good presentation needs an introduction, followed by the main body and an ending with some conclusions. It is also helpful if the main body breaks into about three key themes. You can leave the detail either for inclusion in your written paper or to be dealt with during question time. Once you have mapped out what you want to say, you will need some visual material and, if appropriate, a formal paper or maybe a brief the audience can read beforehand. For an informal peer review, a whiteboard or a flip-chart is fine. For a more formal occasion, the use of a PC presentation package such as PowerPoint may be more suitable.

Those who understand how to present effectively understand how to structure their presentations, what to say and how to say it in order to make an impact with their audience. Even 'off the cuff' presentations are more effective if the person delivering it has an understanding of what is required in the presentation process. The audience is then far more receptive to the message which is being communicated – if the person delivering it does so with an understanding of the process of presenting and speaking. Further, it gives the chance for the presenter to build up his confidence from presentation to presentation.

Effective leaders are also effective presenters and speakers. Executives and managers in business today need to present well to have the edge over their competitors – both the internal as well as the external competitors. Importantly, they are effective influencers of others. First decide what you want to say and how much time is available to do it. If it is a conference or seminar, then you will probably be allocated a fixed period of time. The golden rule is 'keep it simple'.

2. **What is an effective presentation?**

An effective presentation makes the best use of the relationship between the presenter and the audience.

It takes full consideration of the audience's needs in order to capture their interest, develop their understanding, inspire their confidence and achieve the presenter's objectives for which careful planning is essential. There are **seven stages** in planning a presentation.

1. **Preparation** – Many factors affect the design of your presentation. A

powerful presenter will acknowledge and address each of the following:

- **Objectives** – Bear in mind what you want to achieve and what you want your audience to take away with them. Once you have decided upon your objectives, you are in a much better position to make strategic decisions about the design and tone of your presentation. Ask yourself:
  - ✓ What do you want your audience to have understood?
  - ✓ What action do you want your audience to take following your presentation?
  - ✓ How can you best design your presentation to meet your objectives?

- **Audience** – Your audience will have a variety of different experiences, interests and levels of knowledge. A powerful presenter will need to acknowledge these and prepare for and respond to them accordingly. Ask yourself:

- ✓ How much will your audience already know about your topic?
- ✓ How can you link new material to things they might already understand?
- ✓ Will you need to win them over to a particular point of view?

You may not be able to answer these questions for each member of your audience but you should have enough information to ensure that you have targeted your material at the right level for their needs. This might involve avoiding technical jargon or explaining abstract concepts with clear practical examples. If you fail to consider your audience's needs, you will fail to appeal to their interest and imagination.

- **Venue** – Where will you be making your presentation? What will the room be like? What atmosphere will the physical conditions create? A large lecture theatre might create a formal atmosphere. Similarly, a seminar room might create a less formal tone. Ask yourself:
  - ✓ What kind of atmosphere do you wish to create?
  - ✓ How might the room arrangement affect your relationship with the audience?
  - ✓ Can you do anything to change the arrangement of the room to suit your objectives?
  - ✓ What audio-visual aids can you use?

- **Remit** – You may well have been given a remit for your presentation; you will need to stick to this. For example, you may

have been asked to present a paper at a conference in a certain style or meet certain assessment criteria on your course. Ask yourself:

- ✓ How much time have you been allocated?
- ✓ Are you required to stick to a common format or style?
- ✓ Have any guidelines been set regarding the content of your presentation?

2. **Choosing your main points** – Once you have thought about the design of your presentation, you can define your main points. Try presenting no more than three main points in a ten-minute presentation. Always allow time for an adequate introduction and conclusion. It is difficult for an audience to follow a more complex argument without significant help from the presenter. A powerful presentation delivers information in a logical, structured manner, building on the previous point and avoiding large jumps in sequence. Ask yourself:
  - What are the main points you wish to make?
  - Are these points structured in a logical, coherent way?
  - Do these main points reflect your own objectives and take account of the needs of your audience?
3. **Choosing your supporting information** – The supporting information helps your audience understand, believe in and agree with your main points. This evidence might take the form of factual data, points of detail or an explanation of process. It might be presented in imaginative ways using diagrams, pictures or video segments. Think about:
  - What will add *clarity* to your argument (explaining complex terms, reminding your audience of any supporting theories)?
  - What will add *authority* to your argument (making connections with other people's work, quoting experts, offering evidence from your own research)?
  - What will add *colour* to your argument (showing a video clip or a slide, using a practical example or a vibrant analogy)?
4. **Establishing linking statements** – The next stage is to develop the linear flow of your presentation. This can be achieved by using linking statements to show clearly how your main points fit together. Common linking statements include:
  - “*The next stage in our project was to ...*”;
  - “*Another important issue of consideration was ...*”;
  - “*By following this argument we can now see that ...*”.

Linking statements send signals to your audience, highlighting the next point in your argument, linking to earlier ideas or clarifying the stage you have reached in your argument overall. This may be of particular

importance in a lengthy presentation where even the most effective presenter has to work hard to keep an audience involved.

5. **Developing an opening** – The introduction to your presentation is crucial. It is your first point of contact with your audience; you can either capture or lose your audience's interest in a matter of seconds. Use your introduction to lay a clear foundation for the presentation to follow. Try using the following structure:

- Introduce yourself;
- State *what* you will be talking about (a title or subject area);
- State *how* you will be talking about it (e.g. by comparing test results or reviewing the supporting literature);
- State what you intend to be the outcome of your presentation (an informed group, a lively discussion);
- State what you expect your audience to do (listen, take notes, read a handout, ask questions before/during/after).

Always give your audience a moment to absorb this information before moving into your first main point.

6. **Developing a conclusion** – Your conclusion is another important stage in your presentation. You can use it to remind your audience of your main points, draw these points to a stimulating conclusion and leave your audience with a lasting impression of the quality of your presentation. The following structure provides a powerful conclusion:

- A review of your title or subject area
- A summary of your main points
- A summary of the process you have been through
- A conclusion clearly drawn from your main points
- A parting statement to stimulate your audience's thoughts

7. **Reviewing your presentation** – Once you have written your presentation make sure that you review its content. Ask yourself:

- Does the presentation meet your objectives?
- Is it logically structured?
- Have you targeted the material at the right level for your audience?
- Is the presentation too long or too short?

### 3. **Steps in Planning a Presentation:**

In general, there are seven steps in planning a presentation. Depending on the type of presentation you are doing, you may do some or all of these steps. Speeches do not require visual aids, so you would skip step 5. If you are giving an Impromptu Speech, your topic will be given to you and you will essentially

just have to quickly map out the outline of your speech. With all types of presentations, however, time spent in planning and practicing will benefit you greatly.

1. **Choose your Topic** – Choosing a topic is the most important step in the presentation planning process. If you do not choose a subject you are interested in and will enjoy, you will likely not do a good job. Your personal curiosity about a topic can give you energy to complete all the steps required to reach the finished product, and the audience will be able to sense your enthusiasm when you give your talk. The topic you select should be neither too broad nor too narrow. If your topic is too broad, you will not have enough time to cover the subject adequately and your talk will end up being very superficial. On the other hand, if your topic is too narrow, you might not be able to find enough information to fill the required length of time. Focus on one principle theme or idea that has several supporting points or steps. Depending on where and why you will be giving your presentation, you may need to consider your audience when selecting your topic.
2. **Determine your Purpose** – Now that you have decided what your presentation will be about, you need to decide what type of presentation you will give. You will also need to decide whether to do it by yourself or with a teammate. You need to choose the most effective method for your topic. Look at the information you have and how you plan to communicate it. Ask yourself what the purpose of your presentation is and what response you want from the audience.
3. **Gather Information** – Now it is time to do some research and gather information about your topic. This takes some time, so allow yourself at least a month for this step. You want to learn as much as possible about your subject. The more you know, the more confident you will feel when you are presenting and the easier it will be to answer questions. There is no substitute for being well-informed. You can acquire information from several different sources. Information you gather needs to be current and accurate. Be sure you know the difference between fact and opinion. A fact is something that has been proven to be true. An opinion is something someone believes to be true but has not been proven. If you are using someone's opinion, try to find a second source to confirm it.
4. **Outline or Write** – There are many ways of preparing what you will actually say in your presentation. Some people only use outlines; some use an outline but write out their introduction and conclusion; others prefer to write out their entire talk. You will need to experiment to determine what works best for you. Whichever method you use, begin with forming an outline. List the important points you want to make and

arrange them in a logical order. Under each main heading, list the details you need to cover. Include any materials or visual aids you will need. Once you have an outline, you can begin work on planning your entire talk. Although it may sound odd, plan the body of your presentation first. Next write the conclusion and write the introduction last. You will find it easier to write an introduction if you know exactly what will be included, and you can tie everything together.

5. **Select your Visual Aids** – Visual aids come in many forms: actual objects, posters, videos, charts, slides, overhead transparencies, etc. If you are giving a demonstration or an illustrated talk, you must have at least one visual aid. Remember, no visual aids are allowed for speeches. Visual aids are used to enhance your presentation. They can add sparkle and help keep the audience's interest. They are often useful in explaining complex ideas. They can help the audience learn faster, understand better, and remember longer. As the saying goes, "*A picture can be worth a thousand words*". Visual aids can make the difference between an excellent and a mediocre presentation, but you must select your visual aids carefully and make sure you choose the best type for the job you want it to do. Make sure your visual aid has a purpose, that it is truly needed. A visual should add something to the presentation and not just be there for "looks".
  6. **Choose a Title** – After you have your presentation all planned out, it is time to think of a catchy title. The title is your first opportunity to capture the interest of the audience. It should make the audience want to hear your presentation and wonder what it is about. The title should suggest the topic without giving away the whole story. Spend some time thinking about your title. Be creative and original. An effective title meets one or more of these criteria:
    - It is short and to the point.
    - It is descriptive.
    - It is provocative.
    - It is image-making.
    - It is fun!
4. Planning is probably the most important step in creating a successful presentation of any kind. Planning helps you decide on the content and the order in which the information will be presented. Whether you are using PowerPoint, Open Office Impress or any other presentation software, use the following steps as a guide in planning the presentation.

1. **Determine the Purpose of the Presentation:**

- Is this presentation about a product for a client?
  - Is it a business presentation about the latest sales figures?
  - Is it about a new idea you are introducing?
2. **Determine the Presentation's Audience:**
    - Your staff
    - A new prospective client
    - A group of small children
    - A convention for people in the same line of work
  3. **Gather Your Information:**
    - Remember the *KISS* principle (Keep It Simple Silly) when designing your presentation.
    - Focus on three or four main points only.
    - Know everything about the topic so you are ready for questions after the presentation.
  4. **Sketch Out the Slides on Paper:**
    - Make sure the slides emphasize the main points to be made in the presentation.
    - Try to have only one main idea on each slide.
    - List no more than four points per slide.
  5. **Determine the Order of Your Slides** – Although this can be changed later, having a rough idea of the order of your topic points, will help you plan the order of your slides.
  6. **Create the Presentation** – When creating the slides, be consistent in your choice of background colors, fonts, transitions, and animations.
5. Presentation planning is a useful and necessary skill in professional, community, school and social environments. In professional settings, presenters inform others, sell products, explain important decisions and stimulate brainstorming for new ideas. In politics and communities, presentations are often given to influence important decisions or to inspire solutions to problems. School presentations provide practice in becoming a clear and effective presenter. Social situations, such as giving a toast at a wedding, also require presentation skills. Here are the steps for planning a presentation in any setting.
- **Decide on a topic:**
    1. Choose a topic that you find interesting. Presentation planning can be time-consuming, so choosing an interesting topic will keep you stimulated during the planning and the actual presentation.
    2. Determine the scope of your topic. Adjust the scope of your topic based on the time allotted. If given only 5 minutes to cover a broad

topic, give a general overview or focus on a specific aspect of the topic.

- **Gather information about your topic:**
  1. Review business documents and past presentations on the topic. For a presentation in a business environment, study relevant documents and information, such as product descriptions, customer feedback, usage statistics and other information that may be incorporated into your presentation.
  2. Research academic sources. You may be asked to cite information from books, articles or academic journals.
  3. Speak to informed individuals and experts.
- **Create a presentation outline** – Your presentation should have an introduction, a body and a conclusion.
  1. Introduce yourself and the topic. An effective introduction clearly explains who you are, what your topic is and what you plan to cover during your presentation.
  2. Identify the topics for the body of your talk. The specific intent of your presentation will guide this section. In most cases, the body of your presentation should be organized in a step-by-step fashion that guides the listeners from one point to the next.
  3. Close the presentation. Summarize the points you have covered, thank the audience members for their attention, and open the floor for questions and answers, if applicable.
- **Determine presentation aids** – To enhance your presentation, use handouts, slides, video clips, audio recordings or other tools. Visual and audio aids help to stimulate attention and appeal to people of diverse learning styles.
  1. Create quality visual aids. Enhance your audience's experience by creating visuals that are easy to read. Avoid using a tiny font or colors that are difficult to view.
  2. Limit excessive use of presentation tools. For example, avoid asking the audience to read information from handouts or slides for an extensive period of time. Explain the information and use presentation tools only to accentuate specific points.
- **Practice your presentation** – The presentation planning process involves repeated practice.
  1. Use a script. Practice your presentation by writing out your presentation on note cards or using your presentation outline to guide you.
  2. Ask friends, family or colleagues to listen to your presentation. Request honest feedback related to the clarity of your content, your



mannerisms, your voice quality and the pace of your delivery.

- **Outline your Objectives** – What do you want the end result of your presentation to be? Do you want to convince people to buy something? Do you want to instruct them? The objective of your presentation will determine most of your substance; the simple act of writing down your objectives will make it that much easier to organize what you are going to say and when you are going to say it.
- **Gauge your Audience's Expertise** – The next step is to determine how much your audience already understands about the subject you are going to present. Try to gauge the level of expertise and design your presentation to build upon what they already know. If you are not sure how much experience the audience has had with a given subject, try to meet them somewhere in the middle.
- **Make an Outline** – The next step is to make an outline of all of the concepts that you are going to cover in your presentation. Regardless of what tool you use, build an outline of the topics you want to cover during the course of your presentation.
- **Sequence your Presentation** – Once you have an outline of all of the topics that you want to cover in your presentation then you need to determine the sequence of your presentation. A good way to do that is to use a simple flowchart which lays out the order of the ideas that you are going to present.
- **Determine what visuals you will need** – The final step to preparing a presentation is to figure out what sort of visual aids you are going to need. You probably will not need a complicated visual for every single point of your presentation, but when it comes down to explaining something complicated, like how a business process works, then you are going to want to support yourself with a good visual. Figure out which concepts are going to require a visual – typically it is the most complicated or important concepts which really need it. Go ahead and make a list of what sort of visuals you are going to need.