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Topic : Delivering the Presentation

DELIVERING THE PRESENTATION

If you want to leave behind a professional flavor of a presentation among an audience, keep it simple, as short as adequate and entertaining and leave ample opportunity for audience questions and interactions. A good presenter is judged by how he responds to questions from the audience rather than how rich the contents appeared on the screen.

Basic Principles:

- **Purpose:**
 - ✓ Keep the Occasion in Mind – for a formal speech, certain approaches to certain topics may not be appropriate.
 - ✓ Understand Your Purpose – be sure that your choices are appropriate to the overall goal of your speech. If it is to inform, for instance, be careful not to take a biased approach to the topic.
- **Performing Research** – You may need to do a little or a lot of research, depending on the type of presentation and how much work you have done already. Here are some tips to help you do that research more effectively.
 - ✓ Hit the “stacks” – Once you have found the correct section of the library shelves, you can find a wealth of material by browsing the titles.
 - ✓ Consult with the library staff – Research librarians are there to help you. Use them.
 - ✓ Check out the databases.
 - ✓ Check out the web – There may be many useful websites; however, be sure that they are credible websites.
- **Audience** – It is vital to know your audience – the information you include in your presentation should be determined by your audience’s current knowledge about your topic, as well as the information they need to get out of your presentation. Here are some paths towards understanding your audience:

- ✓ Audience Makeup – Knowledge of education level, economic status, gender, and other demographic characteristics can help you adapt your presentation.
- ✓ Audience Dispositions Towards the Topic – How does your audience currently feel about your topic? Do they agree or disagree?
- ✓ Audience Benefit – How will the audience benefit from your presentation? This is the most important question, as fulfilling the needs of your audience (and the assignment, of course) is the first priority for a presentation

2. Delivering your Presentation:

Here we will focus on three main areas of consideration when you deliver your presentation; body language and movement, your vocal delivery and interacting with the audience.

- **Body Language and Movement** – Relaxed but animated and authoritative body language (such as open hand gestures, an upright stance, pointing to visual aids and moving around rather than remaining stationary) shows your familiarity and confidence, both with the content and with presenting to an audience. However, body language is an extension of our personality and often subconscious and is therefore difficult to change. Rather trying to change your mannerisms, try, instead, to use body language which conveys confidence and which you feel comfortable with, and avoid that which creates barriers. Note down **(a)** body language that you think shows confidence and **(b)** body language that you find distracting.

Confident body language:

- ✓ Standing up straight and face the audience head-on.
- ✓ Using your hands to emphasize and reinforce your points.
- ✓ Varying your gestures and positioning.
- ✓ Nodding your head and smiling to emphasize what you are saying.
- ✓ Aiming to make eye contact with all members of the audience.

Body language that creates barriers:

- ✓ Putting your hand or your notes over your mouth.
- ✓ Standing stationary or hiding behind equipment/furniture.
- ✓ Constantly rubbing your nose, ear, chin etc.

- ✓ Playing with jewelry, your hair, and/or coins and keys in your pockets.
- ✓ Crossing your arms or legs.
- ✓ Speaking to your notes or to the screen or flip chart, with your head turned away from the audience.
- **Using your Voice** – Here are three important aspects of your voice to be aware of and to develop:
 - ✓ **Volume** – It is essential that everyone can hear what you are saying. Before you begin ask a friend to stand at the back, whilst you speak to, and do a sound check. You might also ask the audience if they can hear you once you begin and adjust accordingly. You may need to arrange to use a microphone.
 - ✓ **Pace** – Aim to speak at an even pace that is comfortable to listen to. Count how many words a news reader says in 30 seconds and practice doing approximately the same. It should feel slower than when you are having a normal conversation. If you feel yourself speeding up, pause, take a deep breath and continue at a slower pace. We often speak too quickly because try to include too much in our allocated time!
 - ✓ **Tone** – Engaging speakers modulate their tone effectively, emphasizing key words. Their vocal delivery is energized and conveys enthusiasm for their topic. It is not monotonous, which can happen if we try to read word for word from a script!
- **Interacting with the Audience** – There are a number of ways to engage and interact with your audience. A quick and effective technique is to ask them a question at the beginning of your presentation and get a show of hands. This has three main benefits. First, it allows you to gauge the audience's opinion and/or understanding of the topic. Second, it encourages the audience to actively engage with your topic rather than remaining passive, and allows them to consider their position before you start. And third, it shows the audience that you are interested in their opinion.

3. **Top Ten Delivery Tips:**

- **Show your passion** – Be passionate about your topic and let that enthusiasm come out. You need great content and you need professional, well designed visuals. But it is all for naught if you do not

have a deep, heartfelt belief in your topic. The biggest item that separates mediocre presenters from world class ones is the ability to connect with an audience in an honest and exciting way. Do not hold back. Be confident. And let your passion for your topic come out for all to see.

- **Start strong** – First impressions are powerful. The first 2-3 minutes of the presentation are the most important. The audience wants to like you and they will give you a few minutes at the beginning to engage them – do not miss the opportunity. Most presenters fail here because they ramble on too long about superfluous background information or their personal/professional history, etc.
- **Keep it short** – Humans have short attention spans when it comes to passively sitting and listening to a speaker. Audience attention is greatest at the opening and then again when you say something like "In conclusion....". This is just the human condition, especially so for the busy (often tired) knowledge worker of today. So, if you have 30 minutes for your talk, finish in 25 minutes. It is better to have the audience wanting more (of you) than to feel that they have had more than enough.
- **Move away from the podium** – Get closer to your audience by moving away from or in front of the podium. The podium is a barrier between you and the audience, but the goal of our presentation is to connect with the audience. Removing physical barriers between you and the audience will help you build rapport and make a connection.
- **Use a remote-control device** – To advance your slides and builds, use a small, handheld remote. A handheld remote will allow you to move away from the podium. This is an absolute must.
- **Remember the “B” key** – If you press the “B” key while your PowerPoint or Keynote slide is showing, the screen will go blank. This is useful if you need to digress or move off the topic presented on the slide. By having the slide blank, all the attention can now be placed back on you. When you are ready to move on, just press the “B” key again and the image reappears.
- **Make good eye contact** – Try looking at individuals rather than scanning the group. Since you are using a computer, you never need to look at the screen behind you — just glance down at the computer screen briefly. One sure way to lose an audience is to turn your back on them. And while you are maintaining great eye contact, do not forget to smile as well. Unless your topic is very grim, a smile can be a very powerful thing.
- **Keep the lights on** – If you are speaking in a meeting room or a

classroom, the temptation is to turn the lights off so that the slides look better. But go for a compromise between a bright screen image and ambient room lighting. Turning the lights off — besides inducing sleep — puts all the focus on the screen. The audience should be looking at you more than the screen. Today's projectors are bright enough to allow you to keep many of the lights on.

- **Use a TV for small groups** – If you are presenting to a small group, then you can connect your computer to a large TV (via the s-video line-in). With a TV screen, you can keep all or most of the lights on. Make sure your text and graphics are large enough to be seen on the small screen. You will probably have to increase the type size significantly.
 - **At all times be courteous, gracious, and professional** – When audience members ask questions or give comments, you should be gracious and thank them for their input. Even if someone is being difficult, you must keep to the high ground and at all times be a gentleman or lady and courteously deal with such individuals. The true professional can always remain cool and in control. Remember, it is your reputation, so always remain gracious even with the most challenging of audiences.
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- **Get there early** – Not only do you want to be on time, but if you get there early, you can scope out the room where you will be presenting and start to familiarize yourself with the environment. You can also meet some of the people in the audience, which can help add a conversational tone.
 - **Breathe** – Take a deep breath before you start and remember to breathe during the presentation. You should pause frequently to give your words a chance to sink in and to give yourself a break.
 - **Be a storyteller** – People love stories, so the more anecdotal you are, the more memorable your presentation will be.
 - **Show your passion** – Hopefully you are passionate about the subject matter. Let your enthusiasm come through in your delivery. It can be contagious and the perfect way to engage your audience.
 - **Make it interactive** – To prevent boredom for your audience, plan group activities, ask questions and work in a break, if appropriate.
 - **Use humor** – Humor can be powerful in a presentation setting. Not only can it put the audience at ease, but it can make you more relaxed as well.
 - **Plan time for questions** – Make sure you leave time at the end of your presentation for a Q&A session. And it is always a good idea to build in a little buffer time in case you go over during the actual presentation.

- **Leave something behind** – Handouts are a great way to drive home your message and give attendees something to refer to after they leave. Be sure to include your contact information and invite the audience to contact you with questions.
5. The first step is completed. Your wonderful presentation is created and ready for prime time. Now is your chance to shine when you deliver it to an audience. Here are tips to make this presentation a successful venture.
- **Know your material** – Knowing your material thoroughly will help you decide what information is essential to your presentation and what can be left out. It will help your presentation to flow naturally, allowing you to adjust to unexpected questions or events, and it will help you feel more comfortable when speaking in front of an audience.
 - **Do not memorize** – This is, after all, a presentation, not a recital. Every presentation needs two major components - life and energy. Recite from memory and your presentation will be sadly lacking both of these factors. Not only will you lose your audience, but you will be hard pressed to adapt to unexpected events that may throw you off your mental script.
 - **Rehearse your presentation** – Rehearse your presentation out loud, accompanied by the slide show. If possible, get someone to listen while you rehearse. Have the person sit at the back of the room so you can practice speaking loudly and clearly. Ask your listener for honest feedback about your presentation skills. Make changes where necessary and run through the whole show again. Keep repeating until you feel comfortable with the process.
 - **Pace yourself** – As part of your practice, learn to pace your presentation. Generally, you should spend about one minute per slide. If there are time constraints, make sure that the presentation will finish on time. During your delivery, be ready to adjust your pace in case you need to clarify information for your audience or answer questions.
 - **Know the room** – Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive ahead of time, walk around the speaking area, and sit in the seats. Seeing the setup from your audience's perspective will help you decide where to stand, what direction to face, and how loudly you will need to speak.

- **Know the equipment** – If you are using a microphone, make sure it works. The same goes for the projector. If it is your projector, carry a spare bulb. Also, check to see if the projector is bright enough to overpower the room's lighting. If not, find out how to dim the lights.
- **Copy your presentation to the computer's hard drive** – Whenever possible, run your presentation from the hard disk rather than a CD. Running the show from a CD may slow your presentation.
- **Use a remote control** – Do not hide at the back of the room with the projector. Get up front where your audience can see and hear you. Also, just because you have a remote, do not wander around the room - it will only distract your audience. Remember you are the focal point of the presentation.
- **Avoid using a laser pointer** – Often the projected light dot on a laser pointer is too small to be seen effectively. If you are at all nervous, the dot may be hard to hold still in your shaking hands. Besides, a slide should hold only key phrases. You are there to fill in the details for your audience. If there is vital information in the form of a chart or graph that you feel your audience must have, put it in a handout and refer to it rather than having to point out specific details of a slide to your audience.
- **Do not speak to your slides** – Many presenters watch their presentation rather than their audience. You made the slides, so you already know what is on them. Turn to your audience and make eye contact with them. It will make it easier for them to hear what you are saying, and they will find your presentation much more interesting.
- **Learn to navigate your presentation** – Audiences often ask to see the previous screen again. Practice moving forward and backward through your slides. With PowerPoint you can also move through your presentation non-sequentially. Learn how to jump ahead or back to a certain slide, without having to go through the entire presentation.
- **Have a backup plan** – What if your projector dies? Or the computer crashes? Or the CD drive does not work? Or your CD gets stepped on? For the first two, you may have no choice but to go with an *AV free*

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presentation, so have a printed copy of your notes with you. For the last two, carry a backup of your presentation on a USB flash drive or email yourself a copy, or better yet, do both.