Presentation Skills

Key Points

Plan the structure of your presentation

What’s the aim (i.e. the exact purpose) of the presentation?
- If you are woolly about the aim, your presentation won’t be clear
- Spend time establishing the aim

Who are you presenting to?
- Analyze your audience and target your presentation to their knowledge and understanding

What do you need to cover to ensure you fulfill the aim?
- Ensure what you are going to say is appropriate to both the aim and the audience
- Prioritize your material. You don’t have to say everything.

How much time do you have?
- Don’t go over the allotted time and remember to allow time at the end for questions

Where will you be presenting and is visual aid equipment available?
- Check the venue and equipment in advance if possible. If not, then allow yourself enough time on the day to have a look at the set-up.

Plan the content

Beginning
- Tell them what you’re going to tell them and why they will be interested
- Put the main points up on a slide/flipchart
- Don’t forget to introduce yourself

Middle
- Tell them
- Go through your points logically and in sequence
- Summarize as you go along

End
- Tell them what you’ve told them
- Use the original slide/chart to summarize
- Give a conclusion

Questions
- Plan for questions, don’t be taken by surprise
- Ask for them if none are forthcoming
- If you don’t understand a question, ask for clarification
- Don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know
- Tell them you’ll find out and get back to them
- Get back to them!
Visual Aids

Whatever you use, whether it’s OHP (overhead projector), flipchart or computer presentation, keep it simple and clear. Visual aids should add to the impact of your presentation. Learn to use a software package like Powerpoint or Persuasion, which is specifically designed to produce presentation material. Bullet points are most effective – keep the point size large on slides.

- Use 18-24 point size, with up to 32 point for titles
- Use a sans serif font for clarity, even if you don’t like it for normal use
- Keep graphs large and simple. Use color to differentiate elements
- Don’t use orange – no-one will be able to read it
- Label graphics, graphs and maps clearly
- Computer animations/movies or real samples can go the extra mile

Notes

You may want to produce a full script. You may feel happier using notes and the prompts given by your slides.

- Make them easy to read
- Number the pages and clip them together. A hole punched in the corner, with a treasury tag keeping them together works well.
- Don’t play with them.

Presenting

- If you have a quiet voice, ask for a microphone or speak louder. There’s little point in being a brilliant speaker if no one can hear you.
- Vary the tone of your voice and the pace you speak at, though better slower than too fast.
- Be careful of the ‘ums’, ‘you knows’ etc.
- What people often remember are the mental pictures. If you have suitable anecdotes, do use them.
- Make eye contact with your audience, not the floor, the ceiling or the OHP.
- Use pauses. It gives you thinking time and the audience time to reflect.
- Be natural up there in your stance.

Finally

- Check that you have everything you need sufficiently far in advance of the presentation to allow you time to deal with any unforeseen mishaps e.g. mislaid slides or notes, communications problems between the computer and projector, etc.
- PRACTISE your presentation.
- Revise the bits that don’t work
- Practice it again…
- and again
- And ENJOY yourself!

Good luck.

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