

The Art of Presenting to Groups

Quadrant 1 International

www.quadrant1.com

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Introduction

Any fool can put a set of PowerPoint Slides together and a lot do just because they can. I wish I had a pound for everyone I have come across who believes that presentation equals PowerPoint. It most certainly does not! An extra pound for all those that say 'it's what's expected of me' or 'they will think I'm not prepared if I don't have slides' would go down a treat too.

You only have to check out TED talks or listen to your favourite presenter to realise how ridiculous such beliefs are. Don't get me wrong, PowerPoint can have its place but it most certainly is not synonymous with the word presentation and the phrase 'death by PowerPoint' did not come about without good reason.

Any fool can put a set of slides together and do just that because they can.

So before we take a closer look at what makes an effective presentation let's look at the booboos people make most regularly with PowerPoint –

- Assume it is what is expected
- Overload slides with too much information thus losing the major message
- Use it as a crutch because they think they will forget something and often end up talking to the screen rather than the audience
- Believe their role is to dump information on the audience
- Talk over the slide so the audience doesn't know whether to read or listen thus disconnecting the human decision making channel and causing an 'explosion' in the mind which has to switch off in order to maintain sanity
- End up with no-one taking action because they don't know what action to take
- Miss **golden opportunities** to ask for something, show initiative and expect action.

Taking Golden Opportunities

Giving a presentation whether it's to a group of buyers, your team, The Board, to the whole organisation even as best person at a wedding is an opportunity for you to excel and show what you are made of. It's a platform for you to engage hearts and minds, show that valuable commodity 'initiative' organisations look for and be seen to galvanise people into action.

"People won't remember what you said and did but they will remember how you made them feel"

Maya Angelou

You will be remembered for your ability to appeal to people's emotions – empathy, sense of righteousness, humour, desire to make a difference, need to be shown direction and so on. You will not be remembered for a series of factual, bullet pointed slides.

So if all you need to do is give information then send an e-mail, put a report on the intranet or find some other way but don't miss the golden opportunity that a presentation offers to communicate a message and **gain support** for what you have to say.

Leadership or Leadership?

Learning to present is a skill like any other leadership skill. It is learnable and simple as long as you follow the 'rules of engagement'. Unfortunately social imprinting is responsible for all the boring bulleted bland presentations we have ever sat through. Presenter copying presenter, bullet point after boring bullet point, the safety zone of slide technology is a brilliant crutch for a fearful presenter to hide behind. Such behaviour is further impounded by a reluctance to change due to a universally accepted fear of presentations. Going on a course to learn the skill is frightening in itself so the reliance on old habits continues. But it needn't be this way.



Are you ready to break away from the imprint?

Are you intrigued to learn how to capitalise on the opportunity that presentations give you in so many arenas and skillfully play to your audience **not** to the average expectations of your peers?

All the techniques discussed in this white paper are designed to accommodate the way people learn, take in information and make decisions. They are intended to lead the audience elegantly down this **authentic** path simply and effectively.

Cascading – a word of warning!

The term cascading is used when someone writes a presentation on a particular topic (usually using PowerPoint) and 'cascades' it throughout the organisation expecting others to deliver it in exactly the same way. Never give a presentation from a position of obligation. Be motivated to want to do it, and do it your way, with your messages, or don't do it at all! This will bring out your enthusiasm and help you connect with your audience. You will be judged by others on your ability to communicate clearly and engage – not on the information you deliver.

Know your audience and design an **affective message** to suit them. What experience does the audience have and what is important to them? What do you want your audience to **DO** on leaving your presentation? Don't assume this as a given. People need to be told directly what you expect them to do. A presentation is an opportunity to get people to **take action**. Bringing people together is expensive, so don't waste their time.

Taking action are the operative words here. What is it you want your audience to do as a result of listening to you? Be clear about it and state it at least 4 or 5 times during your presentation. Your presentation needs to be powerful enough to affect them emotionally to take action. Perhaps motivating them to learn, buy a product or service, or get positively involved in a project or experiment with a new idea. Why? The only reason that the sales profession exists is that people have trouble making commitments to purchase. We like to be led down the path to a sale, and the easier the ride the more likely



we will buy. The same is true for the message in your presentation. If you know what you want your audience to do as a result of sitting and listening to you, you have to take them down that path. Don't expect anyone to work it out for themselves.

Strip out all extraneous matter!

Selecting and refining the right content that supports your **affective message** for your presentation is important because you don't want your message to get lost in extraneous matter. Remember you are intending to stimulate emotional channels enough to enable your audience to **make a decision**. You will do this through engaging them with body language, voice tone and commitment to your message.

A Million Dollar Piece of Info that Most Presenters Don't Realise!

People assimilate information in different ways – most do it through their visual and kinaesthetic (feeling) channels. Very few do it through their auditory (hearing) channel. If you are using overloaded PowerPoint slides and speaking over them you are asking your audience to use their auditory channel twice – something it finds it impossible to do. Try listening to the news channels which speak and run breaking news across the bottom of the screen or to football commentators who comment on a match whilst the results are coming in both across the bottom of the screen and down the side. Your attention is split and you cannot focus on more than one section at a time. The same can be said for the misuse of PowerPoint in this way – the mind becomes confused, the kinaesthetic (decision making) channel is disconnected and out comes the mobile phone or tablet to distract away from you as the presenter.

Stimulate all three senses by giving real examples, telling anecdotes, using metaphors and demonstrating with actual products or representations of where appropriate. PowerPoint should be limited to pictures only if used at all. Stimulate sound with your voice and feelings with your gestures and general body language for extra emphasis.

People are Different and Need to Have Their Differences Accommodated

There are a number of patterns of behaviour based on overriding values which if accommodated will leave your audience feeling you have spoken directly to them as an individual. Mismatch them and however good your affective message they won't buy it. The behaviours can be represented on a continuum and can be elegantly incorporated in your presentation. They include such things as recognising how people measure themselves, whether they have a preference for procedure or options and reassuring people with a need for detail (the extraneous matter you stripped out) that they can take away the hand out, memory stick, dvd or report to read at their leisure. Detail is of course very important – in the right place!

Create a structure

Your presentation needs a structure with a beginning, middle and an end. This may be based on -

- concepts, principles and process
- past, present and future
- why, what, how, what if

or some other structure which enables you and your audience to follow the flow and you to have a simple map in your mind so you don't need notes.

Each has its merits in different contexts – choose the one which is right for you and include no more than 2-3 significant points in each section.

Include everyone in your opening statements

For example, 'some of you will be fully conversant with today's subject, others will have read a little and to some it will be completely new'. Whichever it is I am looking forward to a healthy exchange of ideas'. This has the effect of settling people down and recognising their individual starting points. If you are following another speaker find a way to link what you are going to say to what has just been said. With practice you will be able to link anything to anything. A segue like this demonstrates 'joined up thinking'.

Create a great presenting state

Find a great mental and emotional state for presenting and set a physical anchor – maintain throughout and remain curious not judgemental about the behaviour of your audience. Refrain from putting meanings on such behaviours as crossed arms, heavy sighing, looking away, down, up or out of the window and tapping feet.

Finish with your **Affective Message** leaving no doubt about what you expect of your audience.

Want to learn more?

To make your presentations even more engaging, join us on our Real Presentations training course where you will learn to deliver a presentation without notes and be able to do so at short notice. Remember **you know your stuff**. With the right skill set you will be able to deliver it confidently and effectively.

The advanced level skills you will learn on the programme include -

- pacing and leading
- gain trust through rapport before leading with your ideas
- body language and gesturing
- using your body language with purpose to strengthen your presence
- using the voice, varying tone, rhythm and volume to connect and engage
- how to engage using motivation patterns
- some simple language patterns which appeal to people's values to gain and keep attention
- stage anchoring techniques
- using the space you have to anchor certain states in your audience
- using presuppositions and embedded commands
- building a positive response to your messages
- using stories, anecdotes, examples and analogies to make ideas and data stick
- simple ways to make your key ideas memorable
- how to structure your presentation
- how to make it easy for your audience to follow you
- delivering an affective message
- how to be open and positive about your expectations for your audience
- how to keep control

- techniques to regain control from people who change the subject or take the topic off-track
- how to deal with questions
- how to draw the most out of questions
- some practical ways to involve your audience

What you learn can also be applied to other work contexts such as motivating individuals and teams, having an influence with key people, and being better structured in the way you think about your work. So what you get is much more than you anticipated taking away, and it is this which so often astounds our clients. They thought they were going to learn how to remember their lines and feel confident, but what they actually get is so much more than this.

Take Annette who touched her audience so much with her wedding speech that there wasn't a dry eye in the audience and she received a standing ovation and Jamie who pulled in a contract worth millions of pounds with a client, and Andy who blew away all other contenders at an assessment day for a senior management promotion.

The techniques and special rehearsal exercises used make it possible to transform the worst speaker from an anxiety-filled bore into an accomplished confident and engaging presenter in two days. All you have to do is listen, learn, and put 100% into the exercises, and we will make the experience stimulating and enjoyable for you.

Can you think of any valid reason for not availing yourself of the most up-to-date communication skills available today?

<http://quadrant1.com/training-courses/>