

# **PRESENTATIONS**

## **WHAT IS A PRESENTATION**

A presentation is a communication technique used to persuade someone, an audience to take some kind of action. It is more than a conversation.

*A conversation is the exchange of information and ideas.*

A presentation also differs from a speech.

*In a speech you may be simply providing information not calling on an audience to take a particular action.*

## **SYSTEM ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATIONS**

Subsequent to the submission of a proposal to management, Systems Analysts may also be expected to make formal presentations at various stages in the analysis phase e.g. to describe findings for investigation of the current system, to present the logical model of the new system, and to present options in terms of design for the new system. These presentations allow for feedback of the listeners reaction.

## **PLANNING A PRESENTATION**

Preparation needs to be thorough because memory plays an important part. It is very time consuming to refer to notes. You should plan your presentation carefully in order to give a professional presentation that will convey your desired message. Planning takes time - usually more time than most people allow. Give yourself adequate preparation time.

The first thing you should do when planning your presentation is define your objectives i.e. what you want to accomplish with the presentation. The presentation should then be planned so that everything that is said and done relates to those objectives.

In selecting the amount of information to use remember what the audience can absorb. Be selective with the content so that only the most useful or important information is covered. More detailed background information can be included in the handout (give to the audience at the end of the presentation) or during question time.

Select the main points that relate to the objectives and construct an outline. Then organise the facts and ideas sequentially. Plan for variation of emphasis.

Finally the presentation format must be considered. Is it going to be direct drawing its own conclusions or indirect, leaving the audience to draw its own conclusions. Do you want to be deductive, presenting specifics that lead to a conclusion or inductive, presenting your conclusion and supporting it with facts and ideas.

Once you have determined the content of the presentation the techniques to use should be considered next.

## **DELIVERY TECHNIQUES**

The message to an audience is not only what you say but how you say it.

The content may be complete the format impeccable but distracting mannerisms can split the presentation impact and the message you wanted to convey is not going to be the one that actually comes across.

There are elements of delivery style that should become habitual for you. Once you are able to use them in your presentations your likelihood of success is greater.

- Voice:** Your voice quality is important. Speak loudly so that everyone in the room can hear without difficulty. Vary the pitch of your voice, do not speak in a monotone. You should sound as if you are conversing with the audience, not reading a report to them. Project the voice so that it is natural and audible.
- Pace:** Your delivery rate should be comfortable for you and the audience. Use pauses for impact and to allow for questions.
- Vocabulary:** Use a vocabulary that is appropriate for your audience. If the people in the audience are not technically oriented avoid jargon and unfamiliar words.
- Notes:** Work with as few notes as possible. Notes should only contain key words and phrases to trigger your memory. The presentation should be rehearsed beforehand.
- Opening:** Learn your opening lines by heart. Tell something to relax the audience. Never apologise for your presentation material if something goes wrong with your visuals.
- Closing:** Keep the presentation to the point, and within the allotted time. At the end summarise the facts and ideas presented and summarise the actions/recommendations necessary. Give a written summary to each member of the audience at the end of the presentation.
- Questions:** Prepare for a question and answer period by thinking of the possible questions that may be asked, particularly the difficult or tricky ones. If you are asked a question you cannot answer admit it and promise to get the answer to the question within a specific period of time (and then make sure you follow up on it). Never guess or fake an answer.
- Gestures:** Use gestures that are appropriate and natural for you. Gestures that call attention to themselves will diminish the effectiveness of your presentation.

Your movements should be smooth and natural.

**Stance:** Sitting or standing during a presentation has an effect on your control of the audience. When you are standing you are in a more dominant position and have more control over the audience. However, during a question and answer period you may want to sit down to rest and to allow the audience more control over the flow of events.

**Audience Contact:** During the presentation maintain eye contact with the audience members. Glance from person to person and linger for a few seconds to give each person the impression that you are speaking directly to him or her. This technique is important for judging the effect of your presentation.

## **THE AUDIENCE**

Before planning a presentation, the audience should be considered. As the presenter you define the agenda of the presentation and direct the course of events during the presentation. However it is your audience that determines whether you are successful. They will judge whether your presentation was adequate, whether they will support you and follow your recommendations. Thus the audience is as much a part of the presentation as the content.

The following points should be considered:

**Audience Attitudes:** In preparing for a presentation the specific goals of the audience are important considerations.

What are their expectations?

Do their goals differ from the formal goals of the presentation?

**Audience Characteristics:** Are the audience knowledgeable about what the presentation concerns?

How will the combination of people in the audience affect the presentation?

Will the audience be easy to persuade?

**Audience Reactions:** The Audience's potential reaction should be anticipated.

What parts of the presentation are they likely to agree with?

What parts of the presentation are they likely to disagree with?

Will they require specific examples or explanations?

**Audience Feedback:**

During the presentation look at the audience for feedback. To get this feedback you should encourage them to ask questions and ask them directly for comments. However never invite someone to 'argue' about an issue, particularly during the presentation. Also never put someone in the audience on the defensive. Do not make anyone look stupid for asking a question.

When you get feedback from your audience, be prepared to react to it. Plan different courses of action ahead of time.

The crucial question to ask yourself during the presentation is "How am I doing?", the answer may make it necessary for you to change the course of the presentation slightly.

**USING VISUAL AIDS**

Good visual aids have an important role to play in making a presentation. Visuals can enhance or detract from your presentation, therefore they must be selected carefully. You should create and select visuals that are appropriate for your intended audience. Sometimes visuals can dominate the presentation and the goal of the presentation is not met.

There are many kinds of visual aids which can be incorporated into talks.

These are:

**Films**

- \* Customised films are expensive to make.
- \* A film is useful as introductory material.
- \* They need to be carefully chosen.
- \* There is a requirement for a darkened room.
- \* The time taken to load and unload the projector may be distracting.
- \* They are usually general rather than specific.

**Slides**

- \* Easier to use especially if employed with a daylight screen.
- \* They can be made more relevant to the presentation.

**Overhead Projectors**

- \* They can be used in Normal lighting
- \* There are portable versions available
- \* The speaker can face the audience
- \* Transparencies can be prepared quickly by hand or photocopied.
- \* They can be written over or used to build up a picture.

## **Flipcharts**

- \* These are the cheapest type of visual aid.
- \* They need to be neatly drawn.
- \* Easily transportable.
- \* Good for drawing diagrams or illustrating points which arise during the presentation.

## **Black or White Boards**

- \* They are very flexible but are not very portable.
- \* They tend to be dirty to use.
- \* The speaker has his/her back to the audience when speaking.

## **Flannel Boards/Magnetic Boards**

- \* These are useful for building up piecemeal diagrams.
- \* They require a lot of preparation for effective use.

## **Computer Projection**

- \* Some animation and movement can be used.
- \* No cost as compared to outputting slides and transparencies.
- \* Projectors relatively easy to transport.
- \* Display network materials from internet.
- \* Can use audio and video in either analog or digital form.

## **Planning Visuals**

Whenever it is possible you should try and convert verbal information from your presentation to visual information. A standard principle in presentations is that information presented both verbally and visually will create a greater impression and is more likely to be remembered by the audience.

The visuals should be simple and each visual should present only one idea or concept. If there are too many ideas on a visual it will be confusing and lose its impact.

If words are used on the visual they should be only key words not full sentences. There should not be more than five or six words per visual. Lettering should be large enough for every one to read and clear.

The style of visuals should be consistent throughout the presentation. Colour should be used to highlight parts of the visuals to create interest.

In summary, visuals can either enhance or distract from a presentation. They should be carefully planned with the audience in mind.

## **PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS**

Sometimes a straightforward factual presentation is all that is required, but often a more determined and persuasive approach is needed. In this instance, the presentation must really have an impact on the audience. A persuasive presentation should be structured so as to gain the support of those who are in favour. It should be convincing and it should state clearly what is wanted by way of a decision, why it is wanted, what it will achieve and what the benefits will be. The presenter needs to be convinced of the objectives and aware of all the facts. The controversial views of others should be known prior to the presentations so that the presenter is prepared for awkward questions. Facts should be expressed confidently and enthusiastically.

This type of presentation must have an impact on the audience and thus the preparation must be thorough.

## **PLANNING YOUR TALK OR PRESENTATION**

### **1 PRELIMINARY THOUGHT (Ask yourself?)**

Who am I speaking to?

Identify the group as a whole and the key individuals within it. Consider the location, the room. Target your audience before you consider your material, style or technique.

Also try to picture the environment, it should affect your entire approach and method. Giving a presentation to a group of new staff intake is totally different to presenting to the board of directors.

Why are they here?

Identify the purpose of the presentation and the reason the audience will be attending. Is it to gain knowledge, to be sold an idea or product, or is it to help in making a decision.

Why am I speaking to them?

No matter what your main function within an organisation is, there will be times when you are called upon to give a presentation. This will either be due to you providing a specialist function or having some technical knowledge and expertise. It may be because of your position of management within the company.

What do they expect or hope to hear?

This should decide what you present to them, and how you will do it. Whether you are selling ideas, schemes or services, you are selling. You must plot out what buyers are prepared to accept.

What do I hope to achieve by this talk?

Decide what should be achieved from the presentation, is it to sell and therefore get an order? Is it to obtain permission to carry on with some kind of project? Or is it simply to inform?

How long do I have in which to achieve it?

You must know in advance how long you are going to talk for so that you can gauge the content of your presentation. You should also have some kind of contingency plan should the time be cut short or indeed extended (the latter is most unlikely).

## 2 PREPARATION

Listening is difficult. Sort your ideas carefully and logically, and remember that an audience needs signposts and repetition. A useful basic plan - "tell them what you are going to say - say it- summarise what you have said".

### USE THE STRUCTURE INDICATED BY THE SUBJECT MATTER

- a) Narrative (first this happened - then this ... and lastly this).
- b) Spatial (your foot bone's connected to your ankle bone, your ankle bone's connected to your shin bone....).
- c) Ascending order of importance (my argument is that this, this, **THIS**, and most conclusively **THIS**, should make us revise our production methods).
- d) Descending order of importance (the framework collapsed chiefly because THIS was a weak member, this had been wrongly connected, and these instructions were not carried out).
- e) Ascending order of difficulty - move from what the audience knows to what they don't know.
- f) This is the point I want to make, and  
here  
here and  
here are some illustrations in support of it.
- g) Investigations:  
problem - discussion - conclusions  
facts - analysis - conclusions  
facts - analysis - statement of problem  
facts - analysis - problem - discussion - conclusions - recommendations.

## 3 DELIVERING THE TALK (will you)

- a) Write it out and read it?
- b) Write it out and learn it?
- c) Speak extemporary from notes?

d) Combine extemporary speaking with reading?

## A PRESENTER'S CHECKLIST

- |                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. Spare project bulb | Pens       |
| Extension lead        | Slides     |
| Projector             | Hand-outs  |
| Screen                | Crib-cards |
| Room                  | Pointer    |
- 
- Who will be there?  
How long have you got?  
When do you start?  
Have you allowed enough time?  
What are the audience expecting?  
What is the purpose of the presentation?  
What is the measure of its success?
  - Are the slides simple?  
Can they be easily read?  
Is there too much information on them?  
Are they helpful to the audience?
  - Does the presentation have a proper structure?  
Is there a hook?  
Are the conclusions completely clear?
  - How are you going to begin?  
How are you going to end?  
How are you going to involve the audience?
  - Are you/will you be ready?  
Have you rehearsed?