



Corporate Learning  
Turning people into high performers

## Powerful Presentations in 7 Steps

Make your presentations more professional and polished! These steps will make it easier for you to prepare your presentation and present it with confidence and impact. There are several steps in preparing and delivering your presentation. It's important to start at the beginning and work through each step.

### *Step 1 - Who is your audience?*

This might appear obvious; however you need to do some analysis about the make-up of your audience before you put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard). Just saying who they are isn't enough. Ask yourself the following questions and write down the answers before you go any further. If you don't know yourself, then ask the person who asked you to present or find someone who does know.

- Who is your audience? e.g. people who know you, strangers, business people, the public, etc.
- What do you know about them?
- What will be their "position" with regard to your subject matter and you? i.e., positive, negative, couldn't care less, excited, supportive? Their "position" or attitude to you and/or your subject matter will be affected very much by whether they want to be there or would prefer to be somewhere other than listening to you.
- Will it be a mixed audience, e.g. age, culture, "position" (as above), where they are in the hierarchy of the company, decision makers, influencers, etc?
- If the objective of your presentation is to get a decision, are they decision makers or can they influence the decision?

### *Step 2 - What is the purpose of your presentation?*

This may seem obvious. And the answer is not "because someone asked me to". Get clear in your mind what you want the audience to do or think as a result of listening to you. This is the outcome and it will drive the structure and content and, to a certain extent, how you deliver your presentation. Ask yourself the following questions and make sure you have the answers - if you don't know, ask someone who does. Otherwise you can really make a fool of yourself!



Why are you doing the presentation?

- to impart information only
- to sell an idea
- to make recommendations
- to get a decision from some members or all of the audience

What do you want the audience to do?

- make a decision
- go away and think about your message
- nothing
- change their view about your subject

### *Step 3 - Structure*

A well structured presentation makes it easier for you to deliver and for your audience to understand and follow. Spending time on the structure will save you time in the long run and will help your audience to more easily follow and understand the content.

"Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em...

Tell 'em ....

Tell 'em what you told 'em"

This advice has been around a long time, but it's still good advice. In my experience, most people do the first two but not the third. So here's how to get it all together.

- Cover any housekeeping items, e.g. when to ask questions, whether you have handouts, etc.
- Have a strong opening statement (and possibly a visual to support it) that gets attention and conveys the general theme or message of the presentation. "Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em."
- For a longer presentation, e.g. 30 minutes or more, have a list of the topics, or agenda, that you will cover.
- Take about 2 to 5 minutes, depending on the length of the presentation, for your introduction. Include such information as:
  - brief background
  - context of the presentation
  - link to any previous activity e.g. request by member of audience, follow-up from previous visit/presentation.



- State clearly the purpose of your presentation and what action, if any, you want from the audience.
- Use questions, if appropriate (real or rhetorical) occasionally to engage the audience.
- Clearly identify when you move from one topic to the next.
- Have an introductory statement at the beginning of the topic and a concluding statement at the end of each topic.
- Keep to the main message, don't wander away or get into irrelevant material.
- Anticipate the questions the audience will have and include the answers in your presentation or have answers ready for question time.
- After the body or main section of your presentation (“tell ‘em”), have a conclusion, recommendation or summary, depending on your purpose (“tell ‘em what you told ‘em”). This may be a brief re-cap of each topic in a longer presentation.
- Have a strong closing statement that preferably links back to your opening statement. State again what you want from the audience and leave them with a definitive message.
- Take questions and have a general discussion.
- Close with a strong ending statement.

#### *Step 4 - Rehearse*

This sounds like it's an overkill, boring and time consuming. However, if I had to emphasise one of the pointers more than any others, it would be this one. You **MUST** rehearse your presentation. It will give you confidence and ensure that your timing is accurate.

- Rehearse your full presentation at least twice and up to five times if you're nervous about it and/or it's a really important presentation.
- Time yourself every rehearsal. Take only the time you have been allotted, including questions.
- Use your visual aids in every rehearsal.



- If possible, use the room where you will be delivering the presentation or some similar room.
- Deliver the presentation exactly as you will in the real situation, i.e. stand in the correct place, use your notes, visual aids, etc.
- Speak slowly and clearly, at the pace at which you will deliver the presentation, to ensure your timing is accurate.
- Memorise your opening statement.
- Make sure you know how to operate the visual aids you will be using.

### *Step 5 - Visual Aids*

- Determine what is most appropriate for the presentation, room and audience
- If you are using powerpoint slides make sure the font size is 20 point or larger and is an easy-to-read font style
- Put no more than 6 to 7 points on each slide
- Use colours that contrast well and are easily read – yellow on a navy background is an excellent choice
- Use upper and lower case letters, not upper case only, as it's difficult to read
- Stand at the back of the room (or distance where the furthest person will sit) and check readability of slides after you've prepared a few
- Don't use too many "bells and whistles" with powerpoint slides as they can detract from the message
- If you are using a video clip with sound, make sure the sound is loud enough for everyone in the room to hear it - test it beforehand!
- Use a full size projection screen for slides or video clips; small screens (e.g. large TV screens) just don't work with an audience of more than about six in a small room
- Decide if you want to use handouts and when to hand them out; at the end of the presentation is best. If you hand them out through the presentation, audience attention is distracted from you.



- Make sure your verbal presentation matches what is up on the slide at any given time; if your words are different than the visual, the audience gets confused.

### *Step 6 - Pre-Presentation Preparation*

- Make sure your required equipment will be available and set up for you or get to the venue early and set it up yourself.
- If someone else is setting the room up, give them instructions for how you want it set up, preferably with a floor plan.
- Get to the venue early to set up and check the equipment and room set-up.
- If you're using a laptop and data projector, it's a good idea to have someone available who knows how to use it; technology has a way of misbehaving just when you think you've got it under control.
- Determine the best place for you to stand and for placement of visual aids, screen, etc., so that the audience will be able to see you and your visuals at all times.
- Sit in the back row and check visuals for clarity and position.
- Try to meet each member of the audience before you start your presentation – this will help relax you and provide a personal approach; this, of course, depends on the audience numbers and the situation.

### *Step 7 - Delivery*

Well, we've finally got to the big event! Not before time, I hear you say! Yes, it's taken six steps of preparation just to get to the starting line. But by following these six steps you will have a well structured presentation, be well rehearsed and confident to deliver a presentation with impact and that meets your desired results. So here are some tips to get the big event off to a good start and keep it that way.

- Take a couple of deep breaths before you start and breathe deeply to control your nerves
- Stand clear of the screen when using Powerpoint slides and make sure all of your audience can see the screen
- Maintain eye contact with your audience; scan the audience, don't focus on one section only
- Keep your body position facing straight ahead and not to one side



- Try to move around a little and have some hand movements so you don't look too "wooden"
- Keep your voice up at all times and project it to the back of the room as if you were talking to the people in the back row (rehearsing this will make the difference)
- Keep your voice strong at the closing statement, don't let it trail off. Have a confident close.

#### *Using Powerpoint Slides*

- Face your audience with the laptop in front of you - do not look at the large screen
- Always leave "slide show" visual on; if you have to change files do Function F5 or F7 (check before which one it is on the laptop) to turn off the big screen
- To blacken screen during a lengthy discussion, press "b" on the keyboard. Press "b" again to bring slide show back.

#### *Handling Questions*

- If the room is fairly large, repeat the question so everyone can hear it
- Remain calm and non-defensive
- Keep the answers short and concise
- If you do not know the answer, admit it and promise to find out - then make sure you do and get back to the person who asked the question

Written by Linda McDonald

Corporate Learning  
129 Bent Street  
Lindfield, NSW 2070  
Tel 02 9416 1576 Fax 02 9416 6753  
info@corporatelearning.com.au  
www.corporatelearning.com.au



Corporate Learning  
Turning people into high performers