

The 6 Steps to planning a winning presentation

Do plan it - *To fail to plan is to plan to fail!* When you know exactly where you are going and how you are going to get there, you effectively create a map to navigate by. You will relax and deliver with confidence and congruence. Here are the 6 steps to planning that winning presentation:

1) Set specific objectives: Consider what you would like to achieve. Is it understanding of several issues? Agreed actions on one issue? Maybe it is somewhere in between the two? Importantly, consider what you are *able* to achieve given the audience’s current understanding, their likely response, and attention span. Then decide *specifically* what you will achieve. Avoid vague aims like “they seemed happy!”

2) Choose the appropriate Presentation Style: Now you are clear on objectives and audience response what overall presentation style will you adopt?

Telling them about several things they will be interested in: Typically a simple lectern-based presentation with high degree of screen AV support to a large audience in one session.

Selling them on an opportunity and actions you want them to take: Typically lectern based, possibly roving speaker, with screen AV support to large audience in plenary session; followed by smaller break-outs to discuss and agree the actions.

Consulting with them on indicated opportunities and suggested actions: Typically as roving speaker with some screen AV support to med/small audience, or perhaps as interviewee with pre-set questions; followed by break-outs to detail “the plan” and agree implementation steps.

Joining with them to identify possible opportunities: Typically as a roving speaker with minimal screen AV support to small audience, in short plenary briefing, possibly with audience response system or Q and A. Followed by facilitated break-outs to evaluate opportunities and consider next steps.

3) Choose the right shape: With style chosen now map out your presentation, the Body first then Opening and Close:

Tell Body: With assimilation of several topics as the aim, linking them together into a logical sequence like Time, Place or Priority will greatly assist. Alternatively use metaphorical sequences such as constructing a building or assembling a motor car to add meaning. Topics mentioned first and last get remembered better and 3 topic lists best of all.

Tell & Sell Body: Here the aim is to gain understanding, agreement and then commitment. These two persuasion sequences will achieve that:

The Opportunity + Proposal & Benefits + Proof & Acceptability + Risks of inaction + Actions required.

Idea Headline + Benefit Headline + Idea’s USP + Idea Detail & Benefits + Actions required.

Sell & Consult Body: Here we aim for understanding, consideration, agreement and commitment. The persuasion patterns are for single and multiple options:

Pros and Cons Pattern: Disadvantages + Benefits + Summary + Actions.

Options Pattern: Lesser benefit options + Higher benefit options + Summary + Actions.

Consult & Join Body: Here we want recognition, understanding, consideration, agreement and commitment but achieved in facilitating questioning style. So using the technique of Probe Question, Qualify and Develop preliminary responses, Paraphrase and Summarise final responses towards consensus, the pattern we work to is:

Identify the need/opportunity + Agree to tackle it + Consider solutions + Agree on solution + Consider the actions + Agree the actions.

Opening: Techniques that work given the style and audience situation:-

Tell Style: Outline your aims and agenda. Begin a story that analogises your theme.

Sell Style: Headline what they will gain. Invite them to ask themselves questions.

Getting Immediate attention: Pose a question. Quote topical news.

Rapport & Personal Credibility: Talk their language. Empathise with their needs. Identify with previous speaker. Tell a funny relevant story.

Close: Techniques that work given the style and audience situation:-

Tell Style: Reiterate the key messages. Complete the analogy.

Sell Style: Summarize the benefits. Summarize the actions. Restate the vision. Finish with an illustrating anecdote.

4) Choose the right language: Words prompt conscious and subconscious thought so they need to be prepared and not left to chance.

For clarity and acceptance: use audience relevant and beneficial terms, expressed in short conversational phrases. Avoid negative and ambiguous terms.

For emphasis: use sensory and dramatic words like *“rocketing...drowning.”*

For acceptance: use Presuppositions like *“it is clearly the case...”* and Generalisations like *“people often say...”* or vagueness like *“You’ll probably understand this better than me!”*

For subtle influence: use stories & analogies to internalize meaning and distract conscious thinking. Give them a hero, time and place, situation and solution, twist and a conclusion. Metaphors similarly provide emphasis, critical distraction and embed in the mind.

For reinforcement: use popular quotations to borrow credibility and endorsement.

For persuasion: Use Truisms and Equivalentents like *“life cannot stand still and we are the change that voters look for!”* Use Cause and Effect like *“we must change our policies because families are changing and looking for change!”* Use Yes Sets where statements of accepted fact precede your presupposition of fact. Use Pacing and Leading to carry over acceptance of what is here and now to acceptance of what will likely be.

5) Choose the right visual support: With objectives, style, and message sorted out how will you illustrate your message in the most interpretive and compelling way?

Powerpoint: More appropriate to Tell and Sell situations than Consult and Join. Get maximum benefit from images, graphics or photographs to visually sync' with your words, scrolling text to confirm keywords, visual metaphors to engage and embed, but not *script on screen!*

Video: Appropriate in all situations. Choose from 1 or 2 minute Openers to position central message; Vox Pops comments from 3rd parties, customers or staff for reinforcement; Case studies or stories to sell ideas; continuous background shot for “subliminal” reinforcement.

Props: Literal or metaphorical props, either sensible or odd-ball will refresh attention, add live experience for the audience and embed messages.

6) Presenting it on the day: And finally, how will you present on the day and what form does your presentation need to be in?

Scripted Speech: Advisable when content is word-critical, is being reproduced, is unfamiliar or requires complex AV support cueing. Write it in short conversational phrases, large font and spacing in loose leaf.

Scripted Autocue: Suitable when scripted speech conditions apply in a Tell/Sell situation and when audience eye contact is particularly beneficial. Write in short phrases. Use floor and side monitors.

Roving Speaker Prompts: Suitable when speaker accessibility and audience engagement is important such as Sell/Consult style. When talking familiar content, in conversational style, with simpler screen AV. Use cue cards, clip board, floor monitors with slide preview.

Follow these 6 steps and you will be only one step away from delivering the best presentation ever.

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*Bob Howard-Spink is a partner in **Persuadability**. For more tips and advice on persuasive communication please visit www.persuadability.co.uk*

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