

How to Plan a Great Presentation – Putting it together

You began your preparation by identifying the broad aims of your presentation, validating these against the probable responses of your audience, and then refining the aims into a set of specific realizable objectives. Now you have to plan out the presentation content to achieve those objectives.

Body of the Presentation: With a constant eye on your objectives and the “*attention peaks at 15 minutes and goes after 20.*” Rule, you should assemble your key messages into a structure. Why a structure? There are 2 compelling reasons:

You have a map to follow, so you always know where you are and where you are going to next. You are in control so you can relax and enjoy the journey! You can also “signpost” the journey for the audience so they know where they are going too.

You are programming the messages into logical and recognizable sequences, which means that the audience will assimilate more content, interpret meaning more accurately, and also remember more of the content.

Structures to suit the situation:

Assimilate a range of key messages: When the aim of your presentation is to achieve understanding across a range of key messages and you need to sustain attention and interest, look for a logical sequence from one of these options and choose one that has relevance to the message.

- Time: Progression of dates or sequence of events from beginning to end.
- Place: Geographic progression or journey. Stages in a flowchart.
- Priority: Sequence the issues in their increasing scale of importance.

With this multi-message presentation always consider the “immediacy effect” whereby audiences remember best what they heard first and last.

Assimilate key messages and consider implications. Here we look at the use of metaphors. They can be applied to the previous situation when there is no logical sequence to use. They particularly apply when you want to stimulate thinking, to give special interpretation to the meaning, and to embed lasting recall of the messages.

- Constructing a building.
- Components of a motor car.
- Playing positions in a football team.
- Heroes from history.

Agree a key message and the actions to be taken. Rather than control attention across a range of issues, here you are focusing on a key message. The need is to move minds through a sequence of understanding, recognition, agreement and commitment. You are essentially planning a “Tell & Sell” presentation and the ideal sequence for that is:

1. Identify the Problem or the Opportunity
2. Establish the need for change or the benefits offered by the opportunity
3. Discuss the solutions or actions that can be taken
4. Confirm and agree the actions that will be taken

Opening: There are several techniques that presenters use to get their presentation off to the best start. The appropriate combination of these techniques becomes clearer after you have set your objectives and mapped out your presentation. Because then you will see the particular audience responses which are important to you.

Immediate attention:

- Pose a question that gets them thinking
- Pose a question that connects with their key interest.
- Quote a topical news item

Establishing rapport and personal credibility

- Explain the link of your presentation purpose with their key interest.
- Empathise with their needs
- Identify with their group
- Refer to a previous speakers comments

Conditioning to the need to listen across several issues

- Tell them where you are going and what you will be covering
- Begin to tell a story that you will conclude when you close

Creating an expectation to commit to something

- Outline the gain they will derive.
- Encourage them to be asking themselves questions as you proceed

When planning the Opening the important thing is too tailor it to the situation and to make it relevant.

Close: As with Opening, the Close has its favourites and it is a case of choosing a Close that suits your presentation. Remember as well the “immediacy” effect. This is the last and possibly best chance to make sure your message is heard and remembered.

Assimilate a range of key messages

- Reiterate the key messages

Assimilate key messages and consider implications

- Reiterate the key messages
- Restate the vision
- Finish the story you started to tell at the beginning.
- Tell an anecdote or use a metaphor that illustrates the implications

Agree a key message and the actions to be taken

- Summarize the key benefits
- Summarize the actions required
- Ask for the commitment

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