

## **Presenting – How to hold your audience and win them over**

So the presentation has got off to that great start that you planned and you are feeling good! You have engaged the audience’s initial attention and interest. Now your focus turns to holding that interest and getting understanding and approval to your message.

Here are the techniques to use that will do that for you:

**Talk in “Chunks”** Attention naturally wanes and wanders. Rule of thumb says 12 minutes is the peak and 20 minutes is the maximum. Help offset this by breaking your overall message into separate “chunks.”

**Talk in a Pattern** Help the audience to follow where you are in your talk. Link the talk “chunks” together into a logical sequence. Ideally a sequence that is relevant to the subject from the natural choices of time, direction, or process, or maybe use a metaphor like playing positions in a football team. The sequence logic will connect the chunks and retain attention across the overall talk.

**Talk with Links and Signposts** Reinforce the sequence effect by using link phrases that summarise what you have covered so far and signpost where you are heading next. EG: “So having considered Research, and Design the next key stage to look at is Marketing.”

**Talk their language** Tailor your words and phrases and the examples you give to the audience demographics. Design students for example have a different language to say Investment Bankers or Security Advisors.

**Talk with them and not at them** Involve your audience by talking conversationally. Get them thinking with you by posing questions. Invite them to “ask yourself this...” and “I would like you to imagine that...”

**Talk in the different ways that people think** People can markedly differ in how they process information. Some people think visually and like to see examples, some talk internally and want to be told things, some like to feel if something makes sense. Check that you have “see” “sound” and “feel” phrases in your message.

**Engage them with your voice** Keep their interest with contrast. Help their understanding with emphasis. High pitch or fast pace for excitement and enthusiasm, low pitch or slow pace for seriousness and concern. Use silence for emphasis of meaning and to indicate a new topic.

**Engage them with your body language** Stand straight but relaxed. Keep eye contact with everyone. Smile. Be animated when raising excitement. Be calm when registering concern. Nod your head and smile when you are asking for agreement.

**Engage them with stories** People listen when told a story. They internalize it and so experience it and understand the meaning. To achieve this effect build your story around a “hero” for empathy, a time for context, a place for visualisation, a challenge or issue, a solution or outcome ideally with a twist in it, a conclusion or point.

**Appeal to their interests and motivations** Tailor your argument, its reasons and its benefits to the audience demographics. Advertising people tend to like market share or awards. Accountants seem to prefer margins and investment ratios!

**Appeal to the contrasting motivations** Some people are motivated by reward, success, prestige, exclusivity whereas others want to conserve, make safe, reduce costs or benefit others. Cover both sets with your reasons and benefits.

**Persuade with the words you use** Sound positive. Use presuppositions like “clearly” “what we will find...” Use power words and metaphors like “Rocketing!” “Building blocks!” Use truisms to link what is known to be true with what you want accepted as true. Quote the good and the great to back up what you are saying.

**Repeat your key message** Sometimes referred to as “the power of three,” if you repeat a point three times then the simple mental processes of hearing and storing will see that point register

**Ask them to agree** Build agreement to your key benefits as you proceed with tag questions such as “isn’t that true?” Nod and smile as you ask these. Raise the excitement level in your voice and body language. Restate your aim. Restate the required actions. Restate the benefits or the Vision. Thank them and smile.

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