



How to plan a great presentation – Getting the style right

When discussing why planning is so vital to successful presentation we saw that before getting down to key messages, structure and words, there is a fundamental issue we need to consider – *“what persuasion situation are we facing and what suitable style should we adopt?”*

By situation we are looking at the readiness of the audience to accept the message and the presenter’s authority to deliver it.

There are situations when the audience eagerly anticipates the message. It’s appropriate to just stand up and tell them what they’ve come to hear. They expect a direct straightforward approach, and any other way would seem elaborate or longwinded.

Then again there are situations when the audience doesn’t want to listen. They believe the message will be irrelevant or potentially against their interest. Direct telling would seem presumptuous or even confrontational. A much more indirect and questioning approach is required.

The important thing is to identify the situation and to adopt a presentation style to suit.

Here are a series of benchmark situations and style types to adopt. Each situation takes account of audience acceptance to message and presenter, and the relevant styles show the progression from a statements-based to a questions-based approach. These styles are not mutually exclusive and in many circumstances adjoining styles will combine, such as “Tell & Sell” or “Sell & Consult.”

TELL - Appropriate style in learning situations when the audience is eager to hear and accept what we have to say, and has total trust in our motives and credentials. **Example:** Renowned academics presenting latest research to peers.

Statements 80% ⇔ ⇐20 % Questions.

Explain issues and present conclusions

Lots of examples and case studies

Little inter-action necessary. Probable Q & A

Large size audience and long sessions.

Objectives will be met in one event.

SELL - Appropriate style in change situations when the audience is generally familiar and satisfied with the issues but is likely to accept the new outcomes once proven. **Example:**

Marketing Head introducing new campaign to experienced sales team.

Statements 65% ⇔ ⇐35% Questions

Establish needs and explain solutions and benefits

Use of case studies and stories.

Inter-action with large audience over short duration

Probable breakout sessions to engage and secure agreement.

Objectives will be met in one event

CONSULT – Appropriate style in major change situations when the audience is likely to question the issues, the need, and intended outcomes; also when presenter authority is unproven.

Example: New Sales Director introducing fundamentally revised territory workload and compensation package to sales management team.

Statements 35%⇒⇐65% Questions

Outline the opportunity, identified needs and possible solutions

Greater use of case studies and stories.

Engage in discussion to fully explore needs and solutions.

Possibly support recognition of need with analogous group activity

Interim agreements only with end goals coming through small group participation.

JOIN – Appropriate style in major change situations when the audience is certain to question the issues and possibly oppose the intended outcomes; also when presenter authority is unproven. **Example:** HR Manager launching first ever performance management programme to entire management team.

Statements 20%⇒⇐80% Questions.

Outline the opportunity. Consult on possible needs and potential benefits.

Position self as facilitator, asking questions, withholding opinion, and seeking consensus.

Support discussion with case studies.

Support recognition of need with analogous group activity

Preliminary agreements, with end goals coming through small group discussion and feedback.

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