

5.4 Presentation Skills

Aim

To train the participants in the techniques of good presentations

Materials Required

Pen and Paper

Input

To be able to evangelise or sell a product, you need to be able to convince your audience that what you are offering or telling them is worth their time and in the case of products, their money. To do this, you need to make an effective presentation. Most presentations are essentially the same in their construction be they be in front of a congregation, a board of directors or the seemingly simple task of showing a new employee around the office.

The 7 basic steps of making a good presentation are:

1. Decide what you want to achieve
2. Decide whether a formal presentation is the best way to do this
3. If you do decide to go ahead with the presentation, decide the form it should take.
4. Prepare a script
5. Design and prepare visual aids and handouts if necessary (in pastoral communication this may not be necessary)
6. Rehearse
7. Present

Determine whether a presentation is the best way to achieve your required objective.

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Do this by asking yourself:

- Do people need to be able to discuss the topic in order to reach a decision?
- Do they need to be able to question the presenter to fully understand the material?
- Is the presentation designed to 'sell' an idea, a product or a course of action?
- Is there a practical element in the presentation?

If the presentation is necessary, you can choose between 5 formats depending on your primary objective which you can define by:

- Drawing up your main objective in one sentence. For example: Inform all the members of the project as to the current state of play.
- Giving it some hard thought – make it precise.
- Determine what the presentation is meant to achieve.
- Set out the expected/required result of the presentation clearly. Certain basic targets include:
 - Everyone involved must clearly understand the nature of the presentation.
 - Everyone must understand the input expected from them.
- Presenters must have a yardstick to measure how much the presentation has achieved in a certain period of time.

Forms of presentations

Visual Aids

Visual aids are important because:

- We learn about 90% of what we already know visually – from films, books, etc. Only 7% - 11% is learnt through hearing alone.
- The average audience member will remember about 70% of a purely verbal presentation, three hours later.
- Of a purely visual presentation, about 75% will be remembered after three hours, and up to 20% after 3 days.
- Presenters who use visual aids are generally perceived as being more professional and persuasive than those who rely on speech alone.

Thus, for a truly powerful and memorable presentation, you will need to include some form of visual aid. Always use a visual aid that will best suit your purpose, audience and personal skill. Avoid using different kinds of visual aids simultaneously unless you have professional assistance and a lot of practice.

Other forms of presentations are:

- Over Head Projector (OHP)
- Slides
- Computer-based displays
- Video
- Charts
- Film

Audience

To stage a good presentation, focus on the basic characteristics of your audience such as:

- Who will be attending the presentation and what is their level of seniority?
- Who is the decision maker?
- Is there any point in giving the presentation if certain people do not attend?
- Will people be attending your presentation by choice?
- Is their initial attitude likely to be pro, neutral or anti?
- How intelligent are they? Never talk down on people
- How well informed are they? Will they have background knowledge and if so, how much?
- Will they understand the jargon you normally use?
- What sort of mood will they be in?
- What will they be expecting from you?
- How can you present your information so as to encourage a positive response (and avoid a negative reaction)?

Personal presentation

Some pointers to remember are that:

1. Moving around or standing still does not make any difference.
2. When standing still, aim to have your feet about shoulder width apart and keep your body square onto the audience and with your toes pointing slightly outward. This stance is comfortable to maintain and indicates to the audience that you are relaxed and confident.
3. Be clearly visible to your audience, especially when saying something important. If you stand in front of a bright light, e.g. a well lit window, your audience will not see much more than a black shape which will be perceived as a negative image.
4. Settling in one spot, leaning to one side.
Hidden message: 'I'm bored and I'd rather be somewhere else.'
Solution: When standing still, keep your weight evenly balanced and your hips level.
5. Leaning over the top of the lectern.
Hidden message: 'I'm too tired to stand up straight – or I just can't be bothered to do so.'
Solution: When using a lectern, stand to one side rather than directly behind it.
6. Sitting on the table provided for your notes, the OHP, etc.
Hidden message: 'I don't have to make an effort here, because I'm more important than you.'
7. Sitting on the table provided for your notes, the OHP, etc.
Hidden message: 'I don't have to make an effort here, because I'm more important than you.'
Solution: No matter how relaxed you feel, stay standing!

It is far more important that your verbal content, vocal style and body language be congruent (all giving the same message) than walking 3 meters or 3 kilometers while delivering your presentation.

Movement

1. Hands

Act as though you were in a normal conversation. For example, if you usually wave your hands in an animated fashion do the same thing (with reason) in a presentation. It is also fine if you don't usually make much use of your hands during a conversation. If you don't feel comfortable, don't do it and don't worry about it. Keep in mind however that if you use your hands when talking, make sure that your gestures during a presentation are appropriate for the size of your audience. Thus, the more people you are talking to, the bigger your hand and arm movements will be. Some poses you might want to avoid are:

- The 'stand at ease' stance – feet firmly planted and hands clasped behind your back. It looks stiff and overly formal. It is an authoritarian stance and will make it much harder to establish any degree of rapport with your audience.
- Having your hands behind in your pocket looks unduly casual, or even sloppy. If you find your hands have wandered into your pockets:



- Remove your hand(s) from your pocket(s) in a leisurely manner at a suitable moment: to point at something in a visual display, to turn a page of your notes etc.
- For men, if your hands find their way into your trouser pockets, then above all, keep them still. Fiddling with something in your pocket will be interpreted by your audience negatively.

Clasping your hands in front of you looks rigid and uncomfortable and in English speaking countries is generally recognized as a defensive posture, particularly for men. It will tend to set you apart from your audience and will lower your esteem in their eyes. It won't do much for your self-confidence either. Standing with your hands on your hips can look arrogant, affected or plain silly.

Folding your arms over your stomach or chest can appear domineering in a large person and is otherwise recognized as a defensive or divisive posture.

Rubbing your hands together in a 'washing' motion looks creepy, fussy and possibly dishonest.

2. Eye Contact

Two key elements which ensure dynamic eye contact with an audience are timing, and the aura effect. As for timing, you should look at any single person for no more than three or four seconds. Shift your gaze frequently and preferably randomly. It is important to look at every member of an audience in order to maintain rapport with whole groups of people rather than with isolated individuals. It works because our field of vision 'fans out' as it gets farther away. The aura effect extends to the sides, in front of and behind the person the presenter is actually looking at. In the first illustration, when the presenter makes eye contact with one person near the front of the audience, at least four or five people are likely to believe that the presenter turns his gaze towards the back of the audience, however, as many as 15 to 20 people are likely to believe that the presenter is looking at them, and them alone. In general then, there will be times you will want to maintain eye contact with your audience. There are times however, when you will want to deliberately break eye contact. If, for example, you ask your audience to think something through, for a few moments, you will get a better response if you lead by breaking eye contact and then mime, being thoughtful until you are ready to continue. In essence, the overall image that you need to project for the best effect, is one of relaxed control. This effect is most easily produced if it reflects what you really feel – when you know that you've done everything you can to ensure that the presentation goes well.

Style of Speaking

Speaking style improves in a gradual way, in a progressive process. It is an extension of our abilities. Several ways in which we can improve our voice is by: practicing in front of a mirror, talking into a tape recorder or a video camera, reading a column from your local telephone directory so that it sounds exciting, amusing or persuasive. This way, you'll be able to develop your vocal style.

Rehearsals

Once you have drafted the outline of your script, put it on audio tape (video tape is even better) then run it through with the following thoughts in mind:

- Does your presentation follow a clear sequence of ideas?
- Have you aimed the material at the right level?
- Have you included material that isn't strictly relevant?
- Are you trying to cover too much information?
- How and where can you use visual aids to clarify and enhance the basic presentation?
- Are you presenting your material in an appropriate manner?

Once you've developed a script that does what you want it to, have another recorded rehearsal, asking yourself whether it really achieves the required result. It will also pay to take note of the vocal interest in your delivery (plus your body language, if you're doing a video recording).

When you first begin to give presentations, you might also want to set the microphone a little away from you so that you can learn to project your voice. The difference between projecting your voice and raising your voice (shouting) is:

- 1a To project your voice is to use your diaphragm to drive the air up through your throat and mouth.
- 1b When you shout, you use your neck muscles to do all the work.
- 2a When you project your voice, you should find that you were conversing with someone only a short distance away. Projecting your voice should not cause any kind of physical strain.
- 2b When you shout, it hurts!

Review

1. To be able to evangelise or sell a product, you need to be able to convince your audience that what you are offering or telling them is worth their time and in the case of products, their money.
2. The 7 basic steps of making a good presentation are:
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Reflection

‘Of a purely visual presentation, about 75% will be remembered after three hours, and up to 20% after 3 days.’ Write a reflection on this stating what implication(s) this has on effective presentation.

Relevant Skills

Using the knowledge you have acquired and the steps outlined above, present a 7 minute speech on any pastoral topic to your fellow participants.

References

BOSCOM-INDIA. ‘SHEPHERDS’ FOR AN INFORMATION AGE. Matunga: Tej Prasarini, 2000.

