

Fundamentals of crafting an effective public presentation

We've all watched lecturers slog through interminable PowerPoint presentations and have witnessed unprepared spokespersons who think they can "wing it," but their performance reveals that they cannot. You do not want to be either of those presenters.

The following tips will help you craft an effective, engaging presentation:

Getting started

- Know Your Audience:
 - o Who will be listening to you speak?
 - o How much time do they want to spend on this topic – really?
 - o Why do they want the information you have to impart?
 - o Find out the answers to those questions and tailor your presentation to their needs, not yours.
- Transform Information into Knowledge:
 - o Organize, analyze and synthesize your information to distill it into tailored, useful knowledge.
 - o Think ahead to deliver information that answers the question, "So, what?"
 - o Consider how the audience will strategically use the information.
- Understand Your Presentation Strengths:
 - o Decide if you prefer detailed notes or an outline of key points. Your notes should enhance your style and the audience experience.
 - o Prepare for questions and rehearse succinct answers.

Creating an engaging presentation

- Objectives:
 - o Keep your audience engaged and impressed by marrying meaningful images with the key points you are speaking.
 - o Add value to the image the audience sees on the screen by offering elaboration, conclusions, analogies or case studies.
 - o Use memorable language and images.
 - o Always assume what you say will become "public," even when behind closed doors.

PowerPoint best practices

- Guidelines:
 - o Each slide should feature as few words as possible. Optimal is 35 or fewer.
 - o Never read the slides aloud to the audience.
 - o "A picture is worth 1,000 words." True, so choose images that tell your story.
 - o Connect with your slides. Use gestures to highlight key information on the screen. Build a connection between you, your slides and the audience.
- Prepare and Rehearse:
 - o Some professionals rehearse one hour for every minute of a presentation. That may not be practical. Rehearse at least twice on different days.
 - o Identify questions to engage the audience and prepare for their questions.