



Professional Presentations - How To Plan And Deliver A Compelling Presentation





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INTRODUCTION

In bringing together this collection of articles that I have published on the art of presentation skills and public speaking, my primary objective is to share with you some of the secrets I have learned over the years.

I don't believe that anyone is a "natural" presenter or orator. Yes, certainly some people are naturally gifted communicators with an outgoing and attractive personality; some people have an extensive vocabulary; others know their subject inside out. But all of these will not necessarily guarantee that you can deliver a professional and compelling presentation.

This small book will hopefully guide you through each stage of a professional presentation, from understanding what audiences want, preparing your presentation, the delivery stage (including structure, verbal and physical delivery, plus the question and answer session) and finally how to handle and harness anxiety.

I hope you enjoy it!

Jonathan Farrington



WHAT AUDIENCES WANT AND WHAT THEY MOST DEFINITELY DO NOT WANT

The effective speaker in business, just as in the political arena, is the one who can make people hear the facts and believe the message.

In today's business world of 'quality circles' and 'managing for excellence', the most successful individuals are often accomplished presenters. That's because a successful presenter is more than just a fact dispenser - he or she really knows how to communicate with their audience, they represent someone to whom people listen. The effective speaker in business, just as in the political arena, is the one who can make people hear the facts and believe the message.

Unfortunately, public speaking is not something that comes naturally to most of us. Without prior training in the basics of timing, body language, humour, organisation and all the other skills that go into the act of public speaking, even the smartest, liveliest, and most articulate individual can wither in the glare of "the spotlight".

WHAT DO AUDIENCES WANT?

- ★ To feel you 'know your stuff'
- ★ That you look the part
- ★ That you respect them and acknowledge their situation and views
- ★ To find what you say links with what they want from you
- ★ To have sufficient information to make a considered judgement about what you say (they will 'weigh it up')
- ★ To be clear about any action necessary - at the end





Above all, to find it understandable, interesting and a good fit with the audience and the occasion.

WHAT THEY MOST DEFINITELY DO NOT WANT?

- ★ To be confused
- ★ To be blinded with science / technicalities or jargon
- ★ 'Lost' in the structure (or lack of it)
- ★ To be talked down to
- ★ To be made to struggle to understand inappropriate language
- ★ To be made to make an enormous jump to relate what is said to their circumstances

I have experimented with a number of methods over the years, but I do believe that the simplest are usually the best.

And they do not want to listen to someone whose lack of preparation makes it clear they have no respect for the audience. As with most things in life, preparation and planning is everything. It is important to remember that, as the presenter or speaker, we are there for our audience - they are not there for us. We must earn the right, by proving our credibility, to be standing in front of them.

HOW TO PREPARE A PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

As with all things in life, the quality of the preparation affects the final outcome and this is certainly true when it comes to planning and preparing a presentation.

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THE COLLECTION

Over a period of time, think all round the subject and note down on a large sheet of paper, or indeed several sheets, everything that comes into your head about the subject of your presentation. This is rather like a personal brain storming session and should be done roughly, in the order in which the thoughts occur - do not attempt to write a speech at this stage.

THE CENTRAL THEME

This second method requires you to decide on the exact message you want to get across and writing it down in one simple sentence. Then, you think all around the sentence, scribbling down the ideas as they come to you - this method is almost identical to 'mind-mapping'. Before selecting or rejecting any idea, it is important to decide:

- ★ Who are my audience?
- ★ How much do they know already?
- ★ How much time will I be allowed?

Then, you think all around the sentence, scribbling down the ideas as they come to you.

Having taken account of the answers to those three key questions, it should be possible to answer one further one:

- ★ What do I want to say?

This is the stage at which you can decide your headings and sub-headings and put them into a logical order. Your structure then begins to take shape. Essentially, you go back to the notes you made during the 'ideas' stage and select which ones you wish to use - and then put them in the right order.





Remember, you probably will not have time to tell your audience all you know about your subject – after all, this is not an ‘information dump’ – Use only what is relevant and what can be dealt with in the time at your disposal – this may involve a ruthless reduction exercise! It is suggested that, if possible, you leave the speech, once written, for 24 hours. Then re-read and revise, removing any jargon or unnecessarily flowery phrases or faulty reasoning.

Unless you are a very good actor with a phenomenal memory, do not dispense with notes by memorising a speech ‘parrot-fashion’.

The actual notes that you speak from can be the final draft of the speech, but this will normally cause you to read most or all of the presentation - and the audience will find this dull.

It is much better, therefore, to read the final draft and put it to one side. Then, without referring to it, write short, key-word notes or, if you are very experienced, headings only, on to numbered post-cards (numbering your cards will prove to be an invaluable exercise in the unlikely event you drop them half way through your presentation!).

You can now re-look at the final draft to check that you have included all the major ideas on the cards - but be careful, the chances are that if you forgot that idea when making out the cards, you will forget it when you make the presentation!

AND FINALLY - FINAL NOTES

Unless you are a very good actor with a phenomenal memory, do not dispense with notes by memorising a speech ‘parrot-fashion’. Unless your audience are ornithologists, they do not want to listen to a parrot! Also, it is easy to lose your way when giving a memorised presentation and easier still to lose an audience...





IT'S ALL ABOUT DELIVERY

All professional salespeople have to be involved in a presentation at some time in their sales career and presentations allow us to:

The reality is that making presentations is an essential sales skill and Top 5% achievers are always very good presenters.

- ★ Influence a group of important people
- ★ Gain consensus and commitment
- ★ Find out who the real players are and the real status
- ★ Set ground rules for a major sale
- ★ Make a lasting impression of professionalism

The reality is that making presentations is an essential sales skill and Top 5% achievers are always very good presenters.

Any salesman or woman, who has ambitions to become the best in their sector or industry, will need to ensure that they can deliver dynamic, convincing and professional presentations, whenever they are called upon to do so.


In preparing for any presentation, there is a simple, yet useful structure:

- ★ Prospect need
- ★ Prospect advantage
- ★ Your proposal
- ★ Your action

PROSPECT NEED

It is essential that you consider your prospects/audience's views, because every prospect/audience has a need. Need consists of two parts - symptoms and causes (through identifying the symptoms, we find causes).





Your ideal presentation will cover the above four steps. However, you may change the position of the two pairs according to your audience.

PROSPECT ADVANTAGE

- ★ Main - This demonstrates how your ideas will meet the needs and resolve the prospects problems
- ★ Added - These are powerful persuasions that explain why your ideas are superior and compelling

Do remember that advantage statements should always be specific.

YOUR PROPOSAL

Never assume your audience is as informed about the subject as you are. You must define your proposal by explaining the general pattern, to the extent that your audience needs, in order for them to understand the message.

YOUR ACTION

- ★ Present Action - This is a single immediate action that your audience must initiate
- ★ Future Action - This will be a series of actions, spread out over a period of time (example: inform departments of order, form consultative groups, finalise policy, implement policy)

REMEMBER

Your ideal presentation will cover the above four steps. However, you may change the position of the two pairs according to your audience.



FORMAT

The following format will ensure that your presentation is forceful and compact - it will give you control over the content and structure of your message. You will need to adapt the elements, so that they can be used in any sequence to fit your presentation agenda and to match that of your audience.

The following format will ensure that your presentation is forceful and compact.

Opening

- ★ Introduce yourself
- ★ Thank your prospects for their time
- ★ Build credibility
- ★ State your objectives
- ★ Confirm the level of commitment you expect
- ★ Overview the elements

Agenda

- ★ Topics to be covered

Overview

- ★ Brief presentation of your prospect's goals and objectives
(The primary goals that you will address)

Review Requirements

- ★ Those identified and agreed at the Exploratory Meeting Proposal Discussion
(Your Solution)
- ★ Highlight features and associate advantages

Benefits

- ★ Translation of advantages into actual prospect's benefits

Summarise

- ★ Summarise topics



Question & Answer Session

- ★ Encourage questions to reiterate important points

Close

- ★ Outline your action plan - what you want your prospects to do, based on what you have told them

MESSAGE

Your message is the core of your presentation - this is where you must be at your most persuasive. The definition of persuasion is “Causing someone to do something by argument, reasoning, or entreaty”. Most persuasion requires some form of evidence.

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Audiences process information in two ways – by responding emotionally to imagery or by using logic. Therefore you must address both ways of perceiving information - and you achieve this by using analogies to appeal to imagery and facts and figures to appeal to logic. You will never control your audience’s feelings and actions, but you can “plant” images and create feelings that lead to the actions.

THE THREE LAWS OF SUCCESSFULLY COMMUNICATING YOUR MESSAGE

To achieve a balance in your presentation – for every set of numbers, tell a story, and for every story present a set of numbers. This is called “*The law of variety*”.

Give facts and figures only for points that your audience may doubt - this is “*The law of stinginess*”.





A good presenter is always aware of his /her audience and alters delivery accordingly.

Present one point at a time, prove one point at a time, and use the most powerful facts and figures – Auxiliary law. In addition, also consider using the other two forms of “evidence”. Experience both your own and your audience’s and opinions of experts - but the opinions of experts outside your company.

DELIVERY

The delivery of a presentation is split into two parts – verbal and physical.

TIPS ON VERBAL DELIVERY

Gear your presentation to your audience, use familiar terminology and acronyms. Ensure that your voice level is sufficient for all to hear. Think about your attitude, because your confidence will make your presentation. Confidence is displayed in the words that you use and in the way in which you use your voice. A good presenter is always aware of his/her audience and alters delivery accordingly.

STEER CLEAR OF:

- ★ The use of unnatural terminology and acronyms
- ★ The use of destructive phrases and non-words – e.g. “OK”, “You Know”, etc.
- ★ Speaking too quickly
- ★ Speaking in monotone
- ★ The use of slang
- ★ Reading visuals
- ★ Addressing one person continuously



TIPS ON PHYSICAL DELIVERY

If you look and sound enthusiastic about your subject, the more your prospect/audience is likely to be.

Retain eye contact with your audience and they will always pay attention. Use large descriptive gestures, along with a big voice, to describe important points - your words and hand movements must carry throughout the room.

Enthusiasm really is infectious!

Stand straight, yet relaxed, move around the platform/room - do not hang on the podium/lectern.

Being aware of your audience will help to ensure that you have control of them. If they appear distracted or have lost interest, moving closer to them or using exaggerated gestures should regain their attention. Smile, as this will relax both you and the audience.

AVOID

- ★ Minimal eye contact
- ★ Small descriptive gestures
- ★ Distracting gestures
- ★ Poor posture
- ★ Untidy dress sense
- ★ An unsmiling attitude

Finally ... If you look and sound enthusiastic about your subject, the more your prospect/audience is likely to be. Enthusiasm really is infectious!





SPECIFIC TIPS FOR SEMINAR DELIVERY

- ★ Pitch Your Presentation for the Audience - not the subject matter
- ★ Sense how your audience is responding - and react accordingly
- ★ Ask questions - it encourages a certain amount of interaction
- ★ Always repeat questions back - to make sure that everyone has heard them
- ★ Address answers to everyone - not just the questioner
- ★ Use analogies in your presentation - make it fun to be there
- ★ Limit your use of visual aids – remember, if it is worth saying to the audience, say it!
- ★ Don't be afraid of silences - you can use them to emphasise a point or let the audience absorb an idea, while you check your notes
- ★ Try to speak as you would in normal conversation - with inflections and pauses, rather than speeding non-stop in a monotone
- ★ Talk to someone some of the time, talk to everyone all of the time
- ★ Remember you are selling:
 - Your solutions
 - Your company
 - Your services
 - Yourself – and one of the first tasks is to sell the attendees on wanting to listen

Start with the assumption that nobody wants to be there or to stay - this provides you with a good challenge.

INVOLVE YOUR AUDIENCE – REMEMBER:

- ★ Tell them what you are going to tell them
- ★ Tell them
- ★ Tell them what you have just told them





THE USE OF VISUALS

Generally people comprehend:

- ★ 11% of what they hear
- ★ 32% of what they see
- ★ 73% of what they see & hear
- ★ 90% of what they see hear & discuss

Visuals are not a crutch, but a way of re-enforcing your contact. Confucius said “One Picture Paints A Thousand Words”.

An effective “visual” presentation will:

Emphasise the highlights of your proposal and provide you with a guide and prompt

Plus:

- ★ Stimulate interest
- ★ Guide you - moreover, guide you logically
- ★ Be creative
- ★ Be specific

Visuals are not a crutch, but a way of re-enforcing your contact. Confucius said “*One Picture Paints A Thousand Words*”.

When creating visuals, try and anticipate areas where the audience may need “reassurances”. Dramatise important points that you want to get over ; but overall, know your audience and your position.





AND FINALLY - NINE GOLDEN RULES FOR THE EFFECTIVE HANDLING OF QUESTIONS

- ★ Welcome questions
- ★ Question questions
- ★ Be discreet
- ★ Keep it simple
- ★ Illustrate your answers
- ★ Never win an argument and lose your audience
- ★ If you don't know, don't bluster
- ★ Involve the audience
- ★ Summarise

And: **Stay in control!**

“BUTTERFLIES” CAN BE MADE TO FLY IN FORMATION

The first thing to remember is that anxiety or “nerves” - means you are alive and without them your resulting presentation would be like you - dead!

The first thing to remember is that anxiety or “nerves” means you are alive and without them your resulting presentation would be like you - dead!

What you need to do is learn to control your anxiety and use it to fuel your enthusiasm.

Identifying fears:

In order to control your anxiety, you must identify what it is that you are afraid of:

- ★ Is it forgetting your lines?
- ★ Is it the audience size?





Once you have established what exactly you are afraid of, then establish whether or not you can control it.

Once you have established what exactly you are afraid of, then establish whether or not you can control it.

Imagine you are the captain of an airliner - do you fear flying? Of course not, because you are in complete control of not only the aircraft, but also the crew and the passengers.

You have a flight plan and, before you take off, you know the payload, weather conditions for the flight, arrival time, departure time etc. However, what is most significant - you are familiar with flying, you are comfortable with all of that responsibility, because you have flown so many times before and you know virtually everything there is to know about that aircraft.

Therein lies the secret - the more presentations we deliver, the more accomplished we become. But, equally, we must know what we are talking about, we must know our subject matter inside out, otherwise our audience will find us out!

LET'S CONSIDER THE AREAS THAT YOU CAN CONTROL

- ★ Your audience - After all, you invited them
- ★ Your material - You designed it
- ★ Your resources - You chose to utilise them
- ★ Yourself - You're no puppet

If there are any areas you've identified that you can't control, forget them - it'll probably never happen.





CONTROLLING NERVES AND REDUCING ANXIETY

Organise - Give yourself plenty of time to prepare. Know what is going to happen and when. Take the time to rehearse your presentation - preferably with someone you know well. Get them to pride you with objective and constructive criticism.

Visualise - Get into the habit of visualising how the presentation will go, that way the environment will feel familiar, even if it's your first time. Imagine the end of your presentation and your audience smiling with appreciation.

Drying Up - Make bullet point notes on individual postcards to prompt you (not lengthy scripts) - you may not need them, but they will give you that "comfort zone". Do remember to number them though, just in case you accidentally shuffle them!

Get into the habit of visualising how the presentation will go -, that way, the environment will feel familiar even if it's your first time. Imagine the end of your presentation and your audience smiling with appreciation.

Relaxation - Before your presentation, take some time for yourself to relax, breathe slowly and deeply, go out into the fresh air and clear your head. Do not allow your mind to mentally rehearse the entire presentation, because you need simply to concentrate on your opening lines. Once you have successfully navigated your way through the first couple of minutes, you will begin to relax – a strong opening is crucial.

Warming Up - Clear your throat, practise your smile, drink some water to ensure you are hydrated, etc.

Dress appropriately and check your posture - If you look the part, everyone will assume you know what you are talking about anyway!



All professional salespeople have to be involved in a presentation at some time in their sales career.

Become mobile - It will keep your audience awake.
Use eye contact and smile - They can't fail to pay attention.

And finally - practice, practice, practice!

THE VERY BEST PRESENTERS ARE SEEKERS

All professional salespeople have to be involved in a presentation at some time in their sales career and "Top 5%" players present their proposals every time. When it comes to the enthusiasm that sales professionals have for making a presentation, they broadly fall into four categories:

The Avoider

An Avoider does everything possible to escape from having to stand in front of an audience. In some drastic cases, salespeople may seek positions that do not involve making presentations.

The Register

A Register is also extremely hesitant of speaking in public. However, Registers may not be able to avoid speaking as part of their job, but they never encourage it. When they do speak, they do so very reluctantly.

The Acceptor

The Acceptor will give presentations as part of their job, but does not seek opportunities to do so. Acceptors occasionally give a presentation and feel they did a good job. They even find that, once in a while, they are quite persuasive and enjoy the experience.





Any salesman or woman, who has ambitions to become the best in their sector or industry, will need to ensure that they can deliver dynamic, convincing and professional presentations, whenever they are called upon to do so.


The Seeker

A Seeker looks for opportunities to speak. They understand that anxiety can be a stimulant which fuels enthusiasm during a presentation. Seekers work at building their professional communication skills and self-confidence by speaking often.

IN SUMMARY

The reality is that making presentations is an essential sales skill and, as I highlighted earlier, "Top 5%" achievers are very good presenters. Any salesman or woman, who has ambitions to become the best in their sector or industry, will need to ensure that they can deliver dynamic, convincing and professional presentations, whenever they are called upon to do so.

Becoming a Seeker is a pre-requisite for success!



If you are in a competitive situation, find out when the other suppliers are scheduled to present and if possible, try to be the last presenter.

THE POWER OF A PERSUASIVE PRESENTATION

Sales presentations become so much more compelling at the point when you have identified and agreed all your prospects requirements, and have tailored your presentation so that it illustrates how you can completely satisfy their agreed requirements. If you can then add your unique strengths to what the prospect is looking for, your proposal becomes stronger and much more persuasive.

HERE ARE TEN SUGGESTIONS THAT WILL HELP IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANY PRESENTATION

1. Find out in advance how much time you'll have and plan that your presentation will take approximately 75% of the allocated time. This leaves sufficient time for questions and thorough handling of any objections that you may encounter.
2. If you are in a competitive situation, find out when the other suppliers are scheduled to present and, if possible, try to be the last presenter. The reason this can be so important is because your prospect can make a proper comparison of your presentation in light of your competitor's presentations ; they are better equipped to recognise the added value you provide. This also creates a stronger possibility that you can get a decision from them at the end of your meeting.



3. When structuring your presentation, start with a quick review of the prospects' goals and objectives and then list their agreed requirements. This will determine the sequence and structure for your presentation because, ultimately, you'll want to highlight how your solution meets each one of their requirements. During your fact-finding meeting you should have obtained a priority of their requirements, so that you can address their most important requirements first.
4. Throughout your presentation, incorporate relevant customer testimonials that validate the points you are making - and if you refer to research statistics, ensure that you quote the source.
5. At the beginning of your presentation, you want your prospect to be interested and compelled to listen to what you are about to present. That's why structuring your opening, in a format to appeal to all types of prospects, makes it easier for them to understand your message. Therefore, open your presentation by addressing 4 main questions:
 - ★ Why will the prospect benefit from your presentation/ products/services?
 - ★ What will be covered during your presentation?
 - ★ How will you be conducting your presentation?
 - ★ When will the prospect be able to ask questions?

This simple structure is based on David Kolb's work on learning styles, where he categorised people's ability to learn into four learning dimensions:

Ultimately, you'll want to highlight how your solution meets each one of their requirements.

- ★ Concrete experience - learning from specific experiences, relating to people, and sensitivity to feelings and people.
- ★ Reflective observation - careful observation before making a judgment. Viewing things from different perspectives and looking for the meaning of things.





- ★ Abstract conceptualisation - logical analysis of ideas, systematic planning, acting on intellectual understanding of a situation.
- ★ Active experimentation - ability to get things done, risk taking, influence people and events through action.

Bernice McCarthy developed “The 4MAT” system based around these four main learning styles, each of which asks different questions and displays different strengths during the learning process.

THE FOUR LEARNING STYLES ARE INTEGRATED INTO A CYCLICAL APPROACH THAT

Bernice McCarthy developed “The 4MAT” system based around these four main learning styles.

- ★ Begins by explaining **WHY** the audience will benefit from your presentation. This provides concrete motivation in an innovative way to create interest and an openness to want to hear what you have to say.
- ★ The process then continues by explaining **WHAT** you are going to talk about. This enables the audience to think through the concepts you are about to present and formulate them in an analytical way.
- ★ The next stage is the abstract conceptualisation stage that explains **HOW** you'll be delivering your presentation.
- ★ This then leads to the final stage - the active experimentation stage where you want to encourage IF questions, so they can apply what you have said to different contexts.





6. Use visuals in your presentations, because “a picture is worth a thousand words”. Support your important points with graphics and images, yet keep them simple to maintain interest while conveying relevance. This is particularly important if your prospect has a dominant Visual Communication Style.

Seek to gain agreement throughout your presentation, either non-verbally or by asking questions.


According to the Robbins Research Institute, they have identified the 12 most persuasive words to use when selling.

These are: Discover, Free, Guarantee, Love, Money, New, Proven, Safe, Save, You, Results and Exciting.

Combining some of these words into your visuals, as well as in what you are saying, will help ensure your prospect remains alert and interested.

7. A good presentation will clearly communicate all of your unique strengths and the reasons why you are their best choice. Ultimately, most prospects want to know two things:
 - **Can** you do what needs to be done?
 - **How** can you do it better than the other options we are considering?
8. Seek to gain agreement throughout your presentation, either non-verbally or by asking questions - for example "How does this sound?". After demonstrating a capability, you could ask "How would this be an improvement?" or "How would this help?" Interactive presentations keep prospects more involved and interested. Throughout your presentation, focus your attention on your prospect, checking that they are receiving your proposals positively.





This ensures that the flow of your message remains on track and you may have answered their objection during the process of presenting.

9. Handle small customer objections as they occur and agree to handle larger objections at the end of your presentation. This ensures that the flow of your message remains on track and you may have answered their objection during the process of presenting.
10. If your prospect is not in a position to make a decision at the end of your presentation, schedule another appointment. Come up with a reason to get back in there.

Even if the decision is not in your favour, you'll receive some valuable feedback that you can incorporate when you next present to other prospects.



JONATHAN FARRINGTON

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