

The Basis for Good Presentations

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The basis for Good Presentations is ... organising your material. And most presentations or speeches are comprised of three main sections:

- The opening,
- The body and
- The conclusion

No matter what you have to present it will go better if you organise the information to match these three principles. And each part of the presentation has an important role to play in ensuring that your audience gets the full impact.

The Opening

Audiences need to know right from the start exactly where you are going in your presentation; they need to know why you want them to spend 15 or 20 minutes listening to you. Why it is important and how relevant to them personally is the subject. Here is where they get that information. Right up Front.

So in the opening you will need to cover these elements:

- What subject you are about to cover
- Why it is important to your listeners, and
- How Relevant is it to them

For instance if you were giving a presentation about a new product your company has developed you would need to

- Briefly explain what the new product was
- Highlight what are its capabilities – what it is designed to do
- And why it would be helpful to this particular organisation.

It is not necessary to go into great detail at this point, it is more in the nature of teaser – engaging the listeners' attention and making them ready for more.

But to grab their attention we need something that shouts out "*Listen to me ... I have something important to say*" – so how can we do that?

Open with a question opening with a rhetorical question immediately engages the audience's attention, because our automatic response to being asked a question is to consider our answer. So a question such as "*Would you like more time to work on your business?*" will usually get everyone thinking about what they would do if they had more time.



Make the question pertinent to the topic and you will grab your audience's attention immediately. However, if you ask a question you should make sure that you pause before continuing on with the presentation. Otherwise you will find yourself talking over the listener's thinking time and they will miss some important points.

Use an appropriate quotation Quotations are extremely useful for summing up your whole topic in simple language. There are thousands of quotations available on line and there is bound to be a number that will encapsulate your message. Again, leave the audience time to think about it before continuing.

Shock them with Statistics Depending on the topic there will be some facts and figures that will startle and amaze your listeners – we begin our public speaking workshop with the words *“Research has shown that 60% of all business communication is ineffective”*.

Just startling them with statistics is good – but making it personal is even better. After we have told them that 60% of their communication is probably ineffective, we make it really personal by spelling it out in detail:

“That’s 60% of all the telephone calls you made yesterday; 60% of that business meeting you thought you had handled brilliantly – and of course 60% of all those face-to-face communications you had with your suppliers and staff – all those instructions and requests gone into a black hole.”

Unless we make the information personal our listeners will not bother to apply it to themselves – “it may be true for others; but not for me!” is the likely attitude.

Any one of these opening gambits will grab your audience's attention and get it focused on you and what you are going to say. Follow it up by briefly outlining the topic, its importance and relevance and you have opened with style.

The Body

Here is where the bulk of our work takes place. This is where the information is given that proves the logic of our arguments; where examples of what you are talking about will make it personal to the listeners. It is the ‘nitty gritty’ of the presentation. In the opening we engaged their interest – in the body of our presentation we need to establish our credibility.

So to achieve that, we need to be organised in our approach and ruthless in our planning. We need to decide what information is essential for our audience to be convinced about our position on this subject.

That will depend on what you want to achieve and how much time you have to achieve it in. It is not polite to go over time when you are breaking into another person's day. So careful planning is necessary to make sure that you get your point across in the time frame allowed.



There is one fact about people's ability to absorb information which is important to this planning process:

No one can remember more than three points." - Philip Crosby

No matter how enticingly you wrap them up – if you offer more than three points you will overwhelm your listeners and they will switch off.

So what are the three most important points that your audience needs to know to convince them of your point of view. These are the important elements that will lead them directly to achieve the aim of the presentation. And you may have to be ruthless in culling them down to the essential.

Once you have decided on the three most important points, arrange them in order of importance. Then work out what supporting information you will need to demonstrate the accuracy of your information and how to make it personal to the audience. Making it personal creates the willingness to be convinced that brings your listeners to agree with you.

Now you are ready for the final part of the presentation:-

The Conclusion

There is a great difference between a conclusion and an ending. An ending merely stops – but a conclusion brings the presentation to a well rounded end finishing with a rousing call to arms.

All presentations are given for a reason, and you will have briefly covered that in the opening – the **Why** this is important and **How** it is relevant to your listeners. Here is where; after all the facts and figures, the quotations, the anecdotes and personal experiences you tell them what you want them to do with all that information.

Moving into the conclusion gives you an opportunity to recap the three main points of your body. Just briefly restate them and then it's the flag waving finale. What do you want them to do? Sign the contract, buy the product, support your petition, join your crusade or go home and change their behaviour – what ever it is it will need a call to arms.

A great way to engage the audience is to bring the presentation back to the opening gambit. If you have asked a question then, ask it again now. Is there a different answer your audience might give? If you started with an appropriate quotation how does that reflect the information you have given; and if you shocked them with statistics – how does what you have just covered affect them.

You should not be diffident about your required outcome; if you have organised your information and ideas correctly your audience will be probably asking themselves "*What can I do now?*" - it is your role to tell them.



But there is one last thing you need to do before you go out to dazzle and amaze them with your presentation – you need to practice it, not just once or twice but enough times for you to get a real feel for what you are going to say. And more importantly the time in which you are going to say it in.

Remember that you will be taking time out of a busy executive's day, and if you run overtime they may cut you off. In which case that brilliant conclusion with its clarion call to arms will be lost. You will not achieve the outcome you wanted and you will have wasted not only their time but also your own.

So, practice it and time it – and if it is over, sit down and plan where to cut out information while still keeping that which is essential for the understanding of the topic. Honing the presentation in this way will really help you focus on what is absolutely essential.

When you are practising for time – aim to bring the presentation in at least one minute under time. That will allow for a degree of interaction which could otherwise force you to run over.

The secret of great presentations is in the organisation and the planning. Without giving due care and attention to these you run the risk of delivering a presentation that fails to deliver the objective.

So What's Next?

So now you have the presentation all organised and ready to go – what else do you need? Well you know what you have to say – what about **How to say it?**

How about some practical tips on improving your presentation style?

We can do that for you:

Trischel runs two workshops which are designed to help you present with panache!

If you have not had much experience in public speaking, then the **One Day Public Speaking Workshop** is ideal for you. Here you will learn techniques to conquer fear; you will learn more about the need to structure your presentation, and the platform skills you will need to engage the audience's interest and commitment.

If you already feel comfortable with public speaking but feel that your presentation techniques need improvement then why not consider our **Presentation Skills Workshop**, where you will come to understand the basic differences between communication styles; realise that PowerPoint is only a tool not the whole thing as well as receive feedback from our highly experienced trainers.

Whichever is the next step for you, you can be assured that Trischel will be able to assist you to achieve it.

