



How to Deliver an Effective Presentation

Tips for Coverts Cooperators

Adapted from: "Presentation Skills for the Interpretive Naturalist", Interpreters Handbook Series, Kathleen Regnier, Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman, University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point

Setting the Stage

You begin "speaking" to your audience long before you utter your first words.

- Be appropriately groomed and dressed, with an alert, confident posture. Let your appearance assure the audience that you are competent.
- Be a good host. Arrive before your audience in time to ready equipment, prepare props and check everything.
- Be ready to make as many acquaintances as possible when the audience first arrives. This helps you make last minute changes to make sure your talk is relevant to your audience.
- Come prepared. You should know your subject so well that you can concentrate your delivery and respond to your audience.

Your Beginning

The first thirty seconds of your talk are critical in establishing rapport. You need to project warmth, confidence and competence. You should have practiced your talk so that it flows easily.

Don't put barriers between you and your audience. Don't stand behind a podium or table. Meet the audience standing upright with a smile and eye to eye contact. Be casual but not sloppy. Don't sit down or stand with your hands in your pockets. You shouldn't be too formal though with hands behind you, wooden posture and gloomy expression.

Notes

Don't write out your talk. At most have an outline on a notecard to keep you on track. If you need a cue to get back on track, simply pause look at your notecard and carry on. Make this act seem natural.

Don't memorize your talks. It will prevent a fresh spontaneous delivery. Keep the main points in mind and you will easily remember the examples to illustrate them.

Voice

Talk with the same conversational inflections that you would use with a group of friends. Talk spontaneously and with simple directness.

- Your voice is an instrument. You have pitch, rate and volume.
- Orchestrate your talk with a contrast of high and low notes. Use the full range of your voice. Emphasize some parts of your talk with slow, deliberate pace. Breeze through other parts lightly.

- Moments of silence can be used to set off main points of your talk. Pauses are like speed bumps on a road; they alert your audience that something important is coming.

The Words You Use

Well chosen words create vivid images. The time you spend choosing words will be appreciated by your audience.

- Be specific.
- Avoid fillers.
- For more effective imagery use active verbs, specific, concrete nouns, familiar people and places and personal language.

Body Language

Communicate through facial expressions. Some experts claim that fifty-five percent of understanding from messages is from facial expressions, not words. Make friendly eye contact with everyone.

- Communicate through posture.
- Avoid distracting mannerisms. Guard against weight shifting, body rocking, table leaning, arm swinging, hand hiding, clothes fidgeting, foot scuffling
- Communicate through gestures. Punctuate and describe points in the program with your hands. Use natural, unexaggerated gestures. Be tasteful and understated.
- Walk with purpose.

Props

- People pay attention to things they are curious about. Props heighten curiosity, especially when used provocatively.
- Mounted specimens are effective props. Props can give you credibility.
- Keep these tips in mind when using props:
- People respond to familiar objects when they are used in innovative ways.
 - Colors draw attention
 - Involve different senses with props
 - Involve people with props
 - People are drawn to historical artifacts

Humor

Humor should only be used if it illustrates an important point.

Questioning

- Questions can be used if they serve several purposes. They stimulate interest. They help organize program. They encourage creative thinking. They emphasize important points. They offer visitors a chance to share thoughts and feelings.

- Focus Questions, the most basic kind of questions ask for specific information. They often begin with “who, what, or where.”
- Process Questions have a wider scope of possible responses than focus questions. Process questions ask people to integrate information rather than just remembering or describing.
- Evaluative questions usually deal with matters of value, choice or judgement of the participants. They offer group members a chance to express their feelings. Not all questions require a verbal response from visitors. Rhetorical questions are asked when you don't expect visitors to answer aloud.

Tips for Questioning

1. Direct most questions to the entire audience rather than a single individual. This indicates to the group that everyone is expected to think.
2. Ask only one question at a time.
3. Allow time for an answer. This is called “wait-time.” Research has shown the longer the questioner allows for an answer, the better the answer will be. Never answer your own questions. If no one offers a response, leave it open to be answered later or rephrase the question.
4. Do not start a question with “does anyone know...” or “Can anyone tell me...” Such phrases express doubt that the question can be answered.
5. Pace questions to the ability of the group.
6. Develop ideas and concepts through a series of questions. Build from focus questions to process questions to evaluative questions. This challenges your group to higher levels of thinking.
7. Accept answers to questions gracefully, even if the answers are wrong. Never make someone feel foolish for participating in the program.
8. Finally, avoid questions that require a simple yes or no.

Structuring Your Presentation

Step 1: POW

Capture the group's attention with a provocative introduction.

An introduction does two things. It promises your listeners a rewarding experience and it introduces your talk theme.

You can be startling or humorous, a rhetorical question or an apt quotation. Your goal is provocation. You need to grab your audience with your first words.

Step 2: Bridge

Answer the questions, "Why was that said?" and "What does it mean to me?"

Bridges connect the introduction to the body of the talk and to the interests of the audience. Bridges would answer the question, "OK, you have my attention, but what's your purpose? Why should I care?"

Step 3: Body

Illustrate the main message of your program with examples. Listeners enjoy personalized "for instances."

Your theme serves as the skeleton to which you attach your ideas. The body is made up of facts and for instances that flesh out your theme. Without a theme the body of your talk will be flabby and shapeless with little appeal to your audience.

With your main points outlined, you now must decide how to illustrate them. To be effective, every main idea presented should be illustrated in some way. Use visual aids, such as props, slides or other audio visual devices. Create mental images through metaphor and analogy, guided imagery or storytelling. Involve the audience physically. Make sure you breathe life into cold dead abstraction.

Step 4: Conclusion

Conclude your presentation by summarizing or giving a call to action. Answer the question, "So What?"

Your conclusion should tell the listener you are done. It can be a call to action or can summarize your main points. It might be a thought provoking quote or a dramatic ending for emotional impact.

Checklist for Presenting Your Slide / PowerPoint Talk

1. Do not refer to each slide as it appears on the screen. Let the slide illustrate what you are talking about. For example, do not say “this is a tree.” Use as little text in your slides as possible – images speak better than words. Your role is to tell the story that the slides illustrate.
2. Verbally anticipate the next slide so you don’t have to wait for it to appear as a cue before you advance to your point.
3. Under most circumstances display a slide on the screen no longer than 10-15 seconds. The audience will begin to study it and stop listening to your point.
4. Never apologize for your slides or your program. It will make the audience uncomfortable.
5. Face your audience from the front of the room. Don’t turn your back on them to look at slides as you talk.
6. Develop a rhythm when changing slides. Change the tempo to suit the storyline and action sequences.
8. Calmly fix problems. Be prepared to give your talk verbally, without images. It happens! Proceed calmly and act like it’s no problem. Never let them see you sweat!
9. Try to involve people’s senses and feelings through: (a.) dissolving slides (b.) a sequence of action slides, or (c.) creative use of sounds and music.
10. Use close-ups frequently. They have more impact.
12. Use a pointer for maps and charts.
13. Don’t crowd too much material (graphs, etc.) on one slide. It will appear small and cluttered.

The Basics

1. Most slide programs should last one-half hour or less.
2. A one-half hour program should as a rule contain more than 45 slides and less than 90 slides.
3. Know your equipment and how to repair it quickly.
4. Always adjust the LCD projector so that images do not spill off the screen.
5. Always preview your presentation to make sure the equipment is functioning
6. Use quality photos and make sure to credit photographers.