

Persuasive Presentation Skills

Top tips for your presenting success!



Analysis

A presentation is any form of communication where you are trying to influence your audience to change their behaviour.

Start every presentation by applying the 5 Step Analysis

1. Topic
2. Goal
3. Purpose
4. Leading Statement
5. Think/Feel/Do

Remember your goal in a presentation is, 'To convince'.

Remember your purpose for your presentation is always stated from your audience's perspective – from the second position. It's the 'sexy' title of your presentation!

Your leading statement is your key message. It's the thing you really want your audience to believe.

Your audience will be thinking, feeling and doing something as they sit down in your audience. We call this their current state. Every time you present you want your audience to think, feel and do something. We call this your desired state. Your role as the presenter is to shift your audience from their current to your desired state.

If you take the time to get to know your audience, you will feel much more confident in your delivery of your presentation.

Design your presentation

Make sure you use an audience-focused model rather than presenter-focused for structuring your presentations.

Use the four questions that form the basis of Dr Bernice McCarthy's 4Mat System when structuring your message. The questions are *Why?*, *What?*, *How?* and *What if?* or *What else?*

Storyboarding is a tool used in conjunction with the 4Mat System for designing your presentation in a minimum amount of time. Storyboarding ensures you capture all your critical ideas quickly and succinctly and prevents procrastination. It is a memory tool, so it reduces your need for notes and allows you to connect with your audience.

Make sure you use post-it notes when you storyboard: they will help you to speed up the process and to remember your points.

Script your presentation using the 13-steps

Consider the 13 Steps to Exceptional Presentation Design, so you know what to say to an audience and maximise the likelihood of changing their behaviour.

Use the 13 Steps to Exceptional Presentation Design in the correct order unless you think that swapping the order will further increase your ability to influence your audience to do what you want.

Ensure you open your presentation in a way that builds rapport. Inclusive statements reflect what your audience already knows to be true and therefore they help you build strong rapport.

Remember to motivate your audience using the WIIFM (What's In It For Me) language pattern: reduce, maintain and improve.

Manage audience objections using the POO technique: state the objection, say 'and', 'so' or pause, lead to your solution and finish with the word 'because' and a justification.

Control and relax your audience using frames that set the boundaries.

Explain your credibility in the framing section to give confidence to your audience. Remember to link your credibility to your audience's pain.

Cover the 'what?' and 'how?' sections of your presentation as thoroughly as your audience needs.

The audience may well have forgotten most of what you have said by the time you get to the end, so remember to articulate your three key messages in your summary – something from the why? what? and how?.

It's important to call your audience to action so they know what to do next. Be really direct, clear and explicit.

The Q&A is an opportunity for you to showcase your professional expertise. The Q&A can be just as controlled as the rest of your presentation if you include an x, y, and z.

If you don't know the answer to a question, don't fake it!

Remember to include the negative and positive consequences before your close and say 'if' and 'when' rather than 'if' and 'if'.

Don't say 'thank you' at the end.

Closing statements are designed to conclude your presentation with a sizzle!

If you are really keen to engage your audience it's a good idea to at least try to deliver your presentation without using any notes or slides as a crutch.

If you forget a point, don't apologise or make a big deal about the fact you have forgotten. Take a deep breath, drink some water, check your notes and just keep going!

Watch your language!

Try to pause and breathe diaphragmatically instead of using filler words that break rapport with your audience.

Ensure the words you say help your audience to agree rather than disagree with you. Try to avoid saying 'okay', 'basically', 'obviously', 'you know?' and 'alright?'

Use audience-focused, 2nd position, inclusive language throughout your presentations, such as 'you', 'your', 'our', 'together', 'we'.

Try some definite language like 'It is', 'I know', 'It will', so you appear confident and sure of yourself.

Power words can help you increase the strength of your message.

Consider using linguistic devices such as alliteration, tricolon, epistrophe, conduplicatio, anaphora and rhetorical questions to ensure your messages are even more memorable for your audience.

The art of storytelling

Stories have been with us since time began. They are a wonderful way for you to convey your message so your audience finds you interesting and engaging. Stories are best told using the Magic Formula Story, with an incident, point, benefit, if they are to captivate your audience.

Remember to add effective stories in a variety of places in your presentation.

Metaphors and analogies are more memorable than simple facts or statistics, and our job as the presenter is to make our message memorable for the audience.

Humour can be anything from a cheeky smile through to a one-liner. Well-used humour is engaging, interactive and a delight for your audience. Just be careful you use it wisely.

Exaggeration is the expansion or reduction of the details of a situation and belongs in the middle rather than the opening or close of your presentation.

Warm up your mind

It's important to warm up your mind, your body and your voice before presenting.

Rehearsal is a good way to warm up your mind and the more you rehearse the more unscripted and natural you will sound.

Rehearsing is not the same as rote learning. Rote learning is where you learn your script word for word and rehearsing is where you run through your key messages using different words each time.

Find a variety of places to rehearse so the room you actually present in is just one more location.

Harness the power of positive thinking to keep control of your nerves.
Find a word other than nervous so you reframe the experience and make presenting a positive experience: change the word and change the experience.
Your core question is the deep, inner question that is driving your presentation. Regardless of your preference for perfection or excellence, be sure that you have a core question that enables you to be your best.
Warm up your body and your voice
In our society we tend to associate credibility and authority with people who have a rich, resonant, vocal quality. Vocal warm-ups create a rich, resonant voice.
Your voice is a powerful tool that must be warmed up to ensure you perform at your best and so you don't injure yourself. You can warm up your vocal quality and your articulation with a variety of exercises, such as the tense and relax, kiss/grin, and tongue twisters.
If you warm up your voice your mind and your body, you will come across as credible and persuasive, and be more likely to get what you want.
Connect with your audience
Extending the Self as an effective way to manage your nerves and connect beautifully with your audience. Extending the Self takes your focus off your nerves and places your attention on the audience, which in turn enhances your connection or rapport with them. To Extend the Self, simply imagine there is a bubble around you and your audience. You are in the bubble too. Connect with every individual in the audience one at a time.
Use the star method of making eye contact.
Be sure to look at everyone when you present, even the people not looking at you.
Voice
A smooth, confident voice is within us all. When our voice sounds confident, our audience is more likely to relax and listen.
Use the most appropriate vocal variety for the message. If you want to be engaging and convincing when you speak, strive for a variety of natural pitch, speed and volume.
Pitch is the highs and lows in your voice. Aim for high and low pitch.
Speed is all the different tempos between fast and slow. Aim for a variety of fast and slow.
Volume is the loud and soft extremes. Aim for loud and soft.

Pause is powerful and necessary for your audience. Pausing is where your audience catches up with you!

Pausing will help you breathe deeply and diaphragmatically, which helps you relax and maintain control of yourself as you present.

The best sound system is the one the audience doesn't notice. A lapel microphone projects your voice so you don't need to strain, and it projects a pleasant, even, smooth sound so it's easier for your audience to listen to you.

Clip-on mics should be clipped onto your belt, so remember to wear a belt.

Rehearse with the microphone if you can.

If you have more than one presenter, ensure you have two microphones and have the second person wired up well before you finish your presentation.

Body Language

It's important to give appropriate eye contact to individual members of your audience.

Your body also plays a fundamental role in the believability of your message. Make sure you use your movements to reinforce your points.

Focus on the different members of your audience as much as possible and, importantly, as much as they need you to.

At the start and finish, and when you are under pressure in your presentation, try the natural stance — feet under your hips, brace muscles engaged.

The two main types of gestures are informal and formal. Informal gesturing is where you talk with your hands. Formal gesturing is rehearsed and involves lots of air under the armpits. Formal gestures can replace PowerPoint slides.

Put your hands down by your side and clean the slate between all your gestures to give the audience a visual break every now and then.

Your audience's left is their past; their right is their future; and the centre of the room is the centre of intelligence, where you deliver your important facts and data.

Do what's necessary with your body to maximise the chances of influencing your audience.

Make sure you smile when necessary to convey the appropriate emotional objective.

Engage & Entertain

Audiences are made up of people with a variety of personality filters, which explains how we process and sort information. Some important filters that you should understand and pay attention to when you are delivering a presentation are the visual, auditory and kinesthetic filters.

You can use a variety of methods stimulate the visual, auditory and kinesthetic preferences of your audience members.

Music can be effective in creating the perfect mood for a presentation. Consider how you might use it in your next meeting or conference.

Dealing with difficult people

Pay attention to disruptive behaviour and nip it in the bud as soon as you can to ensure the smooth running of your meeting or presentation.

Presenters can cause both positive and negative ripples in their audience. Excellent presenters send out hundreds of positive ripples in a single event: they compliment, smile, acknowledge and give status to the audience. Unskilled presenters can cause many negative ripples in their presentation: they demonstrate rudeness and insensitivity, and ignore or offend the audience. Skilled presenters can counteract a negative ripple with some positive ripples.

Strategies to help manage disruptive behaviour include:

- building and maintaining rapport with the audience
- getting audience members to turn to a friend for discussion
- using your own physical proximity to the person causing the disruption
- handing over to the audience for short discussion to distract from the behaviour
- calling the behaviour — though you need to be skilled to pull this off
- ignoring the problem in the hope it will go away
- pre-framing to distract a likely trouble-causer before the presentation begins

Visual Aids

Slides can cause 'death by PowerPoint' — be careful to use them wisely!

PowerPoint Tip: Use dark text on a light background, at least 30 points in size in a legible type like Times New Roman or Verdana.

PowerPoint Tip: Don't use underlining, italics, bold or shadow on your fonts. Only use key words on your slides.

PowerPoint Tip: Change the colour of the font if you need a word to further stand out.

PowerPoint Tip: Replace words with pictures as often as possible.

PowerPoint Tip: Colour code graphs so people see the point of the graph easily from a distance.

PowerPoint Tip: Use beautiful, clever graphics, not overused, tired ones. Ensure your transitions from one slide to the next don't distract.

PowerPoint Tip: Sound clips should add value not distract from the message.

PowerPoint Tip: Arrive early and set up your room, and keep the lights on unless you mean for your audience to bond with your screen.

PowerPoint Tip: Manage distractions in the room; tape down your power cords.

PowerPoint Tip: Interplay the slides, the space, the message and your personal brand — the computer's 'B' key will help you do this.

PowerPoint Tip: Remember to rehearse with your slides.

PowerPoint Tip: Reduce your use of the laser pointer —it can be distracting for your audience. Instead colour-code your slides and refer to the item by colour.

Aim to use flipcharts and whiteboards to add an organic element to your presentation.

PowerPoint Tip: Get what you want from your audience by connecting with the people and using your slides and other visual aids to captivate and influence them.

Distractions are distracting! So remove as many of them as you can.

Room Set Up

Ensure your audience is as comfortable in your environment as possible. Pay attention to chair style, temperature and catering.

In meetings always seat the audience with their backs to distractions like a breathtaking view or glass walls.

Consider requesting the room set-up you desire. You might just get what you want.

Get some positive feedback

Many people fear public speaking because they focus too much on their negative points and their nervousness rather than on their positive attributes.

Whoever you are, you are wonderful! Remember that and let your positive attributes as a presenter shine through.

Setting up a positive feedback system (using a model like the 4 Step Feedback Model) can help you learn about what you are doing well. This can be terrific for your self-confidence.