

10 Top tips for effective presentations

Introduction

According to research the fear of speaking in public beats the fear of almost anything!!

Whether you're running your own business, a student, in employment or looking for a job – one thing is for sure, you'll have to deliver a 'presentation' at some point. Don't be fooled into thinking that its only a presentation if you are standing at the front of a room with a screen behind you and bright lights from a projector blinding your eyes! Instead, there are benefits to viewing any situation where you are delivering information to other people as a presentation. Read on to find out the 10 top tools for Effective Presentations, and discover how to become more powerful, memorable and dynamic when you are 'presenting' to other people.

1. Always be clear about your objective

You'll have heard the phrase 'if you don't know where you're going, how will you know when you're there'? How true is that of presentations? Be crystal clear in your own mind of what you're trying to achieve – and then the rest will follow. Remember Stephen Covey's '7 Habits of Highly Effective People' – habit number 2 is to 'begin with the end in mind'.

2. Use mind-mapping to get your ideas down on paper

Tony Buzan, the father of mind-mapping said that mind mapping gives you 'the freedom to roam the infinite expanses of your brain'. Lists create order and are somewhat restrictive at a time when you need to be creative. Try mind mapping as a way of recording all the ideas you have for your presentation. Don't worry about the running order – just get it down on paper!

3. Spend time working on your curtain-raiser!

Your presentation needs a beginning, middle and end. Beginnings are traditionally lacking in attention, so stand out from the crowd by taking the time to think through how you are going to engage the people you are talking to right from the very beginning. The audience need to know 'what's in it for them'. Why should they listen to what you're about to say? How can you get them interested straight away? A story? A quotation? An anecdote? A joke? A shocking fact.....



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4. Add interest to the presentation

What you say isn't going to be enough to keep people engaged. You need to think about **how** you are going to get your message across. The facts are rarely good enough to stand alone. You need to add interest by using examples, describing your own experiences, highlighting success stories or examples when something 'went wrong'. Bring the presentation to life with pictures, demonstrations and 'exhibits' that can be passed around.

5. Engage the senses

People will take in information from your presentation by using their senses. The more senses you can engage, the more people will be able to remember of what you had to say. You should attempt to provide information in an auditory, visual and kinaesthetic way. In other words give people something to hear, see and touch. If you can engage with their feelings too then their recollection will be even more vivid.

6. Use your voice like a musical instrument

Talking to people in a formal setting is not like having a chat in the corridor! You need to work on your vocal delivery to add interest, impact and dynamism! Punctuate what you are saying with pauses! Don't be afraid of silence – people need a break from your voice! Consciously work on the speed to match the message you are delivering. Slow down to emphasise a point and speed up to add some excitement! Experiment with volume – lowering your voice is a useful way of getting everyone to hang on your every word; raising your voice slightly can show that you are starting a new theme.



7. Use visual aids to enhance not repeat what you're saying!

Visuals should draw people to the key points; they shouldn't be a word for word duplicate of what you are saying. They are useful for showing something that is difficult to describe; they can be a useful way of summarising the main points that have been covered; they can help the audience see how you have structured your talk. Avoid too many words, check they can be seen, avoid spelling mistakes and don't use jargon.



Serene provides effective communication and powerful presentation courses that provide practical help to make your presentations memorable and increase your own skills and confidence.

8. Check body language

It's not just your words that communicate your message, it's your body language too. People should be able to connect with you personally, even though they might not actually speak to you during the presentation. Your body language needs to be 'open' and 'engaging'. Eye contact with as many of the audience as possible is essential. Look confident – keep an upright stance, even if you are sitting. Avoid crossing your arms and put down anything that makes you 'fiddle' (pens etc). Smile!

9. Knock 'em dead with your question-handling

Most people hate taking questions in case someone asks a difficult one! You have got a great opportunity to impress via professional and confident question handling. Rack your brains beforehand to see if you can anticipate what might be asked; smile and thank people who ask questions – repeating the question for everyone to hear if necessary; answer the question when you are sure that you've understood the question; if a question is tricky, consider bouncing it back to the group to seek other views!

10. Control your nerves by being well prepared

There's nothing worse (well almost nothing!) than giving a presentation that you've not had time to prepare for. So, always prepare, plan and practice beforehand. Literally speak the words out loud to check pronunciation and tongue twisters. If you find your nerves getting the better of you beforehand, try a simple breathing exercise: breath in for 3 counts; hold for 3 counts; breath out for 3 counts; wait for 3 counts; then repeat.



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Miranda has been working with Serene Communications since 2002. She is an inspiring, creative and engaging training professional. Her skills lie in designing and delivering interactive and enjoyable learning experiences. Feedback from learners endorses her friendly and approachable style – people look forward to attending her programmes and leave with skills and approaches that are immediately transferable to their roles.

She combines her passion for people development with her desire to see individuals transform their lives and achieve their potential. She is regularly asked to speak at business conferences and networking events.



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