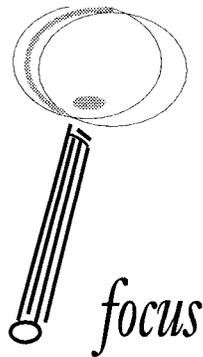


1

Get Ready to Make Successful Presentations



Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Describe the elements of a successful presentation.
- State the benefits of learning to make effective presentations.
- State the key actions for ensuring that a presentation is successful.
- Identify your goals for this course.

In today's competitive business world, you need all the skills you can muster to get ahead. One important skill is the ability to make presentations that communicate what you know clearly and persuasively. A carefully prepared, well-delivered presentation can inform, convince, and excite people in a way that written documents and other forms of communication are unable to match.

This course provides practical strategies for making presentations that achieve results. In this chapter, you'll begin by looking at reasons why some presentations fail to achieve their objectives and examining the elements of a successful presentation. You'll examine the benefits of learning to make presentations and preview the key actions for making sure your presentations achieve specific objectives. Finally, you will identify your goals for this course.

ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION

What makes one presentation successful and another a dismal failure? Is a good presentation one in which you get through all the information in the allotted time? When the audience laughs at the right moments? When no one gets up and leaves in the middle?

an evaluation of what their audience already knows, needs to know, and wants to know.

Organizing Information Effectively

If a poorly organized journal article is confusing and difficult to read, you can read it over and over again until you get the message. With a presentation, you only have one chance to "get it." It's the presenter's job to organize the information so you can follow and understand the points as they are presented.

Successful presenters create an outline that follows logically from point to point. They include supporting statements or evidence for their main points so that listeners can easily follow the rationale for the main argument the speaker is trying to convey.

Choosing the Right Amount of Information

Presenters who overestimate what can reasonably be covered in the amount of presentation time they have often ruin their presentation by speeding up their delivery or skipping important points.

Successful presenters understand that an audience can take in only so much information. They carefully estimate how much information they can include without "overloading" the audience. They use practice sessions to check their timing and adjust the content as needed.

Starting and Ending on Time

There can be many reasons why a presentation fails to start on time. Two of the most common are that audience members arrive late or that equipment is not working properly. Presentations go into overtime when presenters try to cover too much information, allow discussions or question and answer sessions to ramble, or feel they need to make up for a late start.

But presenters have a responsibility to respect the audience's need to adhere to a time schedule. Successful presenters know that it's unfair to ask people to come on time just to sit around and wait, or to expect them to pay attention when the presentation runs too long.

Speaking to Be Heard and Understood

Imagine trying to watch a play in which the actors mumbled and stared at their feet. It would be difficult or impossible to follow. In the same way, an audience needs to be able to hear and understand a presenter's words. If the presenter speaks indistinctly or too softly, talks to her notes, or faces the flip chart instead of the audience, the message may be lost completely.

Successful presenters practice their presentations aloud. They speak loudly enough to be heard and slowly enough so the audience can follow without falling asleep. They use a conversational tone. They pronounce words clearly and distinctly.

Choosing the Right Presentation Aids

Carefully prepared and carefully used presentation aids, such as overhead transparencies, computerized slides, handouts, and videos, can add interest and help the audience understand the points.

Too many presentation aids, visuals crammed with tiny type, or slides flashing by every 15 seconds are distracting and confusing. Experienced presenters make sure that each presentation aid serves a useful purpose. They keep presentation aids simple and clear. They make sure the audience knows where to look at any given time. They always have backup plans in case equipment malfunctions.

Communicating Confidently

Successful presenters establish rapport right away and maintain that rapport throughout the presentation. They project the sense of confidence that comes from careful planning and preparation. They know how to reduce and control the symptoms of anxiety and nervousness.

BENEFITS OF LEARNING TO GIVE SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATIONS

The good news is that anyone who is willing to devote the necessary time and attention can reap the benefits of learning to give successful presentations. That's what Ricardo learned from his boss, LuAnn.

Everyone knows that Ricardo can be relied on to do the best job possible in any situation. That's one reason LuAnn decided to promote him to the new position of department spokesperson. Ricardo was pleased with his promotion--until he discovered that he would have to make a monthly presentation to division heads. "No way," he told LuAnn. "I'm no good at talking in front of people. I just can't do it."

LuAnn understood Ricardo's concern. It wasn't that long ago she'd had to overcome her own reluctance to give presentations. "But then," she told Ricardo, "I thought about all the ways in which being able to give successful presentations would be helpful to me." LuAnn told Ricardo that learning to make presentations helped her in these ways:

- **Increased ability to communicate ideas and information.** The ability to communicate clearly in a wide range of situations is essential for almost any job. Presentations are the most effective and efficient methods for communicating certain kinds of information.
- **Increased opportunities for career advancement.** Delivering successful presentations increases your visibility by helping people get to know you and what you can do. The hard work you put into learning presentation skills will help you achieve your career goals.
- **Increased self-confidence.** Every new skill increases self-confidence, especially when learning the new skill means challenging yourself to overcome reluctance or fear.



Apply What You Learn

Instructions: Consider the work you do now and your career goals. Do you currently give presentations? How often? Are you considering a position that requires giving presentations? In what ways will learning to give successful presentations benefit you?

KEY ACTIONS FOR MAKING SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATIONS

Ricardo considered LuAnn's reasons for learning to make successful presentations. Finally, he said, "You're right. This is something I have to learn to do. But I'm not sure where to begin. Knowing *why* I want to be able to deliver presentations is one thing--knowing *how* to make them is another."

"No problem," LuAnn said. "I'll be glad to teach you what I know."

LuAnn explained that an interesting, dynamic, informative presentation is the result of careful thinking, attention, and hard work. "A good presentation," she said, "looks easy. The presenter is relaxed, the information seems to flow, all the parts fit together neatly. But that doesn't just happen. In fact, the easier it looks, the more attention the presenter paid to the three key actions for making a successful presentation."

LuAnn described the three key actions to Ricardo. They are the key actions you will learn in this course and described below.

Planning the Presentation

Careful planning improves your chances for success in most activities. For example, you're more likely to achieve the goals of a project if you develop and follow an action plan. In the same way, it takes careful planning to ensure that your presentations meet the audience's needs and achieve your objectives.

To plan a presentation, you need to follow these five steps:

- Evaluate the audience.
- Determine what you want to accomplish.
- Select the best type of presentation for the audience and the situation.
- Decide what information to include and organize it in the most effective way.
- Identify information that can be explained, illustrated, clarified, or reinforced with the help of presentation aids.

It doesn't matter how long your presentation is, or how complicated--even a five-minute talk needs careful planning.

Preparing for the Presentation

Once you have developed a presentation plan, you need to prepare for the presentation. You'll expand your presentation outline into a set of notes--or, occasionally, a script--that includes an introduction, transitions, and a closing. You'll design any activities you plan to use. You'll prepare materials and presentation aids.

The preparation process also includes setting up or becoming familiar with the room in which you'll deliver your presentation and deciding how to handle questions. Finally, you increase your chances of success by anticipating problems, taking steps to avoid and reduce them when possible, and creating backup plans.

When you've planned and prepared carefully, you can enter the presentation room relaxed and confident.

Delivering the Presentation

Last--but far from least--is the delivery itself. The planning and preparation you've done will give you an excellent foundation for delivering an interesting, dynamic presentation. Now you need to focus your attention on communicating clearly and making sure the presentation runs smoothly.

Effective delivery starts with effective practice. You need practice to learn the material and the sequence. During practice sessions you can check the timing and your delivery technique.

When you deliver the presentation, you want to be sure to speak clearly, control your tone, pace, and volume, and use effective body language. You'll also use presentation aids so they enhance the presentation and manage the group to keep the presentation on track.

SO WHY ARE YOU TAKING THIS COURSE?

We all have certain characteristics, skills, and abilities that make it easier to do certain things. Some of us are good at math, some can write poetry, and some can hit a home run. Some of us speak several languages and others can write computer programs. But even when we don't do those things easily, we all have certain characteristics that make it possible for us to learn.

You might feel that you have characteristics that make you a "natural" presenter. Or you might feel that making presentations is especially difficult for you. Nevertheless, it's useful to identify the characteristics you possess that can help you as a presenter, and then identify the skills and abilities you need to develop.



Think About It . . .

Instructions: Identify some of your characteristics that are or will be helpful to you as a presenter. Rate yourself on the following continuum.

Do you have a naturally strong voice? **rarely** 1 2 3 4 5 **frequently**

Are you well organized? **rarely** 1 2 3 4 5 **frequently**

Do you generally communicate well with others? **rarely** 1 2 3 4 5 **frequently**

Are you a good teacher? **rarely** 1 2 3 4 5 **frequently**

Now think about specifics.

When you speak to a group, what do you find easy?

Are you knowledgeable about a particular area or aspect of your business or profession?

Is your appearance businesslike or professional?

Now imagine that you have to give a presentation in two weeks. What would you like to learn that will improve your ability to give successful presentations? Use the checklist in Exhibit 1-1 to identify your goals for this course.

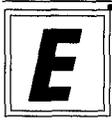


Apply What You Learn

Instructions: During this course, you will be given the opportunity to plan and prepare a 10-20 minute presentation.

Describe the topic of your presentation on the lines below. If there is no specific presentation you need to give, select a topic on which you could speak. (Select a topic that you know well.)

Topic for my presentation:

**Exhibit 1-1****My Goals For This Course**

Check the boxes to indicate what you would like to learn in this course. When you're finished, put a (X) next to the three items that represent your three most important goals.

When I complete this course, I would like to be able to (check all that apply):

- Use my presentation time efficiently without feeling rushed.
- Feel comfortable and in control of the situation when I give a presentation.
- Control any symptoms of nervousness (dry mouth, shaking hands, etc.) I experience when making a presentation.
- Gain and hold my audience's interest.
- Make sure my presentations start and end on time.
- Know what and how much information to include and how to organize it.
- Come across as confident and knowledgeable.
- improve my speaking style.
- Know how and when to rehearse.
- Know when and how to use presentation aids, such as slides, overhead transparencies, props, handouts, etc.
- Know how to avoid appearing foolish or making mistakes.
- Know how to avoid feeling intimidated by my audience.

OTHER: _____



Experienced presenters know that certain key elements must be present for their presentations to achieve their objectives and meet their audience's needs. For example, successful presentations provide information people need and expect, in a way that makes the information easy to follow and understand. The presentation starts and ends on time. The presenter

communicates clearly and with confidence. This ability to communicate ideas and information clearly to groups can help you achieve your career goals and increase your overall sense of confidence. But successful presentations do not just happen; they require careful planning, sufficient preparation, and effective delivery methods. To learn to make successful presentations, the first step is to gain a good understanding of your strengths and identify the skills and abilities you need to improve.



Review Questions

INSTRUCTIONS: *Here is the first set of review questions in this course. Answering the questions following each chapter will give you a chance to check your comprehension of the concepts as they are presented and will reinforce your understanding of them.*

As you can see below, the answer to each numbered question is printed to the side of the question. Before beginning, you should conceal the answer in some way, either by folding the page vertically or by placing a sheet of paper over the answers. Then read and answer each question. Compare your answers with those given. For any question you answer incorrectly, make an effort to understand why the answer given is the correct one. You may find it helpful to turn back to the appropriate section of the chapter and review the material of which you were unsure. At any rate, be sure you understand all the review questions before going on to the next chapter.

1. A successful presentation is one in which the presenter: 1. (b)
 - (a) covers as much information as possible.
 - (b) provides information that is useful to the audience.
 - (c) keeps the question and answer session limited.
 - (d) makes the audience laugh.

2. Which statement is the most accurate? 2. (a)
 - (a) Presenters often look at the topic only from their own point of view.
 - (b) Most audience members don't know what information they need.
 - (c) A truly interesting topic ensures the success of a presentation.
 - (d) A dynamic presenter always captures an audience's attention, no matter what the topic.

3. Which of the following is the most valid reason for learning to give good presentations? 3. (d)
 - (a) Good speakers can always supplement their income by going on tour.
 - (b) If you can give a good presentation, you are bound to be promoted.
 - (c) People who can speak well in front of groups usually get the best job assignments.
 - (d) The ability to give good presentations means you can communicate ideas and information more effectively.

4. Planning your presentation is only necessary when: 4. (c)
- (a) you plan to talk for more than 15 minutes on a complicated subject.
 - (b) you're in a high-stakes situation, with an audience you need to impress.
 - (c) you want to be sure that the presentation meets your objectives and the audience's needs.
 - (d) you are going to be talking about a subject with which you are somewhat unfamiliar.
5. Which of the following advice would you give to a novice presenter? 5. (d)
- (a) Don't worry too much about your delivery style because it's the least important part of making a presentation.
 - (b) People usually don't mind if the presentation runs late as long as they're interested in what you have to say.
 - (c) If you find that you are running out of time, it's better to speed up your delivery than to leave information out.
 - (d) Preparing for a presentation includes developing backup plans in case something goes wrong.

