



# Presentation skills

Learning guide

# Presentation skills

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## Introduction

Have you ever stood in front of a group of people poised to deliver a presentation and wished that the ground would open up and swallow you? You are by no means alone! Presenting to an audience, or even the mere thought of it, can fill even the most courageous of us with fear and dread. Large audiences can be intimidating because of the sheer number of faces we see before us, but small audiences too can be threatening, especially if we feel the audience may ask more questions. Often speaking in front of your peers can be more daunting than addressing an audience of complete strangers.

Like most fears, the fear of doing a presentation is quite irrational and can be controlled. George Bernard Shaw sums it up quite well by saying:

*"I am the most spontaneous speaker in the world because every word, every gesture, and every retort has been carefully rehearsed."*

As you will discover by reading through this learning guide, only by doing more and more presentations and preparing and practising each one in turn will you be able to reduce the fear to a manageable level.

Communicating involves a large and diverse range of skills. The primary emphasis of this learning guide is to highlight available learning resources which can aid managers in improving their presentation skills.

## **Where to start?**

If you have less than an hour, read the overview and watch an appropriate video from the selection in the resources section. If you have slightly longer than this, some of the recommended books are short, easy to read and full of useful tips. The list of practical development activities gives hints and tips for improving your technique.

## Resources

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### Videos

Watching videos can be a little passive. Hence, active note-taking whilst viewing is recommended. Relevant titles are:

*I Wasn't Prepared For That* (1996), Video Arts, 30 mins.

Stars Dawn French (as Rachel) and Robert Lindsay (as Greg). Rachel is asked to make a presentation to the Board on a relocation project. Under careful tuition from Greg, she learns the secret of success is preparation. Through being prepared her nerves are calmed and all goes well. The importance of tailoring to the audience is highlighted. Contains useful tips and pointers on presentation styles.

*The Floor is Yours – Now!* (1988), Connaught Training, 24 mins.

In this remake of the original film, Jim Arlington is asked to give a presentation to a group of colleagues. He has never done this before. However, with the help of his alter ego James, he learns the secrets of success. These include the importance of preparation; guidelines for planning and structuring the presentation; eye contact/body language and the effective use of visual aids.

*The Audience is Yours – Now!* (1992), Gower (sequel to previous), 18 mins.

This sequel to the above video shows how to deal with the audience and successfully handle interruption. The film gives hints including the importance of preparation, structuring, eye contact and body language, and the effective use of visual aids and using allies in the audience to quash an aggressive interrupter.

*Winning with Words* (1990), Connaught Training, 25 mins.

This training video looks at the use of specific language techniques to make maximum impact at presentations, meetings and briefs.

*Speaking for Yourself* (1990), BBC 25 mins.

This video looks at the techniques involved in confident public speaking for presentations: knowing materials, objectives, capturing attention, dealing with nerves and getting 'them' involved and interested.

## Audio cassettes

*Painfree Public Speaking* (1993), Voiceworks Consultants.

An audio cassette to help you plan a clear and entertaining speech. The tape also includes participative exercises to do beforehand and on your way to delivering the speech!

*Making Effective Presentations* (1986), Connaught Training.

Covers the techniques of preparing and delivering a successful and effective speech, including the combination of the spoken word and visual aids. Manual included.

## Journal articles

Anonymous (May 1996), *Managing Your Audience*, Training & Development, Vol 50(5), p21.

DiResta, Diane (May 1996), *Grace Under Pressure – Managing the Q & A*, Training & Development, Vol. 50(5), p21–22.

Lorge, Sarah (1997), *Let there be light; questions for improving a computer-based presentation*, Sales & Marketing Management, Volume 149(11), p87-92.

Morgan, Nick, (2001), *The Kinesthetic Speaker Putting Action into Words*, Harvard Business Review, April, Vol. 79(4), pg113.

O'Meara, Frank (May 1995), *The Trouble With Transparencies*, Training, Vol. 32 (5), p36.

## Books

\*\* Books marked with asterisks are available for sale from the LRC Bookshop.  
Mail order service available. Tel: 01442 841159. Fax: 01442 841211.  
E-mail: [celia.tucker@ashridge.org.uk](mailto:celia.tucker@ashridge.org.uk).

Bowman, Lee (1999), *High Impact Presentations*, Business Books Ltd.  
Ashridge shelf reference: CF (BOW).

The conversational style is widely accepted as the most skilful way to communicate with virtually any audience anywhere, a technique that today is employed by statesmen from Nelson Mandela to Bill Clinton. This work looks at Bowman's methodology for making your words work for you.

Ehrenborg J & Mattock J (2001), *Powerful Presentations: Great Ideas for Making Real Impacts*, Kogan Page, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.  
Ashridge shelf reference: CF (EHR).

Too often the word presentation provokes a yawn or a shudder - in the audience who must suffer it, and in the one who is to deliver it. If you follow the advice in this new edition of *Powerful Presentations* you will: overcome your inhibitions by putting your audience first; design clear and convincing arguments; breathe fresh life into your old ideas; and live on in your listener's mind.

Hoff, Ron (1992), *I Can see You Naked: A Fearless Guide to Making Great Presentations*, Andrews & McMeel.  
Ashridge shelf reference: CF (HOF)\*\*

A complete guide to public speaking describes the qualities of a good presenter and discusses openings, nervousness, boredom, audiences, and question handling.

James, Michael (1997), *Persuasive Presentations*, David Grant Publishing.  
Ashridge shelf reference: CF (JAM).

Persuasive Presentations is packed full of useful tips and practical guidance, and written in an entertaining, easy-to-read style. The aim of the book is to teach you, how to present to audiences of all sizes so that they remember both you and your message. Topics covered include: making an impact, planning and preparation, winning with visuals, mastering the equipment, and nerve busting and good delivery.

Leech T (1993), *How to Prepare, Stage and Deliver Winning Presentations*, Amacom, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

Ashridge shelf reference: CF (LEE).

A guide to presenting before a group of people which aims to provide both professional visibility and success. The text looks at how to make preparing for presentations less tedious, less expensive and more satisfying and how to target the presentation to different audiences.

Leigh, Andrew & Maynard, Michael (1993), *The Perfect Presentation: All You Need to Get it Right First Time*.

Ashridge shelf reference: CF (LEI)\*\*

This guide aims to alleviate the anxieties experienced by many who are required to give formal presentations to colleagues or clients. It gives pointers to making successful, professional presentations.

Peel, M (1992), *Successful Presentation in a Week*, Headway.

Ashridge shelf reference: CF (PEE).

Successful presentation in a week tackles the fears, which can strike any inexperienced speaker by setting out steps required for a successful and rewarding speech.

Peoples, D A (1992), *Presentations Plus: David Peoples' Proven Techniques*, John Wiley & Sons, 2nd ed.

Ashridge shelf reference: CF(PEO)\*\*

This second edition of Presentations Plus is packed with all the strategies, guidelines, and principles you'll ever need to present, persuade and win.

Townsend, John (1997), *The Business Presenter's Pocketbook*, Management Pocket Books.

Ashridge shelf reference: CF (TOW)\*\*

A good short overview of basic techniques. Areas covered in this book include: organising your presentation, making your presentation, audio visual support, television & radio interviews.

Townsend, John (1999), *The Great Presentation Scandal*, Management Pocket Books.

Ashridge shelf reference: CF (TOW)\*\*

This hard-hitting, no holds barred expose by John Townsend uncovers why all over the world, every year, vast sums of money and millions of hours are wasted in giving and attending presentations and conferences simply because presenters and organisers have failed to ask a simple question: 'why?'. It's a downright scandal, maintains the author. By recounting the tale of Maximillian Jones and his lost slides, Townsend demonstrates how to fight the fraud and halt the hoax.

# Overview

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## Introduction

At some time during your working life you may be called upon to speak in public. By this I mean speaking in front of an audience. It could be your own team, colleagues, bosses or maybe people from elsewhere in the organisation, or even outsiders.

While some people revel in the idea of giving a presentation, others dread it. Nerves prior to giving any presentation are perfectly normal; in fact, a certain amount of nervousness helps get the adrenaline going and can be beneficial to your performance. However, the problems arise when there is too much nervousness which can spoil your performance.

Whatever you feel about speaking in public it is an essential management skill. As long as you don't fall back on that time worn excuse: "Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking.."; as long as you *are* prepared to get accustomed – with as much practice as you can manage - the skills are ones you can get better and better at.

Here are some tips and guidelines to help:

## Problems in presenting

Most of the problems in presenting can be attributed to nervousness. Unfortunately, this nervousness can be transferred into fear which can have dramatic effects upon your performance.

However, if correctly controlled, nerves can help produce the best in your performance.

So, what are the main fears, and how can you help overcome them?

<b>Fear</b>	<b>How to overcome it</b>
Fear of the unknown	Preparation Research Practice Knowledge of techniques
Fear of being misunderstood	Good notes Structured talk Sequential
Fear of the audience	Preparation Audience Research Observing their behaviour
Fear of being inaudible	Dress rehearsal at venue Voice control
Fear of oneself (in your mind)	Concentration Memory training Practice
Fear of physical reaction	Good health Preparation Practice

In fact many of the fears and problems in public speaking can be overcome by two things:

- practice and preparation
- preparing and planning your presentation

Preparation, which includes a plan, is probably the most important part of any presentation. Time, care, and thoroughness taken at this stage will contribute towards the success of the final presentation.

Having been invited to do a presentation there are five questions you can ask yourself which will help in preparation and planning.

These questions are:

### ***1. Why am I making this presentation?***

There are various types of presentation, however. Basically they can fit into three categories:

- To communicate information – a mainly factual presentation possibly briefing your staff or a group of colleagues.
- To make a proposition – presentation of ideas supported by reasoned argument and personal judgement designed to persuade and win support from the audience.
- To inspire and motivate – whatever the content it should reflect and reinforce the feelings of the audience and generate enthusiasm, boost morale and encourage positive attitudes.

Whatever type, the first thing to do is to determine the purpose and establish your objectives, in detail. Write them out and constantly refer to them.

### ***2. What am I going to say?***

Begin your research, brainstorm everything you know about the topic, make notes, draw mind maps, use whatever technique you find best for developing lots of information.

Make use of as many different sources as you can, eg books, files, directories, ask others etc.

Once you have made your notes begin to sort into *must, should, could*, referring back to the objective to help at this stage.

### ***3. Who am I going to say it to?***

Before deciding what you are going to say you must discover as much as you can about your audience. Considerations such as the size and characteristics

of the audience and their knowledge of the subject should determine the content, language, structure and tone of the presentation. Ask yourself three questions:

- How large is the audience?  
Helps to determine:
  - level of formality
  - level of involvement
  
- How much do they know about the subject of the presentation?  
Helps to determine:
  - level to pitch at
  - language to use
  
- Who are the audience?  
Helps to determine:
  - all the above

#### ***4. Where will I be saying it?***

You should always try to see the venue first which will help in determining your approach in relation to audience control, eg is there a stage or not. You will get an idea about what facilities, equipment you could use that would be most relevant to the venue.

#### ***5. How will I say it?***

Much will depend upon the purpose, objectives, audience, etc, but here you will be considering aspects of style.

Do you need a script? What notes will you use?

Any visual aids and what sort? What will the audience expect?

How do I perform best? Is it formal or informal?

By asking these six questions you should be well on the way to the next stage, which is drawing up a "plan of action".

There are five main points here as well as the checklist at Appendix 1 (p22-23) which will help.

### **1. Time**

- For preparation
- For research
- To write your notes, etc.
- To rehearse
- To attend and get there
- The actual talk
  - how long?
  - who before/after?
  - when are you on?

### **2. Check out venue**

- Room size
- Acoustics
- Visual aids available
- Electric points
- Room layout on day
- Catering arrangements
- Temperature and ventilation
- Environment (noise etc.)

### **3. Audience**

- Size
- Where seated on day?
- What do they know about you?
- What do they know about the topic?
- Who are they?

### **4. Support material**

- Own notes
- Visual aids
- Equipment to take

Handouts  
PR material

### **5. Administration**

Smoking  
Loos  
Refreshment breaks  
Telephone calls  
Paper for notes

The above is not an exhaustive list but together with a checklist (why not develop your own?) should help you arrive at the presentation at the right place at the right time with a well prepared talk and support material.

## **Structuring the presentation**

During planning and preparation at some point you will have to begin to put your material into order.

Two main rules at this stage:

- Write down the objectives (again)  
acts as a constant reminder  
helps to check that your detailed notes are relevant
- Get all your points down on paper  
list main theme points  
back up with detail

Begin to put the material into order to get your message across in the best possible way bearing in mind:

the objective  
the time available  
the audience  
the detail of the topic

By establishing and explaining the framework or structure you are adopting and then following it during your presentation it can help to reassure the audience and build credibility.

Basically, you must structure your message into three parts:

### ***1. The introduction***

The beginning of your talk provides you with an opportunity to combine both an explanation of what you will cover and how, plus making some immediate impact on your audience. Anything that grabs their attention will make an audience listen, eg

- appeal to their curiosity
- tell them an anecdote
- personalise your talk to them
- quote someone

Whatever style you adopt to grab attention there are five main points which you should bear in mind:

- Welcome courtesies – thanks to audience
- Identify self – name, job, background, etc
- The intention – topic of talk
- The route map – time, structure, breaks, etc.
- Rules of the road – questions, handouts, etc.

### ***2. Development***

At this stage you should have begun to develop interest in your topic. Now you need to build on the theme by focusing on the main issues ensuring some sort of logical order of presentation is followed. One approach to this might be:

- State the background
  - Everybody should have the same level of knowledge
  - Demonstrate your own level of knowledge and understanding
  - Establish two way communication
- Develop the idea/theme
  - Concentrate on benefits

- Express don't impress
- Give examples
- Relate to existing knowledge
- Recommend the solution/summarise main points
- Enumerate all possible solutions
- Present evidence
- Get ideas accepted

This is the stage where you want them all to listen, so use visual aids to assist. Make it interesting, but above all **Keep It Short and Simple (KISS)**.

### ***3. Conclusions***

There are eight points which may be worthy of consideration for inclusion in your conclusion

- Summarise important facts and arguments
- Re-show main visual aids
- Recommend a course of action
- Propose next step
- Invite questions
- Describe any literature you have available
- Call for some kind of action
- Thank everyone

The concluding statements may be the last contact you have with your audience, so it is vital that you leave them with a lasting impression. Look directly at the audience (you should know your conclusion word for word), speak slowly and deliberately, raising your voice to give it special emphasis. Your audience will sense that you are coming to an end and their concentration will automatically increase.

## **Techniques and skills in presenting**

### ***Memory aids or notes***

Few of us have a sufficiently good memory to be able to speak without notes, but there are a few basic rules to follow:

- Write out your whole talk in full
- Read it through a couple of times to get the general gist
- Make brief notes from which you can talk
- Ensure your notes are sufficient to cover your planned talk

Notes themselves can be in the form of:

- Cue cards
- One large card/sheet of paper
- OHP transparencies
- PowerPoint/Freelance speaker notes

Notes and the extent of them are very personal; much will depend upon:

- Your own self confidence
- Your breadth of knowledge
- Skill at recall
- Support evidence and anecdotes

### *Timing*

Timing is vital in presentations. This is one of the reasons why rehearsal is so important. You should never go over time – rather finish early – you may have to fit in with other guest speakers. Whatever you do, you should ensure your talk fits well into your allotted time.

Some key points:

- Check how long
- Does it include question time or not?
- Start and finish on time
- Give an indication of timing in your introduction
- Err on the side of brevity
- Practise, Practise, Practise!!!

### *Audience control*

The psychology of audience behaviour is a fascinating topic, dealing with such issues as where people sit and why, how they relate to the speaker, etc. Some of the literature mentioned in the book list in the Resources section will cover this area for those who are particularly interested.

However, five main points to be aware of are:

- Maintain eye contact
- Don't bury your head in your notes
- Observe their behaviour (watch for yawns, fidgeting, quizzical looks etc.)
- Avoid distractions
- Watch the time

### *Dealing with questions*

Even if the occasion of your presentation makes it unlikely that you will have to answer questions, it is wise to be prepared. The way you answer will affect the way your audience remembers the whole of your presentation.

When preparing your presentation you should think of likely questions and either:

- Incorporate answers to them in your presentations,  
**or**
- Be prepared to answer them "off the cuff".

You should also be prepared for the unexpected as often questions are asked for other reasons than simply to elicit information, eg

- to gain attention
- to display knowledge
- to gain approval
- to challenge

- to relieve boredom
- to disrupt

Knowing why people ask questions often helps you answer them.

*Some guidelines on dealing with "difficult" questions:*

Type of question	How to respond
Several questions in one	Ask what the main question is and answer it
One which includes incorrect information	Correct it and then answer it if still necessary
Hostile	Express understanding of the reason they feel as they do, but explain why you have said what they're reacting against
Rambling	Interrupt and ask what their question is
Asking you to make a commitment	Don't make a promise you can't keep. If necessary explain your reasons
Argumentative	Answer in a way which re-enforces what you've already said

To help answer questions the following general guidelines may assist.

- Decide and tell the audience when you are going to answer them
- Listen carefully to the question
- Draw them out further if necessary
- Repeat in your own words to ensure you've understood and others have heard
- Relate answers to points made in the talk
- Answer briefly keeping to the point
- Don't try to put questioners down or ridicule them
- If you don't know the answer, say so – someone else may!
- Don't get into an argument.

### *Style of delivery*

Your style of self-presentation, voice control and the language you use will develop and change as you gain experience. Some key points to consider are:

### *Visual aids*

There is a saying – possibly Chinese: "*A picture is worth a thousand words*".

While this is almost certainly so, managing visual aids is an extra responsibility for you, the presenter. The choice of visual aids is varied and many. The most common ones are:

- Datashow
- The overhead projector
- The flipchart
- The whiteboard
- The blackboard
- 35mm slide projector
- Film
- Video

The two most common and popular visual aids used today are:

- Datashow
- The overhead projector

### **The datashow – eg PowerPoint or Freelance**

Increasingly technology is playing a large part in many presentations when the visual aids are a slide show directly from a personal computer or laptop. Many of the general principles and guidelines for all types of visual aids also apply to datashows. However, there are certain very specific issues to be aware of:

Firstly, you must consider the technical implications and availability at the venue. Secondly, it is important to ensure that any lettering, colour and special

effects used do not detract from the message you are intending to convey. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, you should practise using the technology and building this approach to visual aids into your personal style.

### **The overhead projector (OHP)**

The OHP is probably the most popular visual aid used by presenters and speakers throughout the world.

Apart from knowing how to operate the various controls (on/off, focus and bulb change) you should also check the focus and that the audience will see the screen clearly prior to starting your presentation

The transparencies you use on the OHP should be clear and simple to understand. Use pictures, diagrams and graphs where possible keeping words to a minimum. Short statements and phrases to help you audience focus are best. The most important point to remember is that the visual aid should support you message and above all should be visual.

There are however certain rules which you should follow:

1. Don't have too many visuals – always ask "Is this visual really necessary?"
2. Keep the visuals in keeping – make sure they fit the purpose of the talk.
3. Use colour for variety – not too much though; just enough to add interest.
4. Make them large; put them high; make sure your lettering is big enough and that the audience can see them.
5. Get the light right, if blackout is required, do it. Check list on screen before using, eg for sunshine, etc.
6. Watch the sight lines - make sure all the audience can see.

7. Retain the initiative over the aid - never show a visual aid until you need it; never leave it in sight after you've finished with it.
8. Don't talk to the visual - remember the visual is for the benefit of the audience.
9. Go for the greatest impact – use pictures, objects etc. where appropriate.
10. Rehearse, rehearse – too often a presenter approaches a projector and asks "How do you switch this thing on?"

Remember the visuals must work for you, not you for them.  
Appendix 3 gives you more hints and tips on using visual aids.

## Group presentation techniques

Presenting as part of a group or team of people creates its own problems. While many of the same principles apply as in other presentation situations, there are certain points you must consider:

- Personality of group members
- Skills of group members
- Comfort as a group
- Who is the leader?
- Who is doing what? Eg chairperson
  - co-ordinator
  - speakers
  - researcher
  - visual aid expert, etc.
- Format of talk
- Sequence
- Timing
- Practice

As with all presentation techniques the most important is 'Rehearsal'. The diagram on p21 gives more points about group presentations.

## GROUP PRESENTATIONS

"Together everyone achieves more"



# Appendix 1

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## A general checklist for making presentation

What is the topic of the presentation?

What is the purpose of the presentation?

Length?

Objectives?

Results hoped for?

What sort of audience do you expect?

Numbers .....

Type.....

Have you (can you) analyse them in detail?

Which will be helpful to you and the other speakers?

**Dates:**

Of the meeting itself

Of rehearsals

Of preliminary discussions

When information notes must be ready

By when handouts are required

Visual aid details for preparation

**Practical arrangements:**

Room(s) booked

Personal computer/laptop

Film projector

Slide projector

Overhead projector

Different screens

Flip charts

Paper/pens for flip charts

Plastic roll for overhead projector

Pens for overhead projector

Blackboard/white board

Chalks/felt pens

Flannel board

Room layout agreed  
Chairs, tables in place  
Notepads, pencils, ball points  
Water, glasses  
Programme of the day  
Handouts, notes  
Equipment:  
    microphones and loudspeakers  
    tape recorder  
    video equipment, camera, TV monitor  
    playback recorder (VCR) - is this compatible?  
    cables long enough?

**Lighting adequate?**

controllable by whom?  
can the room be darkened?

**Ventilation, air conditioning**

working?  
noisy?  
comfortable?

**Coffee breaks, lunches, accommodation**

for participants  
for speakers

**Have we asked what other speakers require?**

## Appendix 2

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### Individual checklist for giving a talk

#### ■ *Preliminary*

Are you clear on the topic?  
What results will you try for?  
Who will the audience be?  
Do you have time to make your point?  
What sort of visual aids will you need?  
Do you have time to prepare them?  
Who is your contact man?

#### ■ *Material collection and arrangements*

Do you know where your material will come from?  
Own resources? Libraries? Other people?  
Do you have a notebook or small cards to put down ideas as they arise?  
What are the main points? The main headings?  
Have you reduced the number of points you propose to make to a minimum?  
What are you going to start with?  
What sort of audience reaction do you expect?  
Are you going to read your speech? Memorise it and recite it? Speak from detailed notes? Speak from headings using cards or A4 sheets?  
What are the first sentences of your talk?  
Have you written them down?  
Are you using a joke?  
Have you tried it out on a friend?  
Are you summarising the talk?  
Will you mention the objective?  
Will you state the theme in terms of the audience's benefit?  
What are the last sentences of your talk?  
Have you written them down?

Are you ending with a joke?

Are you asking a question?

Are you closing with a summary of what you have said?

■ *Final preparation*

Are your notes typed clearly, double spaced?

Are your cards numbered?

Are they tied together with a lace through the hole in the corner?

Have you timed your talk and marked the times?

■ *Delivery*

Stand up straight

Don't jingle coins in your pocket

Speak slowly at first

Speak clearly

Look at everyone

Do not speak with your back to the audience

Gesture naturally – as your enthusiasm demands

Smile

Pause after making important points

## Appendix 3

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### Visual aids

- Some simple rules:

Choose the appropriate medium

Consider your audience

Consider the subject

#### *Plan the visuals*

KISS – Keep It Short and Simple

Big, bold lettering

Use colour to emphasise

Not too much information

Use diagrams and illustrations when possible

#### *Rehearse the visual presentation*

Get to know the equipment

Know your running order

Mark on your notes where a visual is to be used

Check your audience can read and see it

- Some thoughts on using the most common visual aids

#### *The datashow – Using Microsoft PowerPoint or similar*

Test all the equipment (then test it again!)

Practise using the mouse

Check through your datashow for order accuracy, colour and readability

Keep a paper copy of your slides handy during your presentation – just as a quick reference

Use special effects appropriately but carefully

Consider using an air mouse as this enables you to move around more and not be tied to the PC

Carry a set of transparencies of your presentation just in case!!

### ***The overhead projector***

Before using, check focus, how it switches on and how to swap or change bulbs

Don't stand between projector and audience

Point at transparency on projector, not on screen – helps maintain eye contact

Use reveal technique – cover unwanted area with card and only reveal when appropriate

Don't put too much writing on a transparency, eg six–eight lines of about six words each.

### ***The flip chart***

Ensure there is enough paper

Check markers are working and in a variety of colours

Prepare them in advance, if possible

Write prompts lightly in pencil in top corner

Add dynamics to your presentation by pencilling-in diagrams, graph lines or figures in advance, then trace them during the talk and impress everyone with your "artistic skill"

Write big and bold

Turn over to a blank sheet when flip chart is no longer necessary.

### ***The white/black board***

Use water soluble pens on white board

Write big and bold

Use different colours to draw attention to key points

Stand clear of board when finished writing

Avoid talking to the board

Clear them off when you've finished.

### *The slide projector*

Check how it works – practise

Ensure slides are inserted into carousel right way up and in right order

Ensure the room can be darkened

Use slides when you want to show photographs, charts, diagrams, cartoons, etc.

Use colour – but be consistent

Don't use it when audience participation is important.

### *Films/videos*

Preview first – is it relevant?

Check on equipment – how it works – who will operate it

Plan the introduction and follow-up discussion questions

- Remember

- Keep visuals as simple as possible

- Make life easy for yourself – rehearse the logistics in advance

- Keep your visuals **VISUAL**

- Use visuals as an aid for your audience, not just yourself.

## Appendix 4

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### Working with multicultural groups

Speaking to multicultural groups involves the speaker in taking account of certain cultural traits which may have an effect upon the listener's understanding of what is being said. Taking account of the other cultures, habits, values and traditions may help when planning the talk, not so much from a content point of view, but when considering your own delivery.

Some cultures, in particular Middle Eastern, Far Eastern and Hispanic, experience certain emotional problems if their understanding of a topic is questioned in relation to loss of face and suffering of humiliation. Where cultures value harmony and balance in social and professional relationships, to disrupt this would call excessive undesirable attention to an individual.

Two solutions to this problem are:

1. To assess understanding and
2. To facilitate understanding, which can be done in a variety of ways.

#### 1. Assess understanding

Observe facial expression – a puzzled expression or blank look probably indicates lack of understanding. Expression changes subtly when material is understood.

Too much nodding and smiling – especially if linked with 'yes, I understand' usually means the exact opposite and is generally associated with the desire to save face.

Note absence of questions – again this is not a good sign and is often associated with risking humiliation by asking a seemingly 'stupid' question causing the individual to remain silent and confused.

Note repetition – a word for word repetition of your material is little proof of real understanding.

## **2. Facilitate understanding**

Speak slowly and distinctly – obvious advice but easily forgotten in the heat of the moment.

Use tone of voice appropriately – intonation accounts for about 30% of the face-to-face communication process - eg an emphatic tone may underline the importance of a point, or a compassionate tone can help to relieve the listener's anxiety.

Use non-verbal skills – again, about 15% of the communication process is carried out in the form of physical, non-verbal messages. A word of warning - be aware of the meaning to other cultures for certain physical gestures.

Avoid slang, jargon and acronyms – one of the biggest sources of misunderstanding. We are often unaware of the slang that we use, eg 'keep your eyes open'. Jargon and acronyms can also create confusion and may leave the uninitiated feeling both ignorant and inadequate. If it is necessary to use them then explain the meaning first.

Repeat the information in several ways. Remember the old saying 'tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them and then tell them what you have just told them'!

Ask about comprehension frequently – while avoiding quizzing the listener, the speaker should check frequently for understanding.

In summary, assuring accurate communication across language, accent, and cultural barriers, is not an easy task. Attention to the points discussed above can minimise the risk of misunderstandings.

## Appendix 5

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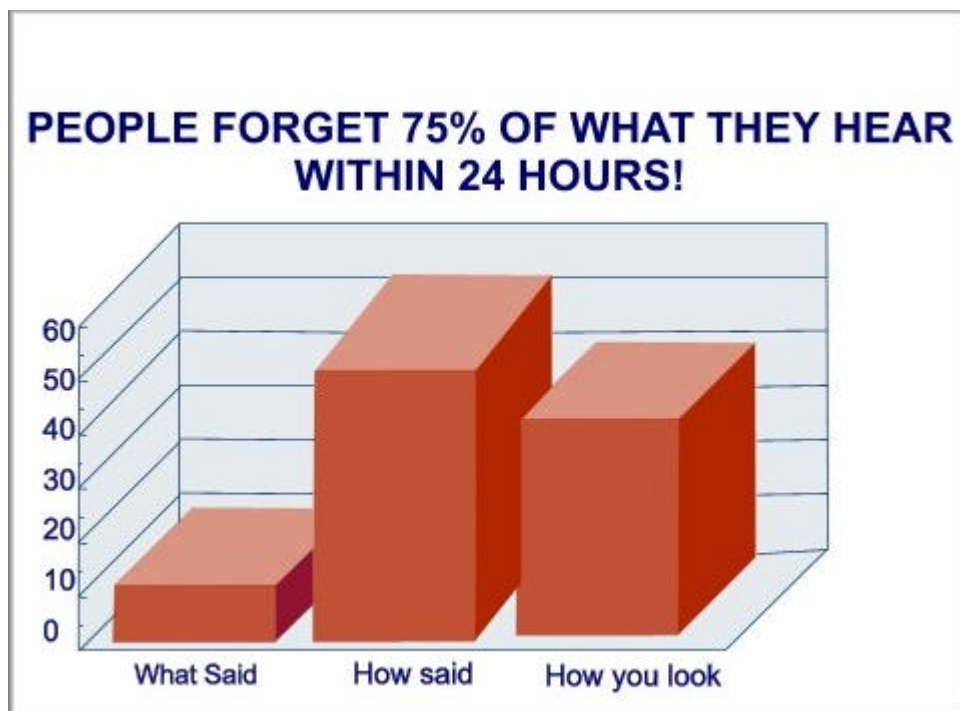
### Some tips on delivery

*"Good content alone is no assurance of an effective presentation"*

- Make sure that your whole presentation is geared round "What's in it for the audience".
- Get set before you start to speak.
- Establish contact with your audience before starting.
- Begin without referring to your notes. Look at your audience instead.
- Use a minimum number of note cards.
- Stop at the end of an idea – don't hook sentences together. Make it easy for your audience to follow.
- Don't fiddle with pencil or notes.
- Ensure your visual aids work, and that you can work them effortlessly.
- Use a pointer for your visuals.
- Remove visuals as soon as you have made your point.
- Talk to your audience, not to your visual aids.
- Do not give material out while speaking, it distracts attention from you.
- Gesture effectively to emphasise key points, and use facial expressions to add interest and extra information for your audience.
- Move about, but don't overdo it. Remember that you are a visual aid yourself.
- Appear to enjoy what you are doing!
- Convey that you want your audience to listen.
- Focus on your audience throughout your presentation.
- Speak with enthusiasm.
- Vary your speaking rate, pitch and volume.
- Enunciate clearly, especially when your audience is multi-cultural.
- Don't run over time.
- Don't panic if you make a mistake!
- Smile!
- Remember that the close of a presentation should be your bull's eye.

**And finally.....  
IMPACT**

*"We never get a second chance to make a first impression"*



## Development activities

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### Spoken communication

- Listen to people communicating on the TV, radio or at work – especially those people whom you consider to be excellent. Observe what makes them exceptional and think how you can build these qualities into your communication.
- Think about people whose communication is dull and boring – what is it that makes it dull and boring? Note this down and ensure you avoid falling into the same traps.
- Improve your vocabulary and construction of communication by reading, watching and listening to 'quality' communicators. (TV presenters, politicians, great literature, quality press, professional journals, etc.)
- When listening to others, what keeps you interested and what turns you off? Is it content, topic areas, people or what? Awareness in this area is half the battle - concentration can be improved by simply recognising what turns you off and applying your communication skills to the situation to make it more relevant/interesting.

### Presentation skills

- Actively seek out opportunities to present. Take the opportunity in low risk environments to practise your presentation skills, for instance in team meetings, or presenting findings or recommendations to a project team.
- Ask a trusted colleague to give you feedback on your presentation style – it is best to focus the feedback on specific aspects of style - for instance, body language, the opening, closing, clarity of message, level of impact, etc. rather than simply saying 'give me feedback'. This allows you to get detailed feedback on various aspects of your style over a time period.
- Either video or tape record yourself presenting for later self analysis.
- Watch skilled presenters and analyse what they do. Think how you can incorporate their good practices into your approach.

- Rehearse your presentations with a couple of colleagues (preferably people who have little knowledge of the topic you will be talking about) and ask them for feedback, not only on your style but also on the content and clarity of your presentation.

*This learning guide was written by Fiona Dent, a client and programme director at Ashridge.*