"86.1% of presenters say presentation skills affect their career & income!
Distinction Communication Inc's 2009 Presentation Impact Survey

101 Inside Tips for More Successful Presentations
Helping you make your next big presentation land with impact!

Gain insight from top industry experts and put their collective wisdom to work in your next big presentation opportunity!

Planning a Presentation	**Overcoming Anxiety**	**Creating Influence**
Travel Tips	**Handouts**	**Delivery Skills**
Rehearsal Ideas	**Room Set-up**	**Storytelling**
PowerPoint Best Practices	**Using Sound & Video**	**Webinars**
Using Animation	**Message Shaping**	**Images & Artwork**
Sales Presentations	**Crisis Recovery**	**Getting Feedback**
Body Language	**Professional Resources**	*and much more…*

Did you know...

people are generally more persuaded by what they might lose, rather than by what they might gain? Or that research clearly indicates that a well-told story can be remembered for years while your bulleted PowerPoint slides are forgotten by the time you reach the end of your presentation?

Thanks for downloading this valuable presentation resource!

Dear Colleague,

Over the last several decades, presenters have been inundated with alluring advertising messages promising pizzazz, dazzle and WOW for their next big presentation. Wouldn't it be nice if that were possible. But the reality is, despite the breadth of new tools and resources available, very little has changed. Presenters still turn and read slide after slide while their audiences drift off to LaLa Land. Bullet slides are still the dominant slide format of choice. And presenters' messages are often times still painfully self-serving, much to the distain of their audiences.

One very important commodity seems to be lacking from the presentation equation… *wisdom*. Instead of gleaning some seasoned insight from those who have pioneered the art of presenting before us, most seem to struggle with the same old issues. And for new presenters today whose career progress is often a function of the quality of their speaking skills, there are too few voices to coach and mentor them in this important life skill called "presenting."

This eResource guide represents practical insight from top industry experts and puts their collective wisdom into an easy-to-follow, personal reference guide broken down by the issues that seem to mean the most to presenters today.

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So whether you're cramming for a major presentation, partner pitch or internal meeting, we think you'll find these 101 tips to be a valuable and timely resource.

Make the most of every presentation opportunity!

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Distinction, Jim's company, is a Portland, OR-based organization that comes alongside those tasked with communicating important, high stakes presentations to empower them to communicate their critical stories in ways that invite deeper levels of audience engagement. Distinction does that in three key ways: 1) Strategic message development shaped specifically for the presentation medium. 2) Professional presentation design support so important concepts are grasped more quickly. 3) And finally, Distinction works with an organization's high profile presenters to help them more effectively internalize the personal communication skills needed to foster deeper levels of trust, believability and credibility.

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TriMax Direct, the publisher of PresentationXpert, has been meeting the needs of the business-to-business direct marketing marketplace for over 20 years in list management, list processing, fulfillment, enhancements, and working with the brokerage community to supply the best and most timely solutions to meet customers' needs. TriMax prides itself on knowledge of the best practices in direct marketing, quality customer service, integrity and accountability.

Planning a Presentation

1 **Take a moment a jot down the different job titles that may be in your audience**. Planning a relevant presentation means understanding the challenges that keep them awake at night. Address those effectively and success will follow.

2 **Begin with the end in mind.** Create your closing summary slide first and then build your PowerPoint to drive towards those crisp conclusions. This laser focus will keep your presentation from wandering down non-critical rabbit holes.

3 **Apply the 70% rule!** Only create enough content to fill 70% of the time you've been given. You will never finish early and will find your pace to be less rushed, while you focus more effort on how you're *delivering* your message – not just the message itself. It will also force you to think about what's really important.

4 **Team presentations create a unique planning challenge**. Determine these four critical roles for content development, slide assembly and delivery:

Who will play team leader? (Someone needs to insure continuity as different contributors submit their slides)

Who will open and close the presentation? (Your most passionate and articulate presenters)

Who will provide the more granular solution detail? (Who can be crisp with the details without getting lost in the woods?)

Who will be the "look & feel" gatekeeper? (Without this support role, the presentation will appear to be a patchwork quilt of looks, styles, capitalization and image integration instead of one, cohesive identity.)

5 **"People will not usually remember what you say, but they always remember how you made them feel."** Presentations are often about changing or moving an audience's belief system; beliefs about your ability to impact them, create change, meet a goal, lead or redeem a challenging situation. Before you get too far into your planning, write down your thoughts about what you want audience members to think and believe differently when they leave your presentation. Then make a plan to create the feeling you hope to leave them with.

6 **Time your presentation so you finish five minutes early.** Most presenters cram 60 minutes of content into a 60-minute block of time and it never fits. The audience's final impression of you becomes that of a presenter clicking rapidly thorough slides, speaking at a break-neck pace and being preoccupied with your watch.

Instead, take the pressure off and plan to finish a few minutes early. If a miracle happens and you actually manage to conclude early, you have two wonderful options. Give that time back to your audience knowing they will remember you because you were the only presenter in recent memory who let them out early or offer up a few moments for Q&A with a relaxed summarization and close.

Travel Tips

(7) **Always back-up your presentation on a USB drive**, keeping your presentation and media files in the same folder. Then if you have to switch laptops because of an emergency, drag the folder to the root level on the target computer and all your media links will stay intact.

(8) **Carry a set of annotated 6 or 9-up handouts to help remember key presentation points.** This way you can rehearse in a jam without the need for your laptop. Presenters who've snatched audience raves from the jaws of potential disaster will tell you a little contingency planning goes a long way. Pay special attention to transition slides to maintain continuity.

(9) **Tape your business card to the top of your laptop**. Similar laptops can get inadvertently switched while going through airport security, a surprise you really don't need when you go to boot-up your computer moments before a big presentation.

(10) If you regularly use audio or video in your presentations, **travel with an emergency bag of patch cords and connectors**. That way, in case of a faulty cable or an underequipped hotel AV department, you have a back-up plan. (Include mini-stereo, phono, and 1/4 " jack adaptors.)

(11) If you're checking luggage and don't have an adequate time buffer before you present, **be sure to travel in a set of clothes you could wear in a pinch**. Jeans may be more comfortable to travel in, but the impression will be less than professional if your luggage does not arrive when you do!

Overcoming Anxiety

(12) **Know your presentation material inside and out and practice until you "own" it.** This defuses a big chunk of the anxiety unprepared presenters often experience. For every 60-minute, high stakes presentation, be sure you practice no less than two hours. You'll need even more rehearsal time if you're presenting as a team.

(13) **Set up as early as possible for your presentation.** Last minute emergencies often occur (screen in the wrong place, no AV, chairs set-up incorrectly, projector issues…). If you're sweating up a storm at the moment your audience arrives, you will have no recovery time and your harried efforts will be your audience's first impression of you.

(14) **Take a brisk walk.** Bottled up adrenaline often turns into nervous or distracting presentation habits. Burn off that excess energy and then return to the room in sufficient time to center your thoughts. This will equip you for a much more confident start.

(15) Presenters usually find the first five minutes of their presentations most difficult. **While audience members are coming in, strike up a personal conversation with several so they are known to you when you start**. Establish warm, initial eye contact with those individuals and then spread it to those around them to help you ease into the important opening moments of your presentation. Be sure to not get fixated on just a few friendly audience members.

Overcoming Anxiety (cont.)

16 Often times "disasters" in our early presentation experiences predispose us for feelings of inadequacy. **Our mental "programming" often needs to be rewired.** If this is you, take a few minutes the evening before a big presentation, close your eyes and mentally "walk through" the first few minutes of a "successful" presentation to begin to re-program your old thinking. If it's good enough for an Olympic athlete waiting at the top of a giant slalom to mentally *ski the course*, it's good enough for us!

17 **Get lost in your message, not yourself.** If you get all wrapped up in whether an audience will like you, chances are they won't. But if you put all of your focus and nervous energy instead into ensuring you deliver a message that resonates with audiences, odds are your presentation will succeed. Bottom line: lose yourself in your content and delivery, not whether every hair is in place or every verbal tic eliminated, and you'll find gestures will naturally start to fall in place, the right words will come and you'll make a positive impression on audiences.

Handouts

18 **The best presentation visuals make the worst handouts.** Presenters often try to save time by creating complex PowerPoint files that can also double as handouts, but you need to think of your *projected* content and your *printed* or "leave behind" content as two different animals. That's because slides are designed to be skeleton outlines that prompt the spoken word, not tell the whole story, while handouts naturally require more detail and supporting data.

If you will be using PowerPoint as your handouts, create your more complex version for handouts first, then do a "Save AS" version where you strip out 80% of the detail, integrate more image elements and distill down text-based information for your actual presentation.

19 **Be sure to include all your contact information on your handouts**. If your audience didn't get a business card from you, your handouts may be the only source of contact information.

20 Many handouts end up being left behind by audiences. To save a few trees, **create a PDF file of your handouts and offer to email them** to anyone providing you a business card. You might also provide them as a download from your website and include a URL on your final presentation slide.

21 **Provide a bibliography of web resources to support your presentation topics**. Today's audiences actively utilize Internet resources like articles, blogs, slide-sharing sites, Twitter accounts of subject matter experts and other valuable online tools.

22 **For more professional leave behinds, build your handouts in an MS Word document.** Using the File>Save As option in PowerPoint (and selecting .png from the drop down options), export specific slides and paste them into your word document. Then add more comprehensive commentary. The PowerPoint thumbnail gives them an important visual reminder and the Word document enables you to include more spoken detail. The end result – a much more professional looking handout!
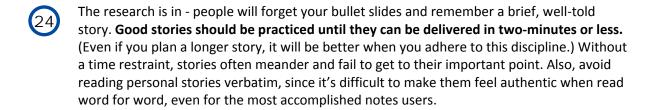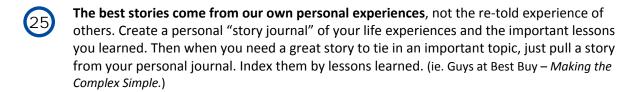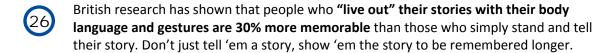
Storytelling

23 Here's a **simple storytelling format** for shaping stories that land with impact.
(From Doug Stevenson's book *Never Be Boring Again*)

- Set the Scene
- Introduce the Characters
- Begin the Journey
- Encounter an Obstacle
- Overcome the Obstacle (or not…obstacles aren't always overcome)
- Resolve the Story (Issues don't always resolve)
- Make the Point (Your stories need one)
- Ask the "make them think" question

24 The research is in - people will forget your bullet slides and remember a brief, well-told story. **Good stories should be practiced until they can be delivered in two-minutes or less.** (Even if you plan a longer story, it will be better when you adhere to this discipline.) Without a time restraint, stories often meander and fail to get to their important point. Also, avoid reading personal stories verbatim, since it's difficult to make them feel authentic when read word for word, even for the most accomplished notes users.

25 **The best stories come from our own personal experiences**, not the re-told experience of others. Create a personal "story journal" of your life experiences and the important lessons you learned. Then when you need a great story to tie in an important topic, just pull a story from your personal journal. Index them by lessons learned. (ie. Guys at Best Buy – *Making the Complex Simple.*)

26 British research has shown that people who **"live out" their stories with their body language and gestures are 30% more memorable** than those who simply stand and tell their story. Don't just tell 'em a story, show 'em the story to be remembered longer.

27 **The bookend story provides continuity to a presentation.** Start with a story that sets the context for your presentation, but don't attempt to resolve the issue. Deliver your presentation. Then close with the opening story and how the "issue" resolved. This approach ties in your presentation elements much more effectively and insures your final points will be remembered.

28 For a great resource on the use of stories to communicate value, culture and other important points, check out David Armstrong's classic book, ***Managing By Storying Around: A New Method of Leadership***. It's a highly practical guide on how to create stories that make important points.

29 **Consider using the "Phrase That Pays."** Doug Stevenson, master storyteller, talks about how good speakers and storytellers will often integrate a recurring expression or phrase that may or may not be self-evident during the presentation. After being used four or five times and being given greater and greater meaning, it will stick in audience's minds long after your presentation concludes. Need a good example? President Barack Obama's speech following the 2008 New Hampshire Democratic primary – *Yes we can!*

Presentation Message Shaping

(30) The vast majority of presentation messages intended to persuade and influence are often presenter-focused. Savvy audiences quickly see the presentation for what it is - more about the presenter than about them. **Here's an easy 7-step model for creating presentations that connect with hearts & minds:**

1) Identify the challenge (Pain)
2) Quantify the impact (Morale, productivity, profits, turnover)
3) Specify the need (Need)
4) Propose the Solution (Solution)
5) Quantify the Benefits (Value)
6) Sell its advantage (Differentiation)
7) Substantiate Your Claim (Validation)

(31) **The principle of Recency-Primacy says that people are more inclined to remember the first and last few minutes of a presentation**. For that reason don't rush your opening. Set expectations quickly and create messaging context with a story. Close with a well-paced, single slide summary and concluding story related to your solution to drive home your point. Spend at least half your rehearsal time on the opening and closing five minutes!

(32) **Alter the nature of your presented material every seven to eight minutes**. The principle of *habituation* means our brains begin to check out when the stimulus in front of us doesn't change. (Monotone voice. Bullet slide after bullet slide. Static delivery.) Using audience interaction, facts, audio, video, stories, props and other messaging vehicles to constantly change up the stimulus will keep your audience engaged and participative from beginning to end. One single approach guarantees audience boredom and message detachment.

(33) **Know how your messaging approach impacts your audience and their responses**:

Factual material (Text, data, charts). Used to prove, inform, justify. Generally has impact on short-term memory, often engages the defensive part of the brain and has low persuasive value.

Emotional/relational material (Stories, props, video, audience discussion...). Used to move/restrain action or behavior. Impacts long-term memory and has high persuasive value.

(34) **One-size-fits-all presentations rarely connect with an audience because of people's unique needs and issues**. Take that core product presentation and use hyperlinking to customize your approach on-the-fly to your audience. Instead of dragging them through 60 minutes of presentation material that only touches on five minutes of relevant need, click and jump early on to the material that's important to them. You can also chart a number of unique paths through the same set of slides using PowerPoint's Custom Shows option. Your audience will think you created the presentation just for them!

Presentation Message Shaping (cont.)

35 **Strive to make three points that stick rather than 10 points that leave no lasting impression.** The "Rule of Three" is one the most powerful concepts in communication, and holds that we can only retain small chunks of information at a time. Presenters have a tendency to try to wedge too many key points into presentations, making them unnecessarily long or wordy. Identity the three top things you want your audience to know. Then, as you're shaping or revising your presentation, constantly ask yourself, "Is this the most important issue, the best example, the most compelling way to make my point?"

36 **Use a "Latitude of Acceptance" diagram during planning to locate key audience belief system indicators**. For example:

Open-minded____I_____I____I____I____I_____I____I____I_____Skeptical
It's unrealistic to think you'll create more than a 10-20% shift in an audience's collective thinking or core belief systems. For example, a company that has never offered a management feedback mechanism but suddenly offers personal lunches with the president may be met with skepticism. *The belief*: management is indifferent. *The approach*: incremental messaging over time creates steps towards a long-term change in beliefs.

Getting Good Feedback

37 In Distinction's *2009 Presentation Impact Survey*, 69% indicated they received little or no constructive feedback on their presentations. **Find someone else on your team to be a *presentation feedback partner***. Honest and constructive input is critical to becoming a better presenter. Here's how to structure your observations… 3 things you did well. 3 things that will take you to the next level!

86% of business presenters believe they are effective communicators. Only 17% of their audiences agreed. The Leader Voice. **Self-awareness is the key to meaningful change.**

38 **Discretely set up a video camera in the back of your next presentation and let it run**. When you play it back during a quiet moment, look for distracting behaviors like nervous hands, happy feet, pacing or looking back at your slides when talking. Simply being aware of these issues allows you to work on one or two of them in your next presentation.

39 **Providing good input to others is often a difficult task** because we often lack an understanding of a few fundamentals that dramatically impact how we are perceived as presenters. If that describes you and your team, it may be time to seek out some outside professional assistance. For ideas on how to find a good coach, check out the Delivery Skills and Resources section of this tips guide.

40 **Many companies today are making presentation skills a part of their annual employee evaluation process but don't have any formal measurement tools.** Check out this link for a PDF file that can provide some helpful measurement questions for an internal employee presentation skills assessment process. www.distinction-services.com/assesspres.php

PowerPoint Best Practices

(41) **Good presentation visuals are most often strikingly simple** and require the presenter to add most of the value and meaning. Apply the 7-second rule to your slides. It should take your audience no longer than 7-8 seconds to scan the slide and return their attention to you, the presenter. More complex slides can be accommodated with animation as long as you build your screen content in 7-8 seconds of scannable material.

(42) **Animation is simply an object in action, but the acting object should never be text.** Objects can move in your presentations, but text should remain stationary. Consider selecting a simple non-moving animation (fade-in fast) for nearly all object and text animation elements. Keep in mind this golden rule of using multimedia: If an action only serves itself, it is useless because the audience only takes interest in the action, and not in the information.

(43) **Consider how many text slides you might replace with a more visually stimulating image**. Breaking away from a numbing parade of text-only PowerPoint slides helps to keep and sustain audience interest. One slide with a picture showing the impact of a tornado on a Kansas home will communicate infinitely more than a dozen bullet slides. Show the picture then add the spoken commentary. "The winds associated with a level 3 tornado can drive straw through a 4 inch post. And it can toss a two thousand pound car a quarter of a mile." The lesson here: more images – fewer words.

(44) **Bulleted text slides should be talking points only, not used as a teleprompter** Make no mistake – heavy text slides can make even the best presenter a "bullet reader." Here are several ways to know if your use of bulleted slide information has run amok.

Are your bullets wrapping around to a second line? You're probably trying to say too much. Discipline yourself to edit text content down to a one-line talking point.

Are you using sub-bullets or sub-sub bullets? These are most often simply additional talking points and shouldn't be part of your visual. Adding this kind of dense text causes audience to check out fast! Do you try to talk to every bullet on the slide? Cultivate the art of talking to the *essence of the slide*. Speak generally about the primary focus of the slide and only call out a bullet or two to make your point.

Do your bullets run down the length of the slide? Don't exceed five to six single lines of bulleted information. If it's necessary to talk to them all, consider splitting them up over several slides, then augmenting with relevant images.

(45) **Rapid slide layout can often be facilitated by working from high level thoughts to more granular presentation slide detail.** Spending a lot of time creating one slide after another is like mowing the lawn while only looking three feet in front of the mower. The path you cut will meander just like presentation messaging often wanders.

PowerPoint Best Practices (cont.)

Create your initial title side and your concluding summary slide first. Then using the seven step model in the Messaging section, layout only slide titles for the rest of the presentation. (No body content at that time.) Ask yourself, does the message flow well towards the conclusion? Then once the flow is validated with titles, begin to add images or detail that supports the slide title but keep in mind the 7-second rule! Your presentation will come together much more quickly!

(46) **Rather than a standard blue background, consider white instead**. Many Web sites are designed with white backgrounds to help text, graphics and other design elements stand out, and the same approach can be effective for presentations. Simple, unornamented backgrounds help other elements of your presentation really "pop." In addition, as projectors have become brighter, it's no longer necessary to turn off the lights in rooms, avoiding the problem of having glaring white backdrops in dark rooms.

(47) **Bad packaging destroys good messaging.** When was the last time you bought a car or an expensive product based on a flyer that was covered with distorted pictures, typos and playful clipart? Probably never. In the same way, your PowerPoint presentation needs to exhibit the same professional standards for design that are expected from other important tools in your organization. (Think print, website…). You can put great messaging into a very amateur-looking template surrounded by pixilated and blurry images and completely destroy the presentation's impact. You can't separate message viability from the quality of the container it's put in.

(48) **Don't get font-style crazy.** You may have corporate standards that include some artsy fonts, but in the presentation medium there are only two considerations: *readability and portability*. The most artistic corporate serif fonts are often the most difficult to read on a presentation screen. Even a traditional Times Roman can cause eyes to strain. The other challenge is that specialty fonts don't always stay embedded and strange line wrapping can mysteriously appear. Stick to the basics like *Arial* and spend your time and energy shaping a crisp message surrounded by clean and relevant imagery.

(49) **To speed PowerPoint design, avoid the "blank slide" syndrome.** One of the biggest challenges time-starved presenters face is finding enough time to dedicate to slide design. So rather than start from scratch, choose a slide design that already works and tailor it to meet your specific needs. This works best when you have a library of graphics commonly used in your organization's presentations. It's easier to start with an existing, successful graphic and customize it than to start with a blank piece of paper. If nothing else, your library of images will get you thinking visually.
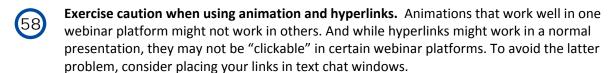
Web-based Presentations

(50) **Don't use polls just for polling sake.** Make sure those multiple choice or true/false questions are integrated with your topic. You might poll to lead into discussion of a new topic, for example, then use the results to guide the ensuing conversation.

Web-based Presentations (cont.)

51 **Visuals in webinars need to be even simpler than in traditional presentations**. Audience multi-tasking is your biggest obstacle in web-based presenting, so keep your slides visually-rich and moving (or building) on a much more aggressive timeline. Never spend more than a minute on a single visual. If you find yourself talking for three to four minutes or more on a single slide, that e-mail window on participants' desktops will begin to call their names!

52 **Vocal mechanics take on greater importance in web presentations, since your voice is the primary conduit of communication.** As such, vocal imperfections will jump out and call attention to themselves. A monotone voice is simply too easy to tune out, and speaking too quickly, too slowly or articulating poorly are other common "verbal viruses" to avoid. Put on that wireless headset and stand and gesture as you deliver the presentation. Your audience will hear the added energy in your voice and make it just that much more difficult to get distracted. Vocally speaking, you need to be an enhanced version of yourself and that means emphasizing enthusiasm, clarity and warmth.

53 **To keep your audience engaged, change up presentation stimulus every six to seven minutes.** Moving between elements like personal stories, compelling statistics, co-presenters, high quality images, audio elements, links to web resources or brief online demos are just some of the ways to keep things interesting. Also, web presentations should be much shorter and more concise than their face-to-face counterparts. A 60-minute face-to-face presentation should become a 35-40 minute virtual one!

54 **Trial runs are vital with webinars.** Presenting platforms vary so it's important to determine their capabilities up front. Does the webinar platform allow presenters to use dual monitors? How are polling questions entered into the system? How clear is the headset sound? Make sure you use the same connection, computer and headset in your trial run that you will use the day of the presentation.

55 No matter how zippy your web connection or that of each participant, there is almost always a slight delay between when you show the next slide and when participants see the slide on their screens. The challenge is you don't know when participants are seeing the new slide unless you **set up a second PC on your desk and connect that PC as a participant.** That way, you can advance to the next slide and keep transitioning with what you're saying until you see the new slide on the "participant PC." Now you're experiencing what they are.

56 **Build virtual relationships quickly.** Put a picture of yourself on your title slide and lead off with a personal story that gives them some insight into what makes you tick and why you're passionate about your topic. Trust is always a by-product of personal insight.

57 **Consider using Webcam-sharing features before and after a presentation**, so participants can connect your face to the content, or during those times when you ask questions. Consult your web hosting consultant about this use. You'll want to avoid streaming live video during the body of your webinar since it can negatively impact the quality of your presentation.

Web-based Presentations (cont.)

58   **Exercise caution when using animation and hyperlinks.** Animations that work well in one webinar platform might not work in others. And while hyperlinks might work in a normal presentation, they may not be "clickable" in certain webinar platforms. To avoid the latter problem, consider placing your links in text chat windows.

59   **Let your audience know up front you will be providing a Q&A opportunity at the end.** Also, encourage them to send their questions via email for a post-presentation response. If questions pile up at the end of your presentation and are not answered, attendees will feel they received less value for their time.

Room Set-up

60   The presenter is considered the most important element of a presentation, but **the location of the presentation screen often sends a very different message**. The screen is often placed in the center-middle of the room forcing the presenter into a corner and setting up an unfair competition for your audience's attention. Whenever possible, move the screen into the upper-right front corner of the room to send the message you are the focus of the presentation, not your visuals. The added space up front will also allow you to move more comfortably and better engage with your audience.

61   **Without a visual reference to see your slides and confirm slide movement, it is almost impossible not to turn your attention frequently back to the big screen**. This constant engagement-disengagement with your audience is one of the most common complaints audiences have for presenters. Place your laptop on a chair or table in the front row so a brief glance is all it takes to get your bearings. You will appear much more in control.

62   **The most difficult room set-up for connecting effectively with your audience occurs when you are trapped behind an impersonal lectern or podium**. Important body language is effectively negated and your eyes will spend more time staring down at your notes than looking at your audience. Although most AV departments default to this room set-up, they're more than happy to accommodate a presenter who would like a wireless lapel microphone and the podium moved off stage. The biggest reason they are not available? The presenter doesn't ask.

63   **Get set-up and ready to go at least 30 minutes before you present.** Then walk the available presenter space to get comfortable with the room, learn where not to stand so you don't get between audience members and the screen and mark the squeaky places on the stage. Nothing is more irritating than a recurring, noisy distraction for your audience.

64   **Room lighting can often wash the color and contrast from your presentation visuals**. Canned or florescent lighting above your presentation screen will wash out your protected images, leaving them less appealing, flat and with more muted colors. You will find most support staff helpful in simply disconnecting that specific fixture to make your visuals "pop" on screen.

Delivery Skills and Resources

Being an effective presenter today is not about executing on a bunch of high-level skills flawlessly, rather it is about doing just a few simple things consistently well. **Here are four areas to focus on to refine your skills:**

(65) **EYES** - Most presenters scan their audience and rarely make sustained, purposeful and individual eye contact. Turn your presentation into a series of one-on-conversations and your audience will sense a much more personal connection.

(66) **HANDS** – Nervousness often exhibits itself in hands finding very anxious things to do. (Clasping, wringing, clutching). Between good gestures, develop the discipline of letting your hands return comfortably to your sides. It may feel uncomfortable but will look less nervous. Remember, your audience's eyes travel to wherever the hands go. Try not to let your hands get "stuck" for more than a few seconds and avoid keeping your arms locked at your sides as if your elbows were nailed to your rib cage. Make gestures big and meaningful.

(67) **MOVEMENT** – Presenters often will say they want to be perceived as passionate, energetic and enthusiastic. Unfortunately, most do little to move in ways that create that impression. And if they do move, it often appears as nervous pacing instead. Practice comfortable, relaxed movements between three spots – center, left and right. The key is staying long enough in each spot that you appear to be well-anchored. Consider moving with slide transitions.

(68) **VOICE** – A strong, confident visual presence needs to be reinforced by a strong, articulate and varied delivery. Presenters are often the last ones to hear the nervous "uhms" and "ahhs" that creep into their conversation. These awkward fillers can become very distracting. Record your next presentation and simply listen, don't watch it. The brain will often insert these nervous "placeholders" as it attempts to buy some time to access information.

Try to be more deliberate in your delivery and insert natural pauses where you're tempted to insert an uhmm. Strive for conversational behavior and tone in a monologue setting. Dialogue behavior feels like two people talking across a kitchen table – natural, comfortable and open.

(69) **Audiences will often reflect back the energy level of the presenter in front of them**. If you are a low energy presenter, you will create low energy audiences (and interaction). For this reason, practice bringing a much higher level of enthusiasm to your presentations. It may feel a little uncomfortable, but this enhanced level of focus, energy and confidence will help you appear more professional and in control. The added passion will not be viewed as phony, rather an enthusiasm they will find refreshing. They will get energy from you!

(70) Sometimes peer-to-peer coaching fails to identify and resolve presentation behaviors. There will be times when you simply need to **seek out professional presentation skills coaches.** They not only will help you identify key issues but also offer some seasoned insight on how to address them. **Look for these things in a professional presentation skills coaching organization:**
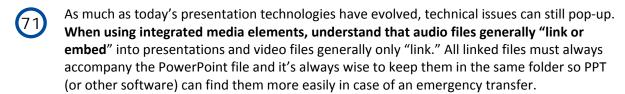
Delivery Skills and Resources (cont.)

•*Self-awareness is critical to personal change*.
 Videotaping must play a central role in any coaching experience.

•*Find a company with a solid track history and check its references*.
 Anyone can fill a screen with client logos.

•*Customization for your team's needs should be a strong consideration*.
 Find someone who understands your industry and can "tune" training for you.

•*Training is never a check in a box – it's an outcome*.
 Be realistic about the time it will take to create real behavioral change in individuals.

•*Know how they will provide post-training support*.
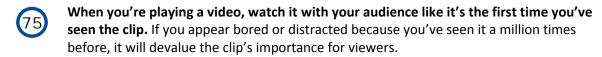 Skills will atrophy when there is no reinforcement and no accountability.

Using Sound & Video

71 As much as today's presentation technologies have evolved, technical issues can still pop-up.
When using integrated media elements, understand that audio files generally "link or embed" into presentations and video files generally only "link." All linked files must always accompany the PowerPoint file and it's always wise to keep them in the same folder so PPT (or other software) can find them more easily in case of an emergency transfer.

Embedded media files are contained within the file but also increase the native file size accordingly. Don't insert a CD-quality audio file when a lower quality audio element will do.

72 **Always test video links before each presentation**. PowerPoint wants to create "triggers" for embedded video but it limits your options. (Play when you "enter" slide or play when you click <u>on</u> the video) To play on any mouse click (more practical), delete the trigger from Custom Animation and ADD EFFECT > MOVIE ACTIONS > PLAY (on a click.)

73 **Make sure you know how audio clips will be played from your laptop during presentations**. (Your own speakers or house speakers?) If your laptop audio is maxed out, you will not have an option to adjust volume levels yourself during the presentation. When testing, set your laptop audio level at 70% and let the sound tech adjust the external mixer for the house. Then you still have some laptop control of house sound levels.

74 To minimize having to make many individual volume changes from your laptop, **adjust audio levels for sound and video files in your presentation within PowerPoint so they are the same**. Click on the media element in your Custom Animation menu and select a settings tab until you see a small speaker icon. The goal should be to set all your audio levels so they sound to your ear as being the same level.

Using Sound & Video   (cont.)

(75) **When you're playing a video, watch it with your audience like it's the first time you've seen the clip.** If you appear bored or distracted because you've seen it a million times before, it will devalue the clip's importance for viewers.

(76) Many presenters today play excerpts from Hollywood movies during presentations to make points. **Be aware that this type of "public viewing" may require a small licensing agreement to avoid violating copyright law.** Visit mplc.com to learn when and where you must obtain an inexpensive license to keep you out of trouble with the movie makers!

Personal Influence

(77) **Text and data is rarely influential**. Making a lasting impact on audiences requires also appealing to the right side of the brain where long-term memory resides. Things like personal stories, the use of props, audio & video integration or interactive group discussion are all tools for fostering messages that will be remembered long after your presentation ends. Remember that what brings data to life is the emotion and relationship behind the information.

(78) Landmark research (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000) found that **when we offer people too many choices or options, it actually makes it more difficult for them to decide**. In a presentation, if we provide too broad a range of variations in our products, services, budgets or other areas, decision making becomes more difficult for audiences, not easier. Choice is not always a good thing. Limit the options you want your audience to consider!

(79) **Are you better at pointing out audience "pain" than articulating a crisp solution?** Research shows that unless we offer up a clear and well-defined path to resolve tension for the issues we've raised, we may actually be *paralyzing* our audiences desire to take action! Be sure to conclude with some very specific things they can do to resolve their "pain."

(80) **Psychologists call it the principle of inoculation**. When there is a pre-existing issue that is known to your audience that threatens to derail your presentation message, tackle it head on early to defuse its impact. For example, "*Last quarter we missed an important product introduction deadline. But because we delayed introduction, we were able to create a better product that has several important features our customers desperately wanted*…" If you don't take this approach, you can be sure someone will ask an embarrassing question during Q&A that will be your audience's last impression.

(81) **Audiences rarely relate very well to people who come across as too polished.** And perfection should never be our goal as presenters. We are most influenced by authentic people who share challenges similar to our own. Our greatest position of influence is in coming alongside our audiences, not speaking down to them as subject matter experts.

Personal Influence   (cont.)

82 **People are generally more persuaded by what they may lose than by what they may gain.** (Robert Cialdini, *Influence: Science & Practice*) Yet we continue to focus on selling the upside of our ideas and solutions. Understanding and articulating the pain-affect-need of an issue (before offering solutions), creates important context and is an effective way to help an audience internalize a needed solution.

83 Why did response rates go up dramatically when TV infomercials changed tactics from "operators are waiting" to "if operators are busy, please call again"? (Robert Cialdini, *Yes*) The answer is the principle of *Social Proof*. **When many people (just like your audience) are making the decision we're proposing, they feel more motivated to make a similar decision.** In your presentations, utilize case studies that are closely associated with your audience demographic to move them towards your solution.

84 **To move a highly-diverse audience (job titles, personal experiences, various industries) ahead together in its thinking or decision-making can be a challenge**. Help people find common ground as a group first. Consider using an audience interaction question or data point that affects everyone in the room and guides them toward an acknowledgement of shared experiences. Then relate that to your topic and the audience's differences will become less important to them.

Better Sales Presentations

85 **Good sales presentations should be more about the issues that keep your prospect awake at night than your need to articulate your product or service features in detail.** Prospects care only about how you can help them solve problems, not the new whiz-bang attributes of your product or service. Content without context is meaningless. (See the 7- step model in the Message section) When you can solve a customer problem or remove a pain, you become a resource instead of a vendor.

86 **Sales calls do not always require a PowerPoint presentation**. An exploratory discussion without the use of a single presentation slide will often provide the insight needed to shape a well-targeted second call presentation that builds trust more rapidly in relationships.

87 Seated presentations may be the norm for many sales calls today, but in a study done by the Wharton School of Business, **when presenters stood to interact with visuals, flipcharts or props, "buyers" in the study were often "more likely to buy."** Standing adds more energy and presence to your interaction when it can be done naturally.

88 **Good elevator pitches aren't what they used to be.** First, elevators are a lot faster these days and secondly, busy executives are usually on their cell phones. For a crisp elevator pitch use this formula: Personal introduction. Then "You know how…" (the issue or problem companies experience), "well we" (your solution and its value proposition) "and the results are…" (the impact your customers are experiencing). Offer your card and a smile.

Better Sales Presentations (cont.)

(89) **Often times a group of technical managers and executive leaders are together in the same presentation, making it difficult to target their specific needs and respect their time**. Start the presentation by letting them know that the first 10 minutes will be a high-level overview of your product/service/idea and then you'll be taking a two-minute break. If participants received all the information they needed, they can feel free to leave. If they want to do a deeper dive, the next 30 minutes will provide additional detail. Everyone will love you!

(90) **Too many sales presentations end because they run out of slides.** Create a succinct summary slide to close your presentation, and know its slide number so when your presentation is cut short by that "driver" decision maker, you can simply type in the slide number of your concluding slide (in PowerPoint) and jump to a crisp conclusion and call to action. It will make you look very polished and prepared!

(91) **Want to know how to get the attention of senior-level decision-makers?** Find out how they are measured in their jobs (profitability, market share, campaign execution…) then target your presentation to those metrics. That will greatly increase your odds of gaining a follow-up presentation.

(92) **Most salespeople hand out colorful brochures, slick flyers, and glossy postcards about themselves and the services they offer**. But these rarely provide value to the audience, and often end up in the circular file. Think instead about offering materials that educate or offer insight. Distribute white papers, special reports, published articles, checklists, and tip booklets that will have a longer shelf life, and keep you in prospects' consciousness.

(93) **Think about ways to extend and repurpose your in-person presentations**. With the rise of social media and expanding web options, presenters need to look beyond the room where they present to get their messages to potential prospects and customers. Digital technologies make it easy to record presentations and post them on presentation-sharing web sites, and you can convert PowerPoint into video to upload it as well. You might also blog about your presentation topics, then provide a link to related presentations you've made.

(94) **When responding to audience questions, seek to turn "loaded" questions into neutral ones.** For example, someone in an audience of sales prospects might ask, "There's a lot I like about your product, but why is your price so high relative to the competition?" As a presenter, seek to change that to, "Let me try to explain how we arrive at our price structure and how it actually creates greater value for our customers."

(95) **Remember that "you" and "yours" are two of the most pleasing words in the English language**. Research shows that these two pronouns will perk your audience's ears as if it were a German shepherd hearing its beloved name called. These words tend to be absent in sales demonstrations that try to appeal to as broad an audience as possible by using impersonal, cookie-cutter language. But when you say you, yours or even your customer's name, you involve an audience as if it's participating in the demo. Instead of saying, "here are the benefits," try "here is how *you* benefit," and rather than saying "here's how it can boost a bottom line," use "here's how it will boost *your* company's bottom line." It's a simple but powerful change.

Rehearsing a Presentation

96   **Make a distinction between "practice" and "rehearsal**. Practice means sitting in your office or on an airplane reviewing your slides or script. Rehearsal, on the other hand, means being up on your feet, using the same gestures, eye contact, pacing and interaction with supporting visuals you'll use in your actual presentation. Too often presenters overwork *what* they are going to say during practice, and under work *how* they are going to say it during rehearsal. People who think they never need to walk through a speech physically usually are those who fall short of audience expectations.

97   **Spend as much time rehearsing the invisible as visible content**. Most presenters spend the majority of their time reviewing PowerPoint slides and other visuals – the visible content audiences can see and read for themselves. They spend far less time practicing transitions between slides, personal stories, analogies and elaboration of slide text – the invisible content that has as big an impact on presentation success as PowerPoint slide quality.

98   **Rehearse while your presentation is still in a formative stage** to get an early sense of what content might be trimmed, modified or condensed. That way you'll limit the amount of panicky late-stage edits or changes you'll have to make to stay within a time limit, switch up slide order or when you realize you've used three wordy examples when one would suffice.

99   **Consider a separate rehearsal just for your non-verbal "conversation."** Once your content is in good shape, determine how you're going to stand, to move, and where during the speech you need to do what. This isn't about getting the words or positioning perfect, but rather about creating a "feel" for the speech as an extension of your body.

100   **Spend 30% or more of your practice time on the opening five minutes and concluding five minutes of your presentation**. If you don't establish a rapid connection with your audience based on personal style or content relevance, you will lose them for the next 55 minutes. If you don't wrap-up and conclude well by leveraging a crisp summary and frame the thought in a relational context (often a concluding story), you will be forgotten by the time they get back to their desks. Do those two things well and you will be a much more memorable presenter.

101   **Don't conclude on a Q&A session.** Q&A can be a great time for message clarification and audience engagement, but it also runs the risk of creating a final unfortunate or awkward impression. If you have an antagonistic or off topic questioner, he or she can totally derail the end of an otherwise great presentation. Always have a prepared 30-second wrap up comment after Q&A that sums up the value you delivered to your audience that day. That way you will always have the last word.

Reading recommendations...

Presentation Zen - Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery
Garr Reynolds

slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations
Nancy Duarte

Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling Your Story
Jerry Weissman

Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Die and Others Survive
Chip Heath and Dan Heath

Managing By Storying Around: A New Method of Leadership
David M. Armstrong

Tools of Engagement: Presenting and Training in a World of Social Media
Tom Bunzel

The Leader's Voice
Clarke & Crossland

Beyond Bullet Points
Cliff Atkinson

The Leader's Guide to Storytelling
Stephen Denning

Metaphorically Selling: How to Use the Magic of Metaphors to Sell, Persuade & Explain Anything to Anyone
Anne Miller

Speak like a CEO: Secrets for Commanding Attention and Getting Results
Suzanne Bates

Influence: Science and Practice
Robert B. Cialdini

How to Mind-Read Your Customers: Using Insights from Psychology to Increase Sales and Develop Better Business Relationships
David P. Snyder

Never Be Boring Again: Make Your Business Presentations Capture Attention
Doug Stevenson

Talking from 9 to 5: How Women's and Men's Conversational Styles Affect Who Gets Heard, Who Gets Credit, and What Gets Done at Work
Deborah Tannen