

PRESENTATION

Presentations are indispensable part of communication. Every day business executives and employees have to make formal as well as informal presentations. Executives have to make presentations at company meetings, seminars and conferences. Employees have to make hundreds of mini presentations to persuade the potential customers to buy. As one progresses in his career, presentational speaking skills assume greater importance than technical trainings.

The success of a speaker depends, to some extent, on the personality and voice; but anyone can be a good speaker with knowledge of the formal aspects of public speaking and by taking the trouble to prepare.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ORAL PRESENTATION

A good presentation must possess following characteristics-

(1) Clarity: Clarity is the first major characteristics of a good speaker. A good speaker should be clear in his idea and he should have good command over language in which he is speaking to express his ideas clearly so that they are instantly understood by the listeners.

(2) Length of the presentation: The length of a good presentation should neither be too brief nor too long. If the presentation is too long it will fail to sustain the interest of audience for long time. If it is too brief it may end even before it exercises to hold once the attention of the listeners. Speaker should express his ideas in a lucid manner and talking most relevant to the topic.

(3) Natural voice: Usually it is seen that some speakers deliberately cultivate an affected style under the impression that it would make them look more sophisticated. But it is not so, because nothing impresses so much as the natural way of presentation. So a good speaker always tries to tone down an artificial accent and tries to cultivate a pleasing voice and speak clearly and distinctly.

(4) Informative: Good presentation should be informative and illuminating so that the audience can gain something from it. If a speaker is repetitive he will simply bore the audience who will turn the deaf ear to whatever is being

spoken. A speaker has to reach his audience, his public, and the method and means by which he does it, is his own. He has to bring out his individuality through his presentation, so that his image stands separate from that of others.

(5) Interesting: A good presentation should be interesting and it should appeal not only to the mind of the listeners but also to their hearts. If the speaker makes an appeal to the emotions of the listener he can easily join their hearts over to his side.

(6) Avoiding Hackneyed phrases and cliches: Cliche means phrase which is used often but has no meaning. Speaker should avoid the making use of hackneyed phrases like 'What I mean', 'Isn't it', 'I see', 'You see', 'Do you follow' etc. Such words and phrases interrupt the flow of their presentation and impede quick grasp of meaning.

(7) Brevity: People take pleasure in talking. So presentation should be brief, informative and to the point. But if a speaker keeps in talking for long, his message will get lost in a sea of verbosity and distraction.

(8) Live: Speaking before an audience requires a slower pace. Slow down; think of every word as you use it. Listeners do not want a tape- recording. It should be live. One should put one's heart into the talk. It should look as if presentation is not flowing out of the mind but also out of the heart of speaker.

(9) Concrete facts: A good presentation should convey concrete facts rather than vague or abstract ideas, otherwise presentation will fail to sustain the interest of listeners. A good speaker should speak with such intensified and exacted naturalness that his hearers never even dreamed that he has been trained.

COMPOSITION OF A PRESENTATION

A presentation like any other composition has an introduction, a body and a conclusion. These much-used words are still useful for analysis.

(1) Introduction: During the time when two or three sentences are spoken the audience 'sizes up' the speaker unconsciously judging his personality and adjusting to his voice and manner. To some extent speaker's at his initial stage

depends upon personality and voice, but the words also play their part. The function of introductory words is to establish rapport. It means pointing out a common board between the speaker and the audience.

(2) Focusing attention: A presentation can't be a series of loose unrelated remarks; there is central point, however small, in every presentation. Attention must be drawn to this point so that the audience has a line of thought to follow. In a serious presentation stating the subject of the talk can do this. For example, I am speaking today on the need for conserving energy.

(3) The body: The material depends on the purpose of the presentation. For example, if the purpose is to ask people to donate blood, information about methods of preservation, classification of blood, need of blood, banks, locations of banks, and their stock management must be given. The audience also need to know about the health, safety and advantages to the donor, and the importance of voluntary donation. A presentation meant to inform must be carefully planned according to subdivisions of the subject. It is better to begin with easy ideas and go slowly to difficult ideas; also it is better to begin with acceptable ideas and gradually works up to gain acceptance of new ideas.

(4) Conclusion: The function of the closing paragraph is to leave clear message. If the presentation has been informative a short summary is the best conclusion for encouraging presentation. Encouragement to future achievement and good wishes for future success are best conclusions.

HOW TO MAKE AN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION

The following tips are designed to make effective presentation:

1. Preparatory Steps

(a) Choose the topic of presentation well in advance before the date of the presentation. If possible, make up index card and notes or key phrases to refer to during your presentation. Do not put the entire presentation on the cards and read it word by word during your presentation.

(b) Discuss the topic with your friends.

(c) Think of your experience for illustrations.

(d) Think of your audience, what they want and what can be of interest to them. What do you really wish to say to it?

(e) You should plan as to which visual aid is to be used. These days overhead projector is extensively used by the speakers. Surveys show public speaking is the number one personal fear in the world. But with some planning, preparation and practice, you can be successful.

The speaker must collect, organize, analyse the facts to be presented in the light of the purpose to be achieved. A more conscientious man would weigh his words and speak only what reasonable and relevant. Some people, again, may entertain the notion that should not suppress truth and, however painful it may be, it has to be spoken out. Thus, the rule we should follow in our presentation, in our private as well as public dealings is that hurting others is to be avoided at all costs, because, as the saying goes, the wound made by words goes deeper.

2. Arresting Attention

i) You may find it helpful to sit quietly for a few minutes before your presentation and gather your thoughts, breathing deeply, relax for a while, tell something new and of interest to the audience. Grab the attention of the audience with an incident, a 'slice of life from your own experience.

(ii) Arouse curiosity.

(iii) Introduce the topic to the audience.

(iv) Use general illustrations

(v) Be natural.

(vi) Talk in a conversational way.

(vii) Emphasise important words.

(viii) Talk with the specific points.

(ix) Secure goodwill, by smiling and other humorous ways.

(x) Crowd your audience together

(xi) Check the physical arrangement like proper light, ventilation, as far as possible. Do not keep other members on the platform.

(xii) Do not roam on the platform.

3. Opening (How to open your talk):

The presentation should have three parts: introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction should be such that it appeals directly and quickly. Arouse curiosity by giving some factual statement. Begin with an illustration. Shocking facts have great power to make people attentive.

How to Capture an Audience:

(a) Eradicate all ill feelings.

(b) Get a yes response from your audience.

(c) Do not challenge.

(d) Present the facts and let the audience form their own opinion.

4. Closing-

How to close - In any presentation, the beginning and the end are very important. Closing is most important because the final words are remembered longer. Closing should have smoothness. Summarize your points and appeal for action. Give sincere compliments. Close with practical quotations, if possible. Plan the conclusion in advances. The conclusion makes the review of what has been said.

5. Never try to play down a member of the audience, or to embarrass questioner by implying that his question is stupid (even if it is).

6. Try not to get angry, even if the provocation is extreme and unfair. If you do get angry, avoid showing it (if you can).

7. If a question period is to follow the talk, let the audience know this, so that they can be gathering points.

8. When asking questions, use questions which provoke thought amongst the whole audience, not just one or two persons or sectors of it. When initiating a question period, don't ask are there any question? The silence can be very embarrassing. Instead ask, "Now, who has got the first question?"

9. When you ask the audience, a question ask it generally to the entire group, then single out a respondent and identify him. This causes everyone to listen and think about it; Example - if you say, "Mr. Sharma, what do you think about such and such?" Everyone else will relax and watch Mr. Sharma try to get himself off the spot. But if you say, "What do you think about such and such.. then) Mr. Sharma"; all the audience will think about the question just in case you call on them and not on Mr. Sharma.

10. Keep your presentation as short as possible without its becoming meaningless. Better to stop while their interest is still aroused than to keep on, until they get restless and become tired and bored.

11. Don't try to summarise your whole presentation at the end. By doing so, you merely prove to the audience that you can actually say in five or ten minute what it has taken you forty minute to say.

12. Above all, be interested in what you are saying, and show it. Enthusiasm generates enthusiasm. If you are genuinely interested in your topic, and in sharing your viewpoints with the audience, then they will automatically detect that interest, and will immediately acquire a similar enthusiasm.

13. Take every possible opportunity to speak. Practice leads to perfection.

Factors Affecting Presentations

(1) Audience Analysis: The presentation can be more effective, if the speaker keeps in mind the behaviour of the audience. If the speaker is unable to analyse the behaviour of the audience it leads to ineffective communication. The presentation depends upon the size and the type of the audience. If the

audience is large then the presentation should be formal but if the audience is small then the informal communication can also work.

(2) Answering Questions: The presentation becomes more effective if the speaker handles the questions efficiently. A speaker who handles the questions of the audience impresses the audience. On the other hand, if the speaker answers rudely, then it will create a bad impact.

(3) Body Language: A speaker must have eye contact with the audience. A speaker who has direct eye contact, is considered to be well informed, more experienced and honest. With this the audience feels involved. In the same way the speaker feels confident. For this, the speaker has to be well prepared.

(4) Quality of Voice: The voice should be clear. A speaker should have variations in his voice so that his presentation should not be monotonous.

(5) Language: The language should be simple and common so that it should be easily understood by the audience. He should use such words that it should appeal to the audience. If the speaker uses typical or difficult language, then he will not be able to impress the audience.

(6) Sequence: The ideas presented should be well organised. Well organised message will make the message more understandable, keep the audience happy, and will also boost the morale of the speaker. The presentation should not be too lengthy irrelevant details should not be included in it. The ideas should not be mixed up. They should be arranged in a logical sequence.

(7) Opening and Closing: The beginning and closing of the presentation should be impressive. The beginning should be such that it creates the interest in the audience. The beginning should not be boring that the audience loses the interest in it. Ending with the use of pictures can leave a great impact on the audience.

Giving Effective Presentation

Effective presentation includes developing reader's benefits, overcoming objections, analysing data and use of slides. The presentations are based on oral communication. Every effective presentation requires the following:

(1) Strategy

(2) Structure

(3) Support

(4) Presentation

(1) Strategy -

- i. The time, place and manner of the presentation should be planned beforehand.
- ii. The speaker must try to know about the audience like their economic and social status, their cultural background etc.
- iii. The speaker should try to judge the possible results that can be expected from the audience.
- iv. The speaker must decide the general as well as the specific purpose of the presentation. The general purpose includes, informing, persuading entertaining or making rapport with the public. The specific purpose includes influencing the specific audience.

(2) Structure -

The speaker must order his ideas properly before delivering his presentation. He must keep the things in mind that what is to be told, when to tell and in the last, what is told. The speaker must be very careful about it. The structure of the presentation is as follows

- i. Introduction
- ii. Catchy statement
- iii. Main theme
- iv. Body
- v. Conclusion
- vi. Review
- vii. Closing statement

For structuring a presentation, the speaker should keep the following things in mind:

- The speaker should gather the material of his presentation from different sources like libraries, books, magazines, journals, newspapers, company files etc.
- Then he should organise the gathered material and divide it into main headings and sub-headings. He should make it sure that presentation should not be lengthy. The points should be organised in a logical sequence.
- The speaker should try to capture the interest of his listeners. This can be done by asking the questions, telling a story, making a very attractive statement, by quoting some authority.
- He should plan the conclusion in advance. This helps him in making the review of what he has said.
- He must decide what is to be said at the end to appeal for action.

SUPPORT

Supporting material clarifies the speaker's ideas, makes it more interesting and leaves a permanent mark on the listener's mind. Visual aids like diagrams, charts, pictures etc. make points more clear. Supporting material can be in the form of:

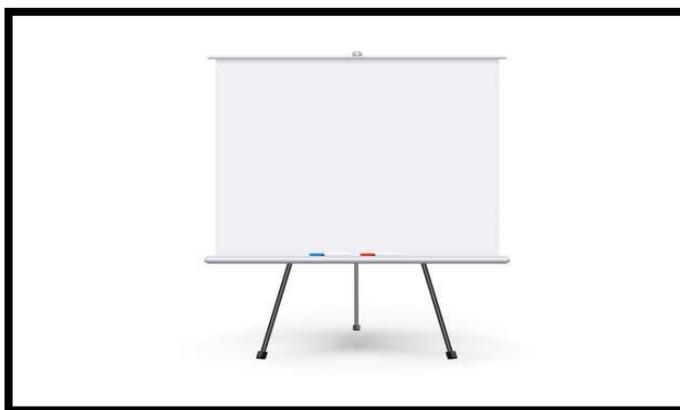
- a) White Boards: These are easy and economical to use, but are non-portable and time consuming.



- b) Hand outs: These are circulated at the start or during the presentation. But it is not always possible to point to what one wants the listeners to see and listen to because it takes away the listener's attention. So, these can be circulated at the end of presentation to avoid any distraction of the attention of the audience.



- c) Flip Charts: These consist of a large pad of papers with various visual presentations attached to a board (wooden frame) to support a picture. These are easy and economical to use and are portable, but are delicate. The letters should be written in a magnified form and with more than one colour.



- d) Overhead Projector: It casts an image of transparencies on a screen written with a marker or sketch pen or photostated copies. Transparencies can be reused for future. Proper focussing of overhead projector should be done so that transparencies are easily readable.



- e) 35 mm Slider: Computer-generated visuals can be transformed into slides and their photographic image can be shown in a dark room with the help of slider. To make the image clear, dust on lens should be cleaned with a soft Cloth, but one should be prepared to hold the interest and attention of audience even if power fails.



- f) Liquefied Crystal Display (LCD) Projector: It can be directly linked to a computer to produce high quality presentations with colourful pictures, detailed graphs etc. These are more powerful but costly also.



- g) Video Films/Tapes: These present the living image of the situation. These should be properly edited. These are expensive. So, every

business cannot generate of its own, but can be bought from professionals.



VISUAL AIDS AND ORAL STATEMENTS

The oral statements use visuals to present some information. These can be in the following forms:

1. Diagram of Essential Objects: If the speaker refers to some objects during presentation, he should try to get their visuals so that he can explain about their different features or components.
2. Tables, Charts, and Graphs: If the speaker discusses the statistical data, he should present it in the form of tables, charts or graphs because the audience may not be interested in hearing the data, but seeing it.
3. Outline of Talk, Report or Both: If the oral statement is complex, the speaker should have its outline with him.
4. Key Terms and Definitions: The speaker should set up a two column list of the important terms used during presentation with their meanings and definitions in the second column.
5. Key Concepts or Points: The speaker can show the main points in the form of visuals.