

DELIVERING A BUSINESS PRESENTATION

Getting Effective Results

Delivering a business presentation is an event that most people find utterly terrifying. A business presentation, however, is just another business skill, combining specific technical aspects with behavioural practise.

There are three distinct components to making an effective presentation:

- ◆ Designing a high-powered presentation
- ◆ Using PowerPoint properly to support your presentation
- ◆ Delivering your presentation effectively

This article, the third of three, will outline how to deliver a business presentation effectively, supported by PowerPoint. It will identify a number of elements which require focus and practise, as well as serious pitfalls to avoid.

Preparation

If you have followed the ideas and suggestions presented in the two companion articles, then you will have developed a business presentation that:

- ◆ addresses the strategic interests of your audience
- ◆ highlights the salient points
- ◆ provides only the most important information
- ◆ delivers a compelling argument
- ◆ is supported properly by PowerPoint slides
- ◆ provides documentation for the participants

You now are ready to organize the delivery of your business presentation. Remember that *You* are the presentation and that throughout the presentation you need to command the audience's attention and lead their thinking.

Your Objective

The objective of your business presentation is to engage your audience to support and endorse the resource requirements needed to achieve your business priorities.

In order to accomplish this goal, you must "*connect*" with the audience. You want to demonstrate that you are the expert of your business portfolio and one way of establishing such credibility is to project ease, comfort and control.

There are two distinct approaches to a presentation. Some people prefer to write out the entire presentation and then deliver it as a speech. Others prefer to identify just the key points. You will need to practise your delivery in order to discover your preferred approach, while also calibrating the presentation's timing.



Practise

You need to ***practise, practise, practise***. Think of athletes and musicians. They spend many hundreds of hours, perhaps even thousands, honing their skills. In particular, they focus on their weaknesses, striving to transform them into areas of excellence.

Because many of us don't feel competent and, therefore, aren't comfortable in delivering a business presentation, we tend to avoid practising it. Intuitively, though, we know that practise will help us become better skilled and, with that, more at ease.

Start by practising alone.

- ◆ Time your presentation and make the necessary adjustments.
- ◆ Become intimately familiar with the content and details of your presentation.
- ◆ Listen to your voice, tone, pitch, and cadence.
- ◆ Practise in front of a mirror. If possible, record your presentation.

When you feel reasonably prepared with delivering your business presentation, seek out a confidant who you trust and respect, and have her/him critique your presentation delivery.

Er, Um and Ah

We often encounter business presentations which are peppered with “*Ers, Ums and Ahs*”. These act as huge distractions for the audience and undermine the presentation. Why does this occur?

If one hasn't practised a business presentation sufficiently, then in the moment of delivery the mind races to organize thoughts and phrases. The “*Ers, Ums and Ahs*” serve as brief reprieves to enable our mental processing.

This counter-productive behaviour can be eliminated by:

- ◆ Recognizing your current delivery patterns.
- ◆ Identifying your preferred delivery style and consciously modelling it.
- ◆ Slowing down the delivery of your presentation, coming to a full stop on occasion and silently pausing.
- ◆ Practising your business presentation thoroughly and repeatedly.



Contingencies

Spend some time considering what could de-rail your presentation and how you might respond in real time. Some situations might be:

- ◆ Questions interrupting the presentation.
- ◆ Someone talking on their cell-phone.
- ◆ People whispering.
- ◆ Losing the audience's attention.

If you can pre-determine how you might handle these types of situations, you will be able to respond and maintain control of your business presentation. It also is totally appropriate to establish conditions at the outset of your presentation (asking the audience to turn off their cell-phones, for example, or requesting that questions be held until the end).

Delivery Tips

There are a number of techniques in delivering a business presentation that warrant your consideration and deliberate action. With sufficient practise, these will become familiar and automatic.

- ◆ Make direct eye contact with as many of your audience, as possible. Do not face the screen, because that cuts off the connection you desire.
- ◆ Modulate your voice and inflection for variety. Avoid monotone delivery.
- ◆ Talk at an even pace, but provide some variation. Do not talk so fast that the audience can't process your message.
- ◆ Pause, on occasion, for effect. This is not a speed contest.
- ◆ Speak loud enough for all to hear you. Use softer and louder volumes for emphasis. Do not speak in a quiet voice.
- ◆ Breathe easily to relieve your stress.
- ◆ Time your presentation through practices sessions. Never "wing" a presentation.
- ◆ Project authenticity and commitment by embodying high comfort and enthusiasm. Avoid projecting doubt or uncertainty.
- ◆ Read the body language of the audience and condense your presentation if you're starting to lose them.
- ◆ Use body language to maximize the impact of your delivery.



Presentation Mastery

Although you still may feel somewhat terrified about delivering a business presentation, this article provides the elements for alleviating that feeling.

Through being properly organized, repeatedly practising your presentation and actively seeking out presentation opportunities, you can learn to master business presentations. As a leader, you must confront that which you fear the most.

Conclusion

By combining these ideas about how to deliver a business presentation effectively with suggestions from the companion articles on how to design a high-powered presentation and how to use PowerPoint properly, you will become much more competent and confident in delivering high-powered and effective business presentations.

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