

PRESENTATION CHECKLIST - Give a Great Talk when it Counts

Go through these steps and you'll give a very effective presentation!

A. First Things First

1. Who is the audience? (size; expertise; amount of background knowledge; amount of detail desired or expected)
2. How long is allotted for the talk? For questions?
3. What do I hope to achieve?
 - (a) overt / explicit goals
 - (b) covert / implicit goals

B. Getting Started

1. Ideas to get across – empty my mind with a list of all the points I might consider
2. What are my “ho-hum grabbers” -- interesting or startling charts, photos, videos, drawings -- to grab the audience’s attention?
3. Repeat the following sequence until the results stop changing:
 - Which ideas are most important? Cluster related items around these
 - What can be used for strong opening & strong closing?
 - What kind of logical sequence connects these?
 - Where should I insert grabbers to sustain interest
4. Make outline
5. Make charts

C. Sequencing (use some or all as appropriate – 1 chart each unless otherwise noted):

1. Title – date, organization or affiliation, plus my name & contact info
2. Strong simple opening – objectives / issues / key points
3. Discussion outline
4. Objective, or what do we want to happen and why? – make it quantitative if possible
5. Basic concepts or definitions or background (one or two charts)
6. Key issues / problems
7. Approach or roadmap to achieve objective – point out any remarkable features
8. Optional: project organization
9. Optional: project schedule
10. Preview accomplishments – make them quantitative (one to three charts)
11. Optional: show roadmap – point out objectives, (quantitative) accomplishments, issues/problems, plans, expected (quantitative) accomplishments (but don't repeat these words too much)
12. Strong simple closing – (quantitative) accomplishments / plans or conclusions with recommendations or call for action

D. Final Checklist

1. Strong simple opening & closing
2. Objectives, issues, accomplishments, plans: very clear and quantitative
3. Chart format:
 - a. not too many words – key phrases only; a goal (which may not always be possible) is the 4-40 rule: no more than 4 key points, & no more than 40 words per chart; “simplify, simplify, simplify”

- b. quantitative, self-explanatory phrases
 - c. enough key words to make talk notes unnecessary
 - d. where needed, add a lead-in at the bottom of a chart to remind me what comes on the next chart
 - e. break time-consuming charts into two
 - f. variety in layout
 - g. use photos, graphical data, drawings, videos as appropriate for variety
 - h. moderate use of color
 - i. no "horse" charts (i.e., picture of horse and caption "horse"; each caption should add to the information contained in the picture)
 - j. use a "preview" chart before embarking on a long sequence of charts
 - k. avoid or minimize "motherhood" (company-speak, rah-rah) charts
 - l. number each chart in lower right corner
4. Decide where I can delete charts or skim over material to save time, in case this is requested at the time of presentation
 5. Where and what questions may be asked?

E. Putting It Together

1. Prepare talk notes – make sure there is a natural flow of ideas from one topic to another and from one chart to another.
2. Rehearse, out loud, and clock how long it takes.
3. Memorize talk. If notes are needed to get through the talk smoothly, or for extra comfort, make a 3x5 card for each viewgraph. Number the lower right corner to match the viewgraph number. List the key points to be made while this viewgraph is being shown.
4. Dry run, with an audience if possible – note areas for potential questions.
5. Polish it up
6. (If appropriate: provide copies of charts to hand out before the talk)