

Presentations

Who loves presenting to a group? For all the hands that go up, I'm quite sure there's many more that stay firmly down; in fact in a survey I spotted, this came out as the No. 1 fear. It seems many people would rather die!

If we think about it, the word 'presenting' covers giving a seminar/talk to a room full of people, to colleagues, to your boss, at an interview and so many different scenarios both in business and one's personal life.

Here are a few pointers to ensure you're on track:

1. Understand your audience and make a connection with them

- who will be there? if a sales pitch you need more than just names, you need to know their roles and who makes the buying decision
- what do they really want from you? – what they really really want, not necessarily what they need!
- why are they participating? typically you have 3 types of listeners
 - i. those really eager to learn/take notes and for whom this is important
 - ii. those who sit back and watch a slide show and enjoy the coffee and chat
 - iii. those there under duress – they've been told to attend!
- you will need to establish credibility and create an environment that's right for leaning
- what time has been allowed? "We have XXX today, does that still work for everyone in the room"? What you don't want is one of your key partners/stakeholders walking out just after you've started.
- specific and measurable benefits – what will the audience be looking for?
- likely objections – think them through so you can answer at the end if necessary – ensure you have a polished response
- dress appropriately

2. Understand the defined objective

- what's the purpose of your presentation
- what do you want from it?
- what's in it for the listener – clearly articulate this so that benefits are fully communicated and understood
- work from defined objectives

3. Too much data? – less is more - 3 points and only 3 eg

- I'm here because (I want you to purchase my xxxxx)
- The benefit for you is that it will save you £.....
- You then explain your structure and that you will be covering:
 - how it will increase revenues
 - reduce your overheads
 - create happier customers
- Why 3?

- memory and impact – the brain learns through repetition, and layering. You need to repeat what you’ve described as main topics and then explain the points in great detail. Layer and repeat, Layer and repeat.
 - distil many into few
 - lead with the best stuff.
- If long and complex, group under 3 headers and lead with the most important
- Add some stop slides so the audience can see where you’ve moved on to the next section

So then say you have 3 main areas to talk about x 15 minutes, the intro of 5 minutes and then 10 minutes at the end for questions. Allow time afterwards to mingle with any audience members who want to speak with you.

4. Writing your presentation

- Start with the end, what you want to achieve, the action/closing/what/why/how?
- Then 3 headlines titles of what you need to talk about to achieve your action closing – generally these will typically be sequential
topical
problem and solutions,
contrast and comparison
- Three critical messages
- The main body x 3
- Your opening words, directions, theme purpose

You may be interested in the 13-box structure by Eugene Moreau – free download on the web. You will also want to tap into the ‘emotional sell’ stressing the benefits of your product or service.

See below for words/phrases to avoid when giving your presentation

5. Excite your audience

- Be confident – have faith in yourself. Inspire your audience without drifting into a fantasy realm
- think about your beginning and end. Don’t leave it to inspiration on the wing. Start with confidence. Think – Script – Rehearse and memorize. You must start strong or else you’ll have an uphill battle on the way.
- How can you excite? Be creative, forget the platitudes, “Hello and welcome to today’s presentation. My name is xxx and for 20 years I’ve xxxxx(this needs to have been scripted and memorized) Find a great story to get people to listen. Make it personal if you can or local. Grab attention.
- Confidence issues? practise and practise and master the art of deep breathing
- If you’re presenting to a larger audience in a large room, then you need to check out the room first, slides/walk round, see screen, lights, microphone etc. Can

everyone see you or are there pillars in the way? You don't want to be surprised on the day

6. Death by Power Point

- more than 300 million people use PowerPoint in the world (that is a scary statistic!)
- Only use to visualise your ideas
- create key points. Use to impress
- Make eye contact with audience and never read from a slide
- It must never be a data dump. Never have a slide which you have to preface with 'I know this next slide is hard to read..... 3 – 4 lines per slide
- Try alternatives – have you played with Prezi yet? <http://prezi.com/>
- Including a slide specific to your audience would be great, eg if they are a particular football team fan, other sport, interest, incorporate that slide somewhere relevantly into your presentation.
- Always have a copy of your notes on paper. Just in case!

Aim to produce a presentation that makes yours stand out from all the rest and one that people will remember after the event.

7. Wrap Up

- “Just to recap, I told you at the beginning that I wanted to xxxxx and that by purchasing it, your company would save £XXXX. We looked at YYYY and ZZZZ” Don't assume the audience has 'got' what you've told them. The brain finds it hard to assimilate and translate new information. It's your duty to make sure that the assimilation is as complete as possible.
- Collect questions as you go through the presentation and answer at the end
- If you're asked about the competition, take great care. Never ever 'diss' the competition, rather reinforce your company's benefits over your competitor's offerings (you have done your competitor analysis, haven't you)?. Position yourself against them based upon their strengths and weaknesses. Or, if it's a specific question to which you don't know the answer, you could respond along the lines “we respect our competitors, it's probably better if you talk to them”
- If a sales pitch, then a good way to end is “What if anything would prevent you from taking the next step with me right now?” – promotes conversation
- Repetition and reinforcement if necessary. Let's quickly review....

The Dragons Den TV programme has done a couple of programmes revisiting what presentations were successful and following some of the 'winners'.

The key pointers included

- Make a good first impression – excite
- Practice makes perfect
- Keep your nerve and stay in control
- Don't offend your audience
- Communicate your passion
- Be honest about your company and the forecasts
- Know your facts – eg if you are applying for a patent, know exactly where you are with the process
- Don't be greedy – but equally know your bottom line

- Have a concise strategy which is easily understandable. No waffle, just hard facts and figures.

And finally, some suggested words/phrases to AVOID when giving your presentations:

Let me unpack this for you

So, well, you know, it's like, it's sorta, kinda.....

Like, you know, um

SO, how many of you have ever....? as an opener

Those buzz words: synergize, monetize, bring to the table, reinvent the wheel, carve out a niche, core competencies, low hanging fruit, deliverables, action items, skill sets – you know the ones – there's a great game of bingo based on these – have you played it?

At the end of the day

Moving forward, going forward

Bottom line

Add value (even though a MBA favourite!)

Specific sporting terms, eg headwinds and tailwinds

The fact of the matter is

Toxic

Back in the day

Irregardless (!)

They may or may not

At this point in time

Efforting (!)

If you do what you've always done, you'll get or the Insanity one. Most people have got Google too!

Let's take it to the next level

You may have heard of ...

Let's drill down on that for a moment

I just want to be clear

My friends

To be perfectly honest (can you be imperfectly honest?)

Can I be honest with you? (no, please continue to lie!)

Here's a link to Buzz Word Bingo – Enjoy!

If you fancy having a go then [this website](#) creates a Buzzword Bingo card every time you refresh the page. If you're feeling really incensed about particular buzzwords that crop up in your industry, then [this page](#) lets you create your own bingo card by entering your own words. [This fab site](#) even goes as far as including bingo cards for e-business with words such as ROI, virtual, dot-com and eyeballs!!!

Bradford on Avon
 Wilts BA15 2AX
 t 01225 869 240
 e info@armstrongbeech.co.uk
www.armstrongbeech.co.uk