Presentations and Time Management

It will explore in more detail how to create a plan (and, more importantly, how to stick to it.

How to schedule your presentation
Start by allocating a couple of minutes at the beginning to awaken your audience's attention and a few minutes to deal with questions towards the end. Also allocate about 30-40 seconds for your call to action.

Your audience will only give you limited time to capture their interest at the start, and once they see you're about to finish, they'll start to think of what they're having for tea, or where they're going on holiday. Separate the remaining time into chunks, one for each section of your content (**more on presentation structure**).

For example, say you have a 40 minute presentation, and you want to deliver five key points. Once you've structured your content, your presentation plan may look something like this:

Awakening Interest	90 seconds
Introducing All Concepts	3 minutes
First Concept	6 minutes
Second Concept	6 minutes
Third Concept	6 minutes
Fourth Concept	6 minutes
Fifth Concept	6 minutes
Questions	5 minutes
Conclusion	30 Seconds

Tools You Can Use to Keep You on Time
An invisible timer is an excellent tool for this job. These, ordinarily, clip on to your belt and can be set to vibrate at specific times. A more efficient way of using these timers is to strap it around your wrist, underneath your sleeve and out of sight - that way you will definitely feel the alarms vibrating. If you were to use one of these timers in the earlier example, you may set an alarm for the end of each section.

The second tool you can use is a countdown timer app on a tablet positioned on the front row of the audience (or somewhere you can clearly see it). That way you can always see how long you've got left and you wont be caught by surprise.

Rehearsing
The key point to remember about timing, is that it has to be rehearsed. You may well discover some sections require more time, and you need to be aware of how to get back on track if you're falling behind on time (i.e. what sections can be reduced).

Timing is as important as **content**. Your pitch may be perfect, but get your timing wrong and you instantly become the person who fluffs the punch line of a joke - it's the loss of impact you remember, not the joke.

Start and finish on-time

Starting late is disrespectful to your audience - they organised their day around your presentation. Finishing late is equally disrespectful, and sometimes more disruptive because people have other plans in their diary. However, the world isn't perfect and last minute, unplanned agenda changes do happen.

If you are a speaker at an event that starts late, ask the event organiser whether they want you to finish on-time (by cutting some material), or present all of your material and finish late. Whatever the plan is, let your audience know - this is the important point. Let people know what's going on. If the timing of the agenda is changed, communicate those changes as soon as you can - and then stick to them.

During your presentation

Many presenters make the mistake of spending too much time on early topics and consequently run out of time later on. Allocate a couple of minutes to capture people's attention at the beginning, and a few minutes to deal with questions towards the end. Separate the remainder of your presentation into timed chunks - including your call-to-action at the end. This way, you will know at any given point whether you're on track to finish on-time.

Here are some tips to track whether you are on time:

- Have a visible clock in the room so you can keep a check on the time without the audience noticing - avoid looking at your watch
- Have trusted audience member give a discreet signal at agreed intervals
- Have a vibrating timer on your belt or wrist

3 Steps to (Presentation) Success

It's no big secret that the key to a successful presentation lies within its preparation. Having said that, many people 'leave money on the table' by neglecting this important step.

The simple truth is, 'winging it' seldom works.

Good preparation starts long before you put pen to paper (so to speak). Here we outline a few key areas you should pay close attention to at the very beginning of your creative process.

1. Understanding your audience

Understanding your audience is very important; delivering relevant, useful material is far more likely to result in you winning business. The more information you know about your audience the better, as every detail you uncover will enable you to tailor your content.

There are many ways you can go about this. Ask the event organiser for a list of participants. Consider sending each one a survey aimed at helping you understand what they wish to gain from your presentation. Check their LinkedIn profiles, websites and company information to see who these people are and what they represent.

2. Know the venue

What size is the stage? Is it to the side of the screen or in front of it? Is there a lectern? Asking the event organiser these questions will help you decide how you are going to utilise your surroundings to best present your material.

What size is the room? Do you need a mic? Will you be able to interact with the audience if you wish? Are also equally important questions to ask. Finding this out in advance will help you minimise 'last minute' changes on the day.

3. Know the technology

Do you build your slides for a 16:9 a 4:3 display? If you think of the screen as a canvas, then you want to use as much of the canvas as possible - getting the wrong aspect ratio will prevent you from doing this (and will leave you with either horizontal or vertical bars).

If you will be required to use a microphone then ask what type. Hand held microphones permanently 'tie up' one of your hands. If you were planning on using a slide clicker and have notes on stage with you, then suddenly your hands are full, and you need to become an expert juggler.

Presentations: Three Things to Avoid

So you have an idea of what makes a successful presentation, but what are the things you should avoid? Here're three things you ought not to be doing...

Poor Preparation

An audience can instantly spot a well prepared speaker. Those that haven't honoured their audince by preparing well tend to over-rely on their notes (or slides). Their content lacks depth and their delivery lacks coherence and energy.

Spend time rehearsing. Use your colleagues, friends and family as 'test' audiences. The old saying "practice makes perfect" became so well known for a reason.

Creating cue cards to keep you on track is a good idea. Make sure thought, that when you speak, you're engaging the audience (and not looking at your notes). This will help your voice reach the back of the room.

Forcing Humour

Being 'entertaining' is not the same as being 'funny'. You don't have to tell a joke - especially if it isn't relevant to the audience or content. You only have (approximately) 90 seconds to grab your audience's attention, don't waste it on irrelevant humour.

If you're not a naturally funny person then avoid jokes altogether. Telling jokes well is an art - and you need to be sure that it's one your audience hasn't already heard. Professional comedians

spend huge amounts of time creating fresh material and crafting its delivery. Every pause, word and sound is practised until perfection is achieved.

No Call to Action or Take Away

The purpose of your presentation should be very clear to you. A presentation titled 'A general introduction to the company' already lacks a real purpose. Before you create your presentation you should be able to answer the following three questions:

1. What do I want them to know?
2. How do I want the to feel?
3. What do I want them to do?

If you don't have the answers, you need to rethink your presentation objectives.

3 Ways to Grab Your Audience's Attention

Staggeringly, as little as 8-12% of an average business presentation is remembered by the audience. Just think, that equates to around three minutes of the 30 minute presentation you sit through. There are several steps to take if you want your presentations to be well remembered. Principle among them is that your opening 90 seconds needs to awaken your audience's attention.

For most presenters, 90 seconds equates to approximately 225 words. You should use those words carefully and with a clear focus on awakening interest. The moment you open your mouth that 90 seconds is quickly ticking away - so here are three key tips for ensuring your opening 90 seconds grab your audience's attention:

1. Script & then... rehearse, rehearse, rehearse

Perfect practice makes for a perfect performance. Consider each word, pause and breath - craft and rehearse them with care, giving yourself the best possible chance of getting your message across. A weak opening will leave you with an uphill struggle.

Once you have scripted your opening, rehearse it until it is committed to memory.

2. Know your surroundings

Don't use this precious time checking whether the people at the back of the room can hear you. This gives the audience the impression that you haven't adequately prepared. Do the appropriate sound checks prior to your presentation and actively work with the audio team (if there is one).

Familiarise yourself with the equipment you are using - where the buttons are and what they do. Keep your focus on the audience rather than the technology.

3. Tell them something they don't know

Making a dramatic statement during your opening is a sure way of grabbing attention - however, make sure you're able to you back up any claims.

Using unfamiliar statistics has equal impact and can help build your reputation as the 'go-to' source of knowledge.

Presentations: How To Use The Stage

Too many presenters spend the duration of their presentation standing in the exact same spot. By using the whole stage you have the ability to engage your audience and help them to visualise your message.

Different display types may affect the way in which you use the stage in the following ways:

- **A front projector** will restrict your positioning as you will be unable to stand in front of the screen (which is commonly centre stage) as you will create a shadow on the display
- **A television screen, back or keystone corrected projector** will allow you to use the whole stage freely

Try incorporating the following three techniques in your next presentation:

1. Create a timeline

In the West, people associate the past with their left, and the future with their right. The key thing to remember is the audience's perception of left and right is the opposite of your own.

If you're telling a story, or explaining your company's progress, position yourself:

- on the audience left (your right) for the past
- in the middle for the present
- and on the audience right (your left) for the future

2. Focus their attention on you or the slides

If you want your audience to focus on your slides try standing closer to the screen, and If you want them to read a customer testimonial then half turn towards the screen as if you are reading it yourself.

Walking away from your slides and towards your audience takes draws the audience's focus towards you.

3. Give different options their own spot

When presenting different arguments or choices, give each item their own place on stage. When you talk about a particular item make sure you always return to its assigned spot. This way it will be easier for your audience to keep track of which points belong to which item.

This method is also particularly useful if you are telling a story with more than one character. By giving each character their own place on the stage you avoid confusing your audience.

The easiest way to stop talking and start speaking is to **be prepared**.

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