

These notes were created by Ian, then managing consultant for a large UK based business consultancy. At 29 Ian was responsible for 40 consultants who delivered change projects to a number of blue chip UK businesses. By 30 he was Customer Service Director for a £400m insurance firm. As a powerful and clear communicator he gives some thoughts here on presentations.

The notes below represent my personal thoughts on presentation structure and style. They do not necessarily represent the view of *****.

Presentations of the sort you are being asked to do, should be treated as an opportunity to market yourselves and to demonstrate your abilities. To do this effectively, you will need to keep the messages simple and clear and you must remember to keep the number of different subjects and examples down to an absolute minimum.

When people have got so much that they want to say, they often try and cram it in, thinking that if they include everything then the audience will be impressed and amazed at how good they are. People get confused if they have to take in too much in a short period of time and forget what it is you are trying to get across. Think of the principles of TV advertising. Keep the messages simple, short and concise. Eliminate waffle.

In my experience, audiences frequently spend a lot of their time trying to work out what the point of the presentation is. They understand what the person is talking about, but do not necessarily know where it is all leading to. They sit waiting for the punch line or the light at the end of the tunnel when it will all finally click into place. When this happens, people often go into their own little world thinking things over and it is when this happens that the key messages do not get across and the presenter has not done a good job.

The best way to avoid this is to structure the presentation, and I would suggest that if you followed the approach below, precisely, you can't go wrong.

1. Introduction

“Good morning, my name is ...”

They now know who you are. A lot of presenters forget to do this or take it for granted that they all know who you are.

2. Overview

“This morning I am going to talk about e.g. *how I made a difference as (e.g.) a project leader.*”

This is a one-liner, no more. Just giving the audience a small bit of information gets them to think about the subject themselves. It gets their attention.

3. Qualify Yourself

*“I am talking to you about this because of **my** e.g. experience as a project leader on the business readiness project for 1998”*

Again, this is a one-liner and you need to emphasise the “I” and the “my”. Already, the audience know who you are, what you are going to talk about and why they should listen to you.

4. Objectives

“The objective of this presentation is to e.g. demonstrate how I have made a difference.”

This is the point where you tell the audience what they are going to get out of; what knowledge or information they are going to walk away with. In this instance they should come away knowing that you can make a difference, nothing more; so don't be tempted to start waffling at this stage.

5. Ground Rules

- Tell them how long it is going to last, and keep to it.
- Tell them whether or not there are handouts or if they need to make notes.
- Tell them when they can ask questions, during the presentation or at the end, and don't be forced into changing half way through.
- Tell them to switch any mobile phones off.
- Tell them anything you need to, to ensure that you are in control. Make sure they know that you are in control.

6. Structure

“This presentation is structured into n sections (3 or 4 for a 15 minute presentation). Section one is Section 2 is and Section 3 is After Section 3, you will have the opportunity to ask questions.”

Only tell the audience what the title of each section is. Do not feel the need to go into any detail. Remember, all you are doing is setting their expectations. At this point in time, the audience knows exactly what is happening and what is coming along. Do not confuse them with any detail at this stage.

7. The Presentation

Now go into the presentation:

“Section 1,”

Introduce it as Section 1 and the title. This ensures that the presentation is entirely consistent with the excellent introduction you have just given. At the end of section 1, summarise the key points and then introduce Section 2. Continue until the end and summarise everything they have heard.

8. Practicalities

- Use note cards. Make sure they are numbered and *use* them during the presentation.
- Have handouts of the slides prepared and make sure that you give them out at the end.
- Keep looking at the audience. Give them eye contact and a smile.
- Practice, practice, practice. Know your lines, know how to pace it. Keep on time.