Effective oral presentations

Jean-luc Doumont

What? | So what?
---|---
Information | Message

Interpretation

To optimize communication...

First law
Adapt to your audience

Second law
Maximize the signal-to-noise ratio

Third law
Use effective redundancy

For an effective presentation...

1 Plan the presentation
   Gather your thoughts

2 Design the presentation
   Define a structure

3 Create the slides
   Convey messages

4 Deliver the presentation
   Master all channels

5 Answer questions
   Drive your point home
Planning the presentation

Find answers to the five planning questions.

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<td>What</td>
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Designing the presentation

First, focus on your audience
Introduce yourself in the task

A way to lead the audience to the need efficiently
A difference between actual and desired situations
What I decided/was asked to do to address the need
The one sentence I want my audience to remember
A map of the body (ideally three points, max. five)

Point 1
Transition
Point 2
Transition

A recap of the body, leading into the conclusion
What the above means to the audience in the end
A way to end the presentation clearly and elegantly

Attention getter
Need
Task
Main message
Preview

Focus again on your audience
Creating the slides

Do your slides right... or don’t do slides at all.
Slides are optional; first plan, design... and rehearse.

With each slide, convey one message (only).
State the message verbally, then develop it visually.

Create slides that make sense on their own so they are effectively redundant with what you say.

Finally, be concise, both verbally and visually.
“Sometimes add; but oft’ner take away” (Ars poetica).
Delivering the presentation

Verbal delivery
Memorize your outline but not your wording. Eradicate filler words; learn to value silences.

Vocal delivery
Adjust mean tone, rate, volume. Modulate to convey meaning, complexity, importance.

Visual delivery
Project confidence by controlling your body from toe to head: quiet noise, send signals.

Answering questions

For more difficult questions, simply be honest and helpful.
Just say things the way they are, but strive to help, not to offend.

Should you be under attack, remain calm and professional.
First, acknowledge the concern; then you can discuss the opinion.

1. **Listen** to the whole question, to ensure you understand it.
2. **Repeat/rephrase** as needed, so others understand it, too.
3. **Think** to construct an answer that is brief and to the point.
4. **Answer** to the whole audience, keeping eye contact with all.

Adapted from Jean-luc Doumont, *Trees, maps, and theorems* (Principiae, 2009). © 2009 by Principiae. All rights reserved. Can be downloaded from [www.treesmapsandtheorems.com](http://www.treesmapsandtheorems.com).