



Presentations are an effective medium to convey your message on just about anything. The key is to provide an engaging presentation with key takeaway messages. If you can chat to a group of friends, you can deliver a presentation. So where do you start? Presentations can be delivered in a variety of forums such as for conference, workshops, education of students, lectures at university or a proposal for the workplace. Each type of presentation has a purpose and an outcome.



Audience Engagement

Presenting in the virtual environment is a very different experience to presenting in person. The ability to connect with a person can now no longer be through movement, eye contact and body language. Create an upbeat tone that captures the audience's attention immediately. Pace yourself so that you can maintain your energy throughout your presentation. Stand up when you are delivering your presentation. Use a wired headset microphone. This keeps the energy up, but also allows you to breathe properly to remain focused and in touch with the virtual audience.

We have all been participants in virtual meetings and conferences over the last year, and you will agree that it is very easy to be distracted from the presenters. As the presenter, it is your job to keep the audience focused on you for the allocated presentation time whether it be 5 minutes – 12 minutes. To prevent listeners from tuning you out, pick up the pace. If you speak at a leisurely pace, you risk losing your virtual audience.

Use a Mirror to Monitor Yourself

One presentation trick is to practice in front of a mirror. This will enable you to see what your audience is seeing. As it is a virtual environment, the challenge is the lack of feedback that you would get from a live audience. By seeing yourself in the mirror, you can then be prompted to smile, or add that additional level of oomph to a presentation that may contain a lot of statistical information. Make sure that you also have good lighting around you to ensure that you are not hiding behind shadows and appear as though you are lurking.

If you have the opportunity, dial up some friends on the virtual platform be it zoom or teams and schedule a practice run. Get them to behave as a virtual audience would and allow them the opportunity to provide you with feedback on your presentation, lighting, colours etc.



Remember the KISS principle. Keep it simple and make sure that you have easy-to-read slides. We all know how easily it is to multitask and be distracted when listening online. Make sure that you ensure that your audience remains engaged by driving home your key messages quickly. Use a sentence headline for your slide titles that states the main point of your slide. You can then include the evidence for each of your key points in the body of the slide. Spread out your points over more slides, rather than less, so that new slides appear on the screen periodically to bring wandering minds back to you and your message.



Balance the pace of your presentation. Too slow or too fast can lose your virtual audience. There are also a few other ways to retain engagement through frequent change-ups or interruptions in your speaking pattern by:

- asking a direct or rhetorical question (live pres)
- soliciting feedback or comments (live pres)
- Use of polling (live pres) • using engaging images here and there,
- telling an anecdote that illustrates your point,
- providing an example or two to explain a point or introducing a metaphor to bring a pivotal point to life, or
- showing a brief video clip that ties into your message. Anything that is relevant and breaks up a monotonous pattern will enable you to come across as a more engaging presenter.

Technical Preparation

We cannot live without technology; however, Murphy's Law will always occur - anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. Here are some tips to assist you control this aspect: Use the most reliable internet connection you can. A wired connection is more optimal than wireless (WiFi) connections. and WiFi connections are considered better than cellular connections. Have another laptop (or emergency tablet or phone) at the ready in case you encounter a problem. Download a PDF version of your presentation to use as a backup in the case of a technical mishap with your slides (You do this by selecting "Save As" and choosing "PDF.") When saving your presentation as a PDF, remember to delete your hidden slides first as they will not remain hidden when you display your PDF presentation. Close any unnecessary applications or any other background activities that require a substantial amount of memory or bandwidth, such as downloading or uploading large files or instant file synchronizations. Make sure you are familiar with the platform that you are using to record your presentation, or if delivering on the live virtual platform.

Checklist

- ø Preparation
- ø Practice, Practice, Practice and again Practice!
- ø Audio
- ø Visuals
- ø Dress
- ø Minimalist slides

We hope that this assists you with the preparation for your presentation. Prepare and practice to ensure that you produce a professional presentation, and finally enjoy the process and good luck!

