



# Prepare well if you want to deliver a great presentation

**One of the keys to a successful presentation is preparation. Over the last few weeks I've seen a number of presenters in action so I thought I'd share a few observations which I hope will be of benefit to you when it's your turn to present.**

## 1. Blank piece of paper

Start the preparation of your presentation with a large, blank piece of paper and sketch out the purpose of your presentation, the three key messages you want to get over and what you want the audience to do next.

Think about how you can capture immediate attention with a strong opening (which won't happen if you begin by talking about you, your company, how great you are etc...), and plan a finish which will be powerful and provoke your audience into whatever action you want them to take.

Check if you are going to be introduced. Ideally you want someone to do that so you can go straight into your presentation. If you are to be introduced give the introducer the words you want them to say.

## 2. The Venue

It is rare when you are presenting to be in a venue that is purposely designed for presenting. Most of the time you will find yourself in a conference room, a hotel dining room, a restaurant or possibly even a cinema.

Ideally you should visit the venue in advance and get a lie of the land -

- Where will you be presenting from?
- How will the seating be laid out?
- Where will the screen and projector be?

- Is there an audio system?

You don't really want any surprises when you arrive to do your presentation.

### **3. The Audience**

Get to know as much about your audience in advance as you can including:

- How many people will be in the audience?
- Who are they?
- What are they expecting from your presentation?

### **4. Are you going to use slides?**

If you are thinking of using slides then make sure:

- You regard them as a prompt for your audience not as a script for yourself
- You keep the words on each slide to a minimum
- Every slide earns its right to be part of your presentation.

Too many words on each slide is the biggest downfall of most presenters. Aim for a maximum of six words per slide and work down from there. One word slides can be very powerful and memorable! You are there to speak the words that tell your story - you don't want the audience reading the story off the slides and not focusing on you.

### **5. Ditch the slides**

If you discover the screen on offer at the venue you are presenting at really isn't suitable for the room and audience size then give serious consideration to ditching most or all of the slides - when I'm speaking to groups of 20-30 people at venues not designed for presenting I swop the screen for an old suitcase full of props - you will be more memorable if you are different.

### **6. Are you going to incorporate video?**

If so here are a couple of tips:

- Ensure the venue has a good audio system so the soundtrack can easily be heard by everyone
- Keep it short - 30 seconds is usually the most people can focus on a video
- Make sure the video is relevant to the message of your presentation
- Make sure all of the audience can see the video - if the screen isn't big enough to do this don't run the video

### **7. Check the projector**

Find out where the projector will be sited.

It's not easy working with a projector that sits on a table and beams at the screen - every time you go near the screen you get dazzled by the light and it will create a shadow.

Ideal if the projector is overhead, better still if it sits near the screen and beams up.

Check also how your slides will link to the projector - is there a remote control or will you need to keep going back to the laptop to change the slides? Slide changeovers can be disruptive to the flow of your presentation so check how this will work.

## **8. How big is the screen?**

The last thing you want in a presentation is to put something up on the screen and then find yourself saying 'I realise some of you won't be able to see this' .

If that's the case revamp the content of that slide before you start or drop it.

Most screens I see aren't designed for the audience or room they are trying to serve. They are either too small or the position of them means a lot of the audience have restricted views.

Check the screen in advance and plan your presentation accordingly.

There is no point in creating a presentation and then finding your audience can't see it.

## **9. Will you need a microphone?**

Most people overestimate the power and carry of their voice and assume they don't need a microphone. Once the audience is beyond 30 in number you will almost certainly need a microphone.

Check if one is available and if it will be hand held or clip on, wireless or cable. Test it before the audience arrives and then trust that it works when you go 'live'. Tapping the top of the microphone and asking 'Is it on?' or 'Can you hear me?' is not very professional and will disrupt your opening.

## **10. Where will you present from?**

If I'm presenting I like to move around so I can create a sense of interaction with the audience. At some venues that may not be possible - the only microphone may be fixed to a lectern, the projector may be screen facing thus restricting where you can stand, the room may be cramped so you have little space to work with. Remember though that in most cases you want the audience focusing on you not the screen. Knowing the layout and structure of the venue in advance will enable you to plan where you will present from. If you want to move around try and use a clip on wireless mic so you've got your hands free for notes.

## **11. Prompts not Scripts**

Part of preparing is practising and being clear about what you are going to say. I always use a couple of postcard size notes with a few prompt words to remind me what's coming up next. If I see a presenter with A4 notes or worse still a print out of the slides with the notes from those slides I tend to think they either don't know their subject or they couldn't be bothered to practice the presentation I have given up my time to come and listen to.

## **12. How much time have you got?**

One of the worst crimes a presenter can commit is going wildly over time. If you have been given twenty minutes then it's not great for the audience, the organiser or the speakers following you if you take thirty or more. Speakers often improvise on the day by elaborating on their key points. This is fine providing you don't then overrun. So when preparing assume you will overrun and practice the presentation to take 80% of your allocated time. You don't want someone on the sidelines tapping their watch and hauling you off before you deliver your big finish.

There you go. A few thoughts and ideas about preparing for your next presentation. If you would like to discuss enhancing your presentation skills then please give me, Trevor Lee, a call on 07785 390717 or email me via [trevor@trevorleemedia.co.uk](mailto:trevor@trevorleemedia.co.uk). Or click <http://bit.ly/1UjWZ9G> to view my other presentation tips and ideas.