

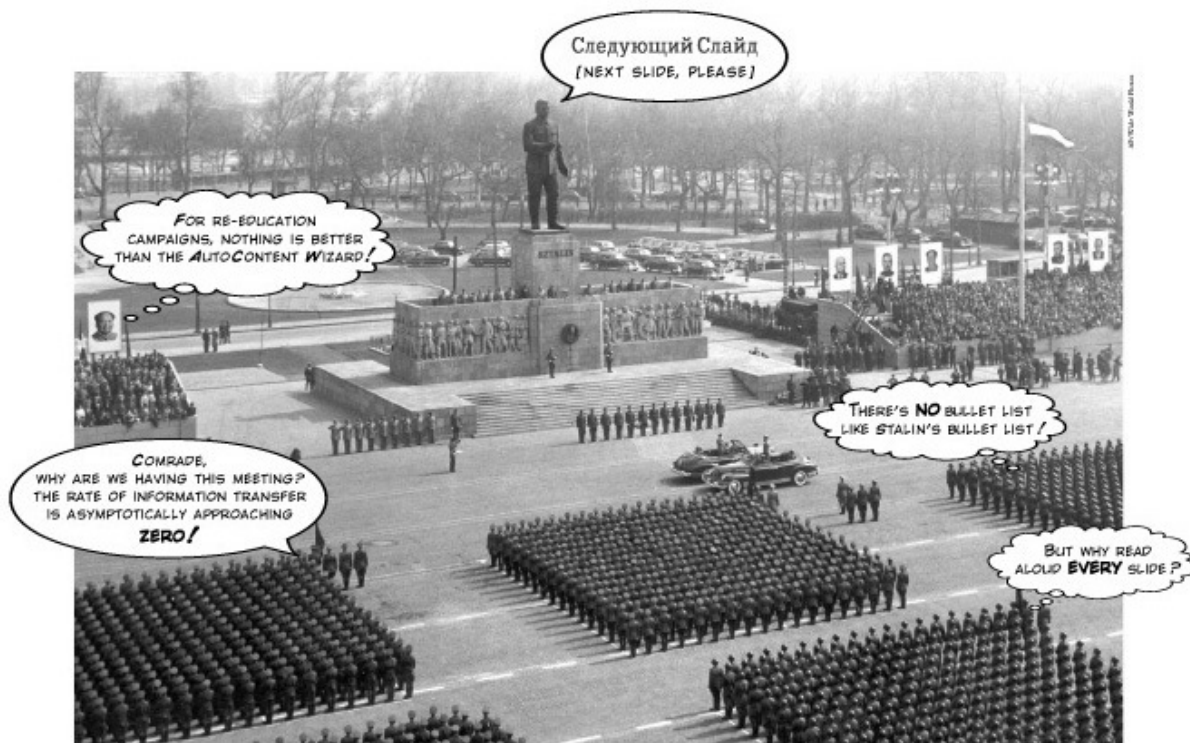
Presentation Skills

Public speaking is one of the hardest things to master. The trick to delivering a powerful presentation is to prepare carefully, take it slowly on the day and be enthusiastic about your topic.

Planning your presentation - prepare with care:

Start, by thinking about your audience and what aspect of the topic they are most likely to be interested in - you should be able to state the purpose of the presentation in an easy sentence. Then list your key points and write down the general structure of the presentation ahead. If you need to, write down every point that you want to cover and practice until you are totally comfortable with the material.

Rehearse the presentation thoroughly, particularly if you have been allocated a speaking time (eg, at a conference). Allow time for questions (but have things to say if there are no questions - running short is nearly as bad as running over!).



Edward Tufte, *The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint*

- Consider the 10/20/30 Rule of PowerPoint:
 - a PowerPoint presentation should have 10 slides,
 - last no more than 20 minutes, and
 - contain no font smaller than 30 points.
- Remember the 6:6 rule:
 - Too much information on a single slide is unreadable especially when it is projected on a big screen.
 - Use bullet points:
 - i. Using bullets not only makes your slide readable
 - ii. They also add to the impact of your presentation.

- Maximum of six bullet points in a slide.
- Maximum of six words in one line.
- Contrast the text with the background.
- The text highlights what you are saying
 - Don't read the slides, talk to the slides...
- Avoid the overuse of clip art and animation,
 - It detracts from the focus of your presentation, but.....
- Do use smart design in preference to words see¹:
 - Presentation Zen: http://presentationzen.blogs.com/presentationzen/2005/09/whats_good_powe.html
 - Edward Tufte: <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint>
- Complex charts and reference materials should be handouts
 - Not PowerPoint slides
- Allow your audience adequate time to read information slides:
 - Minimum 30 seconds (very simple slide)
 - Average 2 minutes per slide
- Rehearse – talk through your delivery several time (5 or 6). Remember, the spoken word is quite different from the written word!
- Use aids such as highlighted text and large notes to keep you on track (but don't read these either).
- KISS - keep it simple.

Delivering your presentation:

On the day:

1. Get a good night's sleep beforehand. Eat a healthy breakfast and try and free your schedule, so you're more relaxed going into the presentation.
2. Before you present, spend 15 minutes going over your presentation. Then take 15 minutes off. Don't make last minute changes!!
3. Then concentrate on your breathing for 2 minutes. This focuses your thoughts, relaxes you and gets rid of any nerves.
4. Remember, the open and close of your presentation are the most important parts. So put in extra effort here, to make it memorable.
5. If you forget something or make a mistake, then never stop and apologise. Keep going and try and relax. Most of the time only you will know you have made a mistake - If noticed by others, it will soon be forgotten.

Body Language:

80% of a successful presentation is about body language, and only 20% is about content. So use these tips to communicate the right message through your body:

1. Make eye contact with people at all times - make sure you look at each part of the audience several times. Don't stare at the ceiling or back of the room as you present.
2. Appear confident - use an open stance, stand tall and proud. Smile and let your personality shine. Don't be overly formal.
3. Remember that relaxed body language conveys honesty and openness. So walk around a little and make use of props.

¹ For more on page layout see: http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1065_Page_Layout.pdf

4. Vary your voice and use slow, open hand gestures. Never have your hands in your pocket or play with a pen. Move your hands to an open position and then pause for effect.
5. Use your hands to help convey images and support your powerpoint slides but don't over do it; eg, hold up three fingers if 3 is an important number in the presentation, or to highlight sizes and shapes.

Voice:

Learn how to speak effectively! Your tone, pitch, pace, clarity, projection and use of pauses can help build credibility and connection. Speak slowly and carefully, but passionately. If you're enthusiastic about the topic, then your listeners will be as well. They won't believe you if you just use a flat monotone. Listening to a recording of yourself can be very surprising!

Spark Interaction:

Encourage interaction with others during your presentation. By having others talk for a few seconds, it takes the focus off you temporarily, to let you clear your head and focus on the key points ahead. Another trick to clear your head is to pause while your audience is reading a slide, working out a problem or considering key points you've just mentioned. You need to give something of yourself to the audience to build empathy, real life examples are great.

Watch your audience's body language. Use rhetorical questions, personal examples and eye contact to engage with them. If they are leaning towards you, open and watching what's happening they are engaged. If you are confident enough, encourage questions during the presentation.

Summary:

People will leave your presentation remembering how it made them feel (emotions²), not the words you said. Put your passion about the topic into the presentation. The opening is critical, a strong opening can build a bank of credibility that helps overcome later failings in your total presentation.

If you miss a bit or get lost don't panic! You are probably the only person who knows you have missed a bit or are out of the planned sequence and it looks unprofessional to say you have missed something.

Use the proven structure of *'telling them what you are going to tell them, telling them and then telling them what you have told them'*. Then allow time for questions.

The Don'ts...

Talk too long – if you are presenting for more than 20 minutes try to re-engage the audience with something different every 10 to 15 minutes.

Kill the audience with bullet points – death by powerpoint is real! Review design topics above....

Go in underprepared – rehearsal is critical.

Make last minute changes – present the presentation you have rehearsed!

Read from your slides or notes – make sure you know your materials and have rehearse the presentation

Cram too much into the presentation. People's ability to absorb new information is limited as is their concentration spans. Stay focused on the one key message the presentation is intended to convey.

Ignore your audience – manage your body language (open and positive) and the way you speak and sound; these factors contributes over 90% of the impression you create. Maintain eye contact with all of the audience (scan and shift your position).

² For more on the effect of emotions see:

http://www.mosaicprojects.com.au/WhitePapers/WP1008_Emotional%20Intellegence.pdf