

15. Making Presentations

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Introduction

Making presentations is an important way of getting across the animal protection message. It can also be a nerve-wracking experience, which can easily go wrong! There are various excellent tips and advice that can help with the process, and these are summarised briefly below. A professional training course can also be a real investment in terms of experience and building confidence.

Planning a Presentation

When planning a presentation, the following need to be considered: -

- Your purpose
- Your audience (and how best to reach them)
- Length of talk
- Talk overview/shape
- Key issues to cover
- Talk structure (beginning, body and conclusion)
- Use of audio-visual equipment
- Other activities which can be included
- Balance
- Whether questions will be taken and, if so, format and timing

Talk Structure

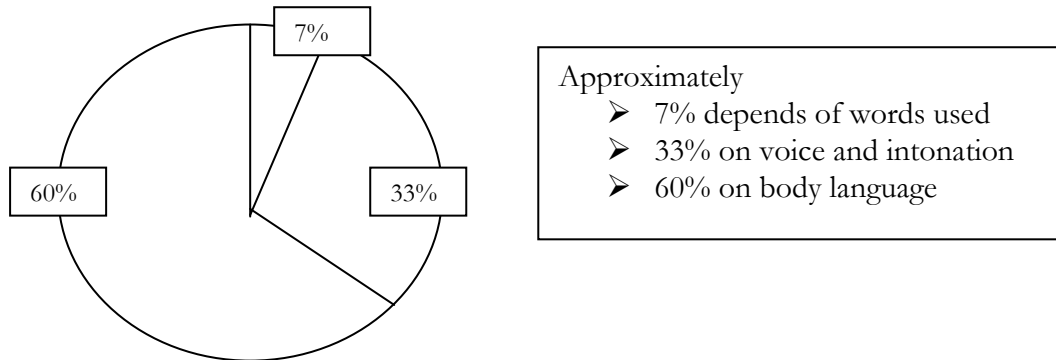
Prepare your speech

Define your purpose	WHY?
Know your audience	WHO?
Select content and structure	WHAT?

Ensure there are a clear introduction, middle and a conclusion.

Introduction

In planning your presentation remember the importance of body language in impact: -



The opening should grab the audience's attention. The body should provide the substance and facts. Then the conclusion should be powerful and memorable.

The body of the talk

- Must have **clear structure** which audience can follow. It helps to set out the main points that will be covered in advance.
- **Restrict amount covered.** You will always take longer than you think! Simpler and focussed messages are always more effective.
- The audience will remember startling ideas, images, stories or facts. Make sure you have **examples, stories, illustrations, slides, video clips, analogies, demonstrations and statistics.**
- If you are given a long time for the talk, **break it up** into short sections.

Conclusion

The strong closing – end with a BANG! Leave a final memorable message.

Answering questions

This is an important part of the presentation. Questions can be used to correct misconceptions and move the audience towards your viewpoint. You can relax and act more informally in question session, developing a rapport with the audience. It helps to consider the audience and anticipate likely questions, and your response.

Where a question is unclear, it helps to repeat your understanding of the question before answering. This ensures the audience is aware of the question, and guards against misunderstandings.

Voice and Communication

Voice projection

It is important to speak clearly and to project your voice.

Vary your voice and speak with enthusiasm and conviction. Don't talk in a monotone.

This will make your presentation much more interesting.

Language

Avoid the use of abbreviations, jargon, technical or complex language. Simple, expressive speech is more effective.

Humour

Humour is generally good to increase interest and build rapport with the audience, but ensure that it is used appropriately.

Statistics

The use of statistics can be effective if they are used sparingly and for impact. Too many statistics can be boring!

Listen and observe

Communication is a two-way process. Good listening is as active a process as speaking.

Discipline

If problems arise, remain polite. Be gently assertive, smile and keep your composure

Respect

Be aware of any cultural differences, foreign speech and names, dialects, regional accents etc. Remain polite and respectful, even if your audience appears antagonistic. If you resort to anger, attack of 'put downs', you will alienate and lose your audience. Respect other viewpoints, but continue to press your own.

People are offended by derogatory remarks relating to race, creed, sex, age or colour. Take care to avoid these. Also, be aware of your audience and avoid anything that may offend them.

Body Language

If you come across as a warm, sincere and dedicated person who has time for the views of your audience, you will come across well. Below are some further specific tips:

- **Eye Contact:** helps to build up a relationship. Switch eye contact between people in different parts of the room. Use an 'eyebrow flash' to acknowledge people together with a smile.
- **Overt body language and mannerisms:** Have an open, relaxed posture and gestures. Don't be rigid, but don't fidget or gesticulate too much.
- **Stance:** Stand upright, with a relaxed stance. Place your feet comfortably apart, and arms hanging loosely by your side (when not in use).
- **Facial expression:** Smile at the audience (when appropriate). Convey cheerful warmth to your audience.
- **Spatial distance:** Try to get close to your audience, but not too close as to crowd them. Try to avoid barriers created by tables, lecterns and so on.
- **Silence:** Don't be afraid of pausing. Some space and time is sometimes needed for the audience to digest information and for impact.
- **Notes:** It looks impressive when a speaker manages without notes, but not many people can do this successfully. If you are not one of the gifted few, use notes, but do not read your speech. This makes you look stilted and you lose eye contact.

Dress

You should dress smartly and appropriately to give a professional impression. The general rule is to dress one level smarter than your audience.

Managing Nerves

It is normal to be nervous. Many great speakers and actors say that they are extremely anxious when they are about to perform. This anxiety can be very helpful in aiding concentration. It will often fade once you have started to talk.

There are a great number of tips that will help you to manage your anxiety. Here are a few:

- **Relax.** Drink a little water (but don't risk alcohol, as this can be counter-productive).
- **Smile** at your audience as they come in. Developing a rapport helps you to relax and encourages a sympathetic response.
- **Be prepared.** Arrive in good time to check that all the equipment works and your notes are in place.
- **Expect things to go well** and your audience to be friendly. Pretend you are confident, even if you do not feel it initially – you soon become confident!
- **Try relaxation and breathing exercises (very calming)**
- **Above all, there is no substitute for practice!**

Talk Aids

General

Audio-visual aids such as videos, slides, overhead projector transparencies and computer projectors (PowerPoint) can all improve a presentation. The advantages of visual aids are:

- They are visual, which provides impact and a different activity to assist passive listening
- They can help illustrate complex information
- They can add variety
- They can provide useful and non-obtrusive prompts

However, if badly used, they can be distracting and annoying! For example, do not be tempted to include too many words, or to turn your back to the audience to read the screen. Do not use too many audio-visual mediums in complex combinations – this has the potential for disaster!

You need to learn how to use them. You also need to be prepared to manage without them in case there is a technical problem! Always arrive early to check that the venue has the equipment you need (in working order) and that the room will have sufficient blackout.

Also, the use of stories, which are easier to remember than facts, and props e.g. models of farming systems, can help to illustrate points effectively.

Written

Reading out a speech can make it stilted and dull. If you need notes, key words on cards are recommended. Tie the cards together and number them, so you do not drop them or get lost.

Video

Video can be a powerful medium, combining sight and sound (the sounds of animals can

help to carry the full impact of cruelty). Video should only be shown briefly during presentations, but is useful for breaking up presentations.

Slides

These are also very powerful. It is much easier to explain what it is like for animals in different systems with a picture on the screen.

You need to ensure test the slides in advance to ensure that they are all the right way up and round. Different machines are loaded in different ways! Also, check that the projector is correctly focussed.

Overhead projectors (OHPs)

These have less impact, but are most commonly available. You can even buy your own portable machine and take this with you, if in doubt about facilities. They are also useful 'back-ups' to a PowerPoint presentation.

Keep OHPs simple and bold, using large font, few words and effective use of colour for impact. You can use a piece of paper to cover parts of the OHP, and then reveal information bit by bit. You can put pictures or cartoons into OHPs.

As with other audio-visual equipment, check beforehand to make sure the projector is correctly focussed.

PowerPoint Projectors

PowerPoint is becoming ever more popular, for very good reasons. It can allow a variety of effects on one medium – Notes, photos and video. However, they can lead to technological problems! Most screens (except video) can be printed onto OHP transparencies, as back up.

You can take your presentation on a computer disk, or take your own laptop and link this up to the projector.

Further Resources

Web Sites

Giving Presentations

<http://www.jaycross.com/jayhoo/giving%20presentations.htm>

Giving Presentations

<http://bmrc.berkeley.edu/courseware/cs160/spring99/Lectures/14-Presentations/sld001.htm>

One Step Ahead: Giving Presentations

<http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting/osa/givingpresentations/>

Giving Presentations and Leading Discussions

<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/courses/leaddisc.htm>

What Happened to My Slides? Giving Presentations at Conferences

<http://www.cultivate-int.org/issue3/presentations/>

Books

Presentations for Dummies (For Dummies S.)

By: Malcolm Kushner

Publisher: John Wiley & Sons Inc

ISBN: 0764559559

Lend Me Your Ears: All You Need to Know About Making Speeches and Presentations

By: Max Atkinson

Publisher: Vermilion

ISBN: 0091894794

Giving Presentations (One Step Ahead S.)

By: Jo Billingham, Beatrice Baumgartner-Cohen

Publisher: Oxford University Press

ISBN: 0198606818

Presenting Magically: Transforming Your Stage Presence with NLP

By: David Shephard, Tad James

Publisher: Crown House Publishing

ISBN: 1899836527