

Presenting with Impact

The ability to present yourself and your ideas with credibility and impact speaks volumes about you and your organisation. Successful presentations share three common criteria:

1. **The presenter was credible** – up-to-date, presenting a clear message and dealing with questions confidently, while projecting a strong image of their own and their organisations professionalism.
2. **The presentation has gone smoothly and apparently to plan** – there have been no personal or technical disasters and the audience feel that the presentation has been a worthwhile investment of their time.
3. **The presentation had impact and was memorable** – the audience are able to remember the key parts of the message and understand fully what they should 'believe, know, think or do' as a result of attending.

10 Steps to making credible, high impact presentations that hit the mark, every time!

Step 1

Set yourself for success – a well thought out and prepared presentation is already 90% given. Thorough planning, preparation and practice are all vital.

Step 2

Use the Four Corner-stones to get you on track – always be clear in your own mind:

- (a) **Why** am I making this presentation?
- (b) **Who** am I making this presentation to?
- (c) **What** is the relevant content?
- (d) **How** can I best get my message across?

Step 3

Develop great content – brainstorm key points, one idea per yellow sticky. Cluster the stickies into themes and give each a heading. Transfer these, colour coding as you go, in columns on an 'X-ray sheet' (download available from www.stepsystem.co.uk). Use black ink for headings; red for 'must haves' content; green for 'nice to haves' and blue for the added stimulus that will highlight you key points.

Step 4

Develop a strong open and close – in your opening, explain why you are making the presentation, include a strong 'grab', a personal credibility statement, your agenda and an indication of when you will take questions. Make sure that your close includes a summary of your key points and time for questions. If you are in a sales presentation, ask for the business or for agreement to move on to the next stage. Whatever the reason for your presentation, always finish with a strong 'call to arms' and leave your key message ringing in their ears!

Step 5

Edit as you present – allocate time to each column of content and then keep an eye on the time as you present. If you fall behind schedule, cut some of your green content, until you are back on track. This will help you to avoid over-running or being forced to rush your final points, your summary or the culmination of your presentation – all too important to be lost through poor time management!

Step 6

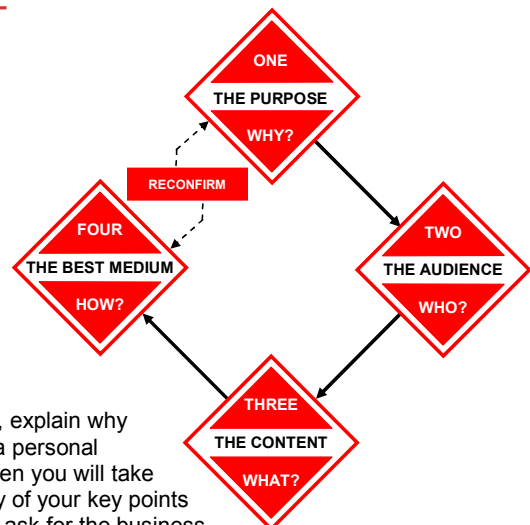
Deal with any negative signals or outward signs of nervousness – work on your non-verbal communication, your ability to portray a positive image, as well as your voice and delivery. Dress to suit the audience and the environment, but always wear clothes that make you feel good about yourself.

Step 7

Look for a variety of ways to make the key elements of your message memorable – most audiences will only retain 5-10% of any new information, so it is imperative that they remember the right parts, for all the right reasons! Add emphasis by using clear diagrams, well chosen case studies and analogies. Use props, humour and handouts to make your message both accessible and acceptable to the audience. This will help you to establish greater rapport, which in turn will make it more likely that the audience will want to listen to your message!

Step 8

Practice out loud – always have a 'stumble through' and a 'real time run through' before you go 'live'. This will help you to manage your pace and give you a sense of rhythm and flow. It will also help you to see where you need to add some 'magic' to raise interest and will enable you to really master your content, making it easier to remember – in itself an essential step in managing nerves.



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Step 9

Don't be afraid of question time – assume that if people ask questions, it is because they are interested and want clarification. If you are worried about being asked a particular 'killer question', assume that you **will** be asked it and think through and practice your answers, before you are asked!

Step 10

Before you start:

- **Check the room and your equipment** – do your best to make sure that people will feel comfortable and are able to tune in to your message. If possible, have natural daylight and good ventilation. As the audience arrives, make eye contact, shake hands and use their names so that when you start you have already made personal contact with as many people as possible.
- **Take a few deep breaths, make eye contact with your audience again and smile** – for your own benefit, have a glass of water to hand and keep your throat lubricated. Prepare to enjoy your presentation – you know you have prepared well. If you enjoy it, the audience will too!

10 Top Tips for using PowerPoint

Tip 1

Position the screen where everyone can see it – visuals must be clear. Do not put too much information on a slide and make sure that you use a font size that is large enough to be read.

Tip 2

Use pictures, graphs and diagrams wherever possible – a picture really can paint a thousand words and can serve to make complex ideas far more accessible.

Tip 3

Keep slides simple – use several visuals or a visual that builds to show the evolution of an idea, rather than an over-crowded slide, showing one complex idea.

Tip 4

Make your presentations live and vibrant – use a tablet PC or interactive whiteboard to capture handwritten text and diagrams. This is much better than using an old fashioned flipchart or a fixed sequence slide deck. It will also mean that you can circulate outputs from your actual presentation by email after the event.

Tip 5

Always have your visuals checked – for accuracy (fact, spellings and grammar), as well as for clarity and impact. Use SlideMaster to ensure your layout is consistent throughout.

Tip 6

Pause when you show a visual – the audience needs time to take it in. Consider using a remote mouse, to give you the freedom to move away from your PC and into the audience.

Tip 7

Face and address the audience – don't be drawn towards the screen. Keep your head up, which will allow eye contact (adding sincerity) and enable your voice to carry into the room.

Tip 8

Have a strategy for referring back to previous visuals – make a note of each PowerPoint slide number. Keying in the specific slide number, followed by 'return' will take you back to the slide that you have selected, preventing you from having to scroll through several other slides to find it.

Tip 9

Blank the screen when you do not need to refer to it – this will refocus the audience's attention onto you and your message. Pressing the 'b' button, will make your screen go dark and the 'w' button, will project a clear white light. Press any key to go back to the slide you were previously showing.

Tip 10

Understand that PowerPoint will not help you to be either creative or interesting – PowerPoint is a fantastic tool for presenting a strong corporate image and for providing structure to your presentation, but do not allow yourself to be drawn into delivering 'Death by PowerPoint'. Look for any opportunity to add 'magic' to support your key points and introduce variety by using other media, such as flipcharts or DVD and always remember that you are your best visual!

This extract is taken from a series of more than 30 Hints & Tips created by Mark Barnes of Step System International Limited.

Step System creates and supplies coaching and training interventions, supported by blended learning and focused publications, delivering success in the areas of personal, team and organisational development.

If you would like up-to-date ideas to help you or your team present more effectively, take a look at: **Stand & Deliver – a Master Class in Making Powerful Presentations** by Mark and Mary-Jane Barnes, published by Management Books 2000 Ltd priced at £18.99 (ISBN 978-185252-533-0). **NB:** While Stand & Deliver is PowerPoint 2007 ready, it also shows how to get the most out of earlier versions of PowerPoint as well!



Next Step

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