

Supervisor's Network **NYU**

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NYU Human Resources

Presenting Successfully. Whether you speak publicly to groups often or have yet to give your first speech, having sharp presentation skills is essential if you wish to grow as a leader. Presenting successfully will go a long way to enhance your credibility with your staff as well as with colleagues in your field. Through preparation and practice, you'll learn to overcome prespeech jitters and convey your message with confidence and enthusiasm.

CLARIFYING OBJECTIVES

Think about what you would like your audience to take away from your presentation. Are you presenting straightforward educational information? Would you like them to take action as a result of your speech? Write down your objective, and refer to it as you prepare.

KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

As you begin to prepare for a presentation, remember to not only focus on the content of your speech but also consider your audience as well. Run through the following list of questions, and keep the answers in mind as you prepare your remarks.

- > What is the expected size of the audience?
- > What is the age range of the audience?
- > Is the audience well-informed about your subject?
- > Has the audience chosen or been asked to attend?
- > What do the members of the audience have in common?
- > Does everyone or anyone in the audience know you?

Becoming familiar with your audience can help you customize your presentation, and it can also help overcome tension before you begin speaking.

STRUCTURING YOUR SPEECH

Think about the main content of your speech, and distill it down to three or four major ideas. One at a time, create supporting information for each point or develop narratives to illuminate your message. If you want one particular point to give the strongest impression, present it first. If possible, your final point should be positive in nature, in order to leave the audience feeling enthusiastic about your subject.

Prepare Your Introduction Last

Once the main themes of your presentation are determined, you'll have an easier time creating an introduction. It is essential to make a good impression at the beginning of your presentation to grab the audience's attention. Use anecdotes to break the ice, and then help the audience become familiar with the topics you are about to raise. Research shows that an audience's attention span (based on a 45-minute presentation) peaks at about 10 minutes into the speech. Prepare your introduction with an effective opening to draw the audience in, and save your strongest point for a few minutes into your presentation.

Using Repetition

Tell them what you are going to tell them. > **Tell them.**
> **Tell them** you have told them.

Recapping information during your presentation is an effective way of reinforcing the main points of your subject. Use different wording the second time around to keep the ideas sounding fresh. To reinforce points, include an overview or "contents list" of your speech, then discuss the issues you are raising, and finish off with a summary.

Ending Memorably

Structuring a strong ending to your presentation is as important as planning a good beginning. It is important to signal to your audience that the end of the speech is approaching to reinvigorate their attention. Statements such as "for my final point" or "in conclusion" will alert the audience that you are about to summarize what you have said.

Rehearsing

Rehearsal is a vital part of preparing a successful presentation. It's an ideal opportunity to memorize and time your material and to smooth over any rough edges in your delivery. Practice with your audio/visual aids, and consider building-in time for questions at the end.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE REHEARSALS

- > Begin by practicing aloud while standing in front of a mirror. This may seem awkward at first, but your confidence will build with each rehearsal.
- > Take any opportunity to cut unnecessary material. It will put more of an emphasis on your main themes.
- > Practice losing your place in your script or notes—and finding it again.
- > Vary the pace of your speech and then decide which pace is most effective.
- > Rehearse in front of a (trusted) friend, and ask his or her opinion of both your vocal and physical delivery.
- > If possible, rehearse (or visit) at the presentation site. Consider the lighting, acoustics, and seating and adjust your delivery accordingly.

PREPARING YOURSELF

It is as important to prepare yourself as it is to prepare your speech. The overall impact of your presentation will be determined as much by how confident you appear as by what you say.

A positive self-image is all-important for delivering an effective presentation. Identify your strengths and then make the most of them. In most cases, the audience is as eager as you are for your presentation to be interesting and successful.

DEALING WITH QUESTIONS

Answering questions from the audience after your presentation can increase your credibility by demonstrating a wider knowledge of your subject. Learning to handle difficult or awkward questions can enhance your positive impression on the audience. Following are some points to remember about audience questions.

- > It is possible to anticipate most questions when researching presentation material thoroughly.
- > Nerves may tempt you to give a hasty response. It's fine to pause and think about your answer before you speak.
- > Stay in control by never allowing more than one person to talk at a time.
- > It is crucial not to be drawn into an argument with a questioner, regardless of how unacceptable his or her assumptions are.
- > All questions should be handled with respect and courtesy.

CARRYING YOURSELF IN FRONT OF A CROWD

As much as two-thirds of communication between people is nonverbal, whether it is transmitted through hand gestures, facial expressions, or other forms of body language. There are small adjustments you can make that will have a big impact on your presentation.

DO

Do keep posture in mind; pull your shoulders back and hold your head high whether you are seated or standing. Practice this until it becomes second nature.

Do breathe slowly and deeply before your presentation; the improved oxygen flow can enhance the tone and volume of your voice.

Do reduce tension through light stretches prior to your presentation. Have water handy should your mouth become dry.

Do smile only when it feels natural to do so. You may appear overconfident or disingenuous if you maintain a toothy grin throughout your speech.

Do use eye contact to obtain feedback from the audience. Their body language will reveal their reactions to your presentation.

DON'T

Don't slouch over the podium or prop up your chin in your hand. Instead, your body language should reflect your enthusiasm about what you are saying.

Don't ignore the pacing of your speech. Speaking too quickly can reduce the impact of what you are saying. Rehearsing can address this.

Don't be unprepared. Feeling nervous before speaking publicly can arise when you fear something will go wrong. Prepare to reduce the possibility of problems, and you'll feel better.

Don't turn your back to the audience. Gesture toward visual aids, but don't turn around completely. It will muffle your voice, and you may lose a connection with your audience.

Don't drop your voice at the end of each sentence. It will sound as if you are not sure of what you are saying.

RESPONDING TO UNANSWERABLE QUESTIONS

There are a number of standard replies you can use in response to difficult questions. If you do not know an answer, you may wish to open the question up to the rest of the audience. Some other useful replies include the following:

"I don't know the answer, but I can find out for you. If you leave me your e-mail address, I will get back to you."

"I need to think about that one. Could we come back to it later? Next question, please."

"I'm not sure I know the answer to that one. Perhaps we could discuss it together after the session."

"There really is no right or wrong answer to that. However, my personal belief is . . ."

ASSESSING YOUR ABILITY

Regard each presentation as a chance to practice for the next. Evaluate your performance by responding to the following statements, and then mark the options closest to your experience. Be as honest as you can, add your scores together, and refer to the analysis to see how you did.

- I set aside enough time to do background research thoroughly.
- I organize the material for my presentation around my main points.
- My presentation still sounds fresh after I have rehearsed it again and again.
- My visual aids illustrate and reinforce the main points of my presentation.
- I arrive at the location in time to hear the previous presentation.
- I grab the audience's attention as soon as I start my presentation.
- I speak at a volume and pace that appear to suit the audience.
- I speak fluently and confidently throughout the presentation.
- I make eye contact with all sections of my audience throughout the presentation.
- My presentation interests the audience and provokes questions from them.
- I remain calm when responding to awkward or hostile questions.
- My replies are to the point and hold the interest of the audience.

OPTIONS				ANALYSIS
NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY	ALWAYS	
1	2	3	4	<p>Add up your total score, and check your level of skill by reading the corresponding evaluation.</p> <p>12-24: Use every opportunity to learn from your mistakes, and take more time to prepare and rehearse for each presentation that you give from now on.</p> <p>25-36: Your presentation skills are generally sound, but certain areas need improvement.</p> <p>37-48: You have good presentation skills, but do not become complacent. Continue to prepare well.</p>
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
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1	2	3	4	

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THE SUPERVISOR'S BOOKSHELF

Consult these relevant books for more ideas about building presentation skills.

Presenting to Win: The Art of Telling Your Story

by Jerry Weissman

Weissman, a corporate presentations coach, shows how to transform presentations from dry recitals of facts into compelling stories, revealing techniques for identifying goals and messages, staying focused on what the audience really cares about, capturing an audience in the first 90 seconds, and making the most of special effects.

PEARSON EDUCATION, 2006

**How to Talk So People Listen:
Connecting in Today's Workplace**

by Sonya Hamlin

Originally published in 1988, the author completed extensive revisions to reflect today's electronically driven workplace. Hamlin covers challenges such as understanding the generations and integrating a multicultural workforce. She also offers techniques, both graphic and verbal, for reaching a given audience. The chapter on handling one-on-one encounters is particularly helpful for supervisors communicating with their staff.

HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS, 2005

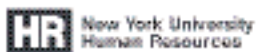
Presentation S.O.S.:

From Perspiration to Persuasion in Nine Easy Steps

by Mark Wiskup

As you can tell from the title, the tone of this book is light-hearted and fun. In a concise manner, the author goes beyond standard presentation advice and provides ways to confidently sell your ideas to a variety of audiences. Special attention is given to handling the Q&A session with ease.

WARNER BOOKS, INCORPORATED, 2005



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