

PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

- ✓ Successful and inspiring speakers are remembered not only because they were eloquent, humorous, or had a good style, but primarily and principally because their messages and ideas caused a change in their audience's actions, attitudes, lives, or made the purpose clear to them.
- ✓ This is true for all types of presentations—professional presentations, business speeches, classroom lectures, and so on, especially in an age of instantaneous communication via telephone, computer, and fax.
- ✓ Face-to-face business presentations are enormous time consumers—from scheduling a date when everyone can attend, to making every arrangement necessary for the presentation, it takes much more time and effort than it would have taken to send the same message as an attachment in an email, in the form of a memorandum, circular, or notice.
- ✓ Nevertheless, presentations still play an important role in business for obvious and good reasons.
- ✓ Throughout our career, we are bound to encounter innumerable situations that require professional presentations to be made.
- ✓ To mention a few, a team leader may have to present before the corporate body about a product that his/her team has brought out;
 - a top administrator of an institution may have to present the goals, activities, and achievements of the institution to an important visitor;

- a project manager may have to present before a committee the results of a project recently undertaken by the company;
 - a college student may have to attend seminars or may have to present project reports to fellow students and faculty members.
- ✓ These situations call for effective, memorable presentations.
 - ✓ Although these circumstances differ in purpose, the strategies in making good presentations do not differ much.
 - ✓ The more successful our career, the more often will we be called upon to make presentations for a variety of situations and audiences.
 - ✓ Constant practice is the key to acquiring this skill. The following points are to be attended to when preparing for a professional presentation.
 - Planning: Occasion, audience, purpose, thesis, and material
 - Outlining and structuring: Introduction, main body, and conclusion
 - Choosing the mode of delivery
 - Guidelines for effective delivery
 - Body language and voice
 - Visual aids

PLANNING

- Preparing and delivering the first business presentation or public speech in our life can be daunting.
- We may find it difficult to decide what we want to say and how to say it, or perhaps the thought of speaking before an audience scares us.

- It is true that some people are naturally talented at public speaking.
- However, with some helpful guidance, anyone can prepare and deliver a successful speech that will be remembered for all the right reasons.
- When preparing a presentation, the first instinct may be to sit down with a pen and paper and charge ahead into the first line of the speech.
- However, devoting some time to careful planning of the speech will save a lot of time and effort later on.
- Effective preparation enables us to answer all the questions and doubts about our speech before they arise.
- The contents of our speech, and how we deliver it, are based on five important factors:

1. Occasion
2. Thesis
3. Audience
4. Material
5. Purpose

Occasion

- ♣ Occasion refers to the factors such as the facilities available for our presentation, time, and context of our presentation.
- ♣ Facilities include the venue or locale along with the projection equipment, lighting, seating, ventilation, etc.

- ♣ Every location has its unique physical environment. We may present in magnificently large auditoriums or oppressively small conference rooms.
- ♣ We need to know the physical setting; find out whether we will have a podium or a table, whether we will have a public address system, and so on.
- ♣ Also, attention should be paid to the physical conditions prevalent in the venue such as seating, room temperature, and lighting.
- ♣ We should try to understand whether the audience will be seated on hard metal chairs for an hour in a freezing room, whether the lighting will be too powerful to render our slide presentations ineffective, etc.
- ♣ If we identify such problems in advance, we can either ask for alternative arrangements or modify our materials, visual aids, and style to suit the environment.
- ♣ Time refers to both the time of the day of presentation and the duration of the talk. Straightforward and factual presentations may work well during the morning hours, but in case of an after-dinner speech, we may need to adapt our remarks to the occasion.
- ♣ Remembering the fact that most professional presentations are brief, we should present the important points in the first few minutes.
- ♣ Context refers to the events surrounding our presentation.
- ♣ When we are presenting in a team, for example, we need to consider the team members.
- ♣ They might have left a positive or negative impression in the minds of the audience and, hence, we would need to adapt ourselves to the existing situation just before presenting our part.

- ♣ Besides these immediate events, the recent happenings in our company can also affect the presentation.
- ♣ For example, if you are about to present a new proposal on budget just after your company has suffered a financial loss, you should emphasize on those features of your budget that focus on reducing the costs.
- ♣ The occasion dictates not only the content of our speech, but also the duration, the tone, and the expectations of the audience.
- ♣ For example, humor may be inappropriate during a serious sales presentation, while it may be welcome during a wedding speech, or a sports event.
- ♣ We should also be aware of our role and any observations that we might make during our speech.
- ♣ For example, if you are presenting the final report of your project to a group of professors or senior colleagues, you need to take care of the short duration, firm but polite tone, and also their expectation.

AUDIENCE

- ♥ All audiences have one thing in common. They are at the receiving end of our communication.
- ♥ They may be our friends, clients, colleagues, sometimes unfamiliar faces, or a combination of all these.
- ♥ The nature of our audience has a direct impact on the strategy we devise for our presentation.

♥ Hence, it is necessary to have some prior knowledge of the audience.

What are their interests, likes, and dislikes?

Are they familiar with the topic?

Is their attitude hostile or friendly?

What is the size of the group?

Age range? Gender distribution?

- ✦ For instance, people from a particular culture may feel uncomfortable asking questions or may not reveal their feelings through facial expressions.
- ✦ If we know in advance how our audience is likely to react, we can structure our presentation and adapt our style to help them feel comfortable.
- ✦ We are also less likely to feel distressed by their reactions.
- ✦ If we are going to speak before an unknown group, we can ask our host or the organizer for help in analyzing the audience and supplement their estimates with some intelligent estimates of our own.
- ✦ Whether we present locally or in a foreign country, we can expect at least some members to have linguistic or cultural backgrounds different from our own.
- ✦ Those who are not very conversant with English or with our accent will appreciate relatively slow speech and visual aids designed to aid their understanding.
- ✦ We would also adjust our style to accommodate cultural differences.

- ✦ While speaking on a controversial topic, we ought to keep aside some time to tackle any opposition from audience.
- ✦ For example, if your topic is on 'Criteria for selection of projects' you may face a lot of opposition from those teams which do not conform to certain criteria.
- ✦ So, you need to be patient in listening to them and then only should react. Give the impression to your audience that you want to share your view with them.
- ✦ **The structure of a presentation can further be skillfully emphasized by pauses, through interactions with the audience, and through changes in delivery techniques.**
- ✦ **If we are going to speak about something controversial or if we have to break some bad news perhaps, we can set aside some time before our presentation to chat with those who will be affected.**
- ✦ This will help to:
 - Build support
 - Consider strategies
 - Anticipate problems
- ✦ **Testing the waters beforehand, so to speak, will help to fine-tune the approach. Speak with confidence and conviction.**
- ✦ **Make your points crystal clear and easy to understand. Maintain an attitude of alertness and confidence.**

- ✦ **Encourage questions from the audience. Audience participation gives the opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding.**

PURPOSE

- ✦ There can be three different purposes of a presentation: to inform, to analyze, or to persuade.
- ✦ The purpose of a presentation not only decides the content and style but also affects the amount of audience interaction.
- ✦ For instance, when our purpose is to provide information or to analyze a situation, we generally interact with the audience in a limited manner.
- ✦ Examples of typical presentation forms with an informative purpose can be a presentation at the new employee orientation programme or an explanation of our project status.
- ✦ On the other hand, when our purpose is to persuade people to take a particular action, collaborate with them in solving a problem, or making a decision, the interaction would be more.
- ✦ We generally begin by providing facts and figures that increase our audiences' understanding of the subject; we may also offer arguments in defense of certain conclusions and recommendations.

- ✦ In addition, we invite them to participate by expressing their needs, suggesting solutions, and formulating conclusions and recommendations. However, this would need a lot of ‘on-the-spot’ thinking skills and in-depth knowledge of the subject.
- ✦ Sales presentations, speeches by political leaders during election, etc., come under the category of persuasive presentations.
- ✦ At times, our goal may be to help the audience have a good time.
- ✦ When we welcome the gathering at a conference, we are cheering and gearing them up for the coming sessions.
- ✦ Likewise, when we give an after-dinner speech at a company gathering or an awards dinner, our purpose is to leave the group in a jovial mood.
- ✦ Depending on the purpose, we should be flexible enough to adjust to new inputs and unexpected audience reaction.