

## **Some hints for a successful presentation**

*From "Business Class" by D. Cotton & S. Robbins*

*Nelson*

### **PREPARATION**

**Planning** Plan your presentation carefully. Thorough preparation will make you more confident and help you to overcome your nervousness.

**Objectives** Think about what you want to achieve. Are you aiming to inform, persuade, train or entertain your audience?

**Audience** Who exactly will you be addressing? How many people will be attending? What do they need to know? What do they already know? What will they expect in terms of content and approach?

**Content** Brainstorm your ideas first. Then decide which are most relevant and appropriate to your audience and to your objectives and carry out any research that is necessary. Be selective! Don't try to cram too much into your presentation.

**Approach** A good rule of thumb is to 'tell your audience what you're going to say, say it, then tell the audience what you've said'. Try to develop your key points in an interesting and varied way, drawing on relevant examples, figures etc. for support as appropriate. You might also like to include one or two anecdotes for additional variety and humour.

**Organisation** Think about how you will organise your content. Your presentation should have a clear, coherent structure and cover the points you wish to make in a logical order. Most presentations start with a brief introduction and end with a brief conclusion. Use the introduction to welcome your audience, introduce your topic/subject, outline the structure of your talk, and provide guidelines on questions. Use the conclusion to summarise the main points of your presentation, thank the audience for their attention, and invite questions.

**Visual aids** If you have a lot of complex information to explain, think about using some charts, diagrams, graphs etc., on an overhead projector or flipchart. Visual aids can make a presentation more interesting and easier to understand, but make sure they are appropriate and clear - don't try to put too much information on each one.

**Rehearsal** Allow time to practise your presentation - this will give you a chance to identify any weak points or gaps. You will also be able to check the timing, and make sure you can pronounce any figures and proper names correctly and confidently.

## **DELIVERY**

**Nerves!** You will probably be nervous at the beginning of your presentation. Don't worry - most people *are* nervous in this situation. Try not to speak too fast during the first couple of minutes - this is the time you establish your rapport with the audience and first impressions are very important. You may find it helpful to memorise your introduction.

**Audience rapport** Try to be enthusiastic - your interest in the subject matter will carry your audience along. Look around your audience as you speak - eye contact is essential for maintaining a good rapport. You will also be able to pick up signals of boredom or disinterest, in which case you can cut your presentation short.

**Body language** Stand rather than sit when you are delivering your presentation and try to be aware of any repetitive hand gestures or awkward mannerisms that might irritate your audience.

**Voice quality** You must be clearly audible at all times - don't let your voice drop at the end of sentences. If you vary your intonation, your voice will be more interesting to listen to and you will be able to make your points more effectively.

**Visual aids** Use your visual aids confidently, making sure you allow your audience time to absorb information from flipcharts and transparencies.

**Audience reaction** Be ready to deal with any hostile questions. Polite, diplomatic answers are a good disarming tactic, but if you should find yourself 'under fire', suggest that the audience keeps any further questions until the end of the presentation and continue with your next point.

## **LANGUAGE**

**Simplicity** Use short words and sentences that you are comfortable with. There is no benefit in using difficult language.

**Clarity** Active verbs and concrete words are much clearer and easier to understand than passive verbs and abstract concepts. Avoid jargon unless you are sure all your audience will understand it.

**Signalling** Indicate when you've completed one point or section in your presentation and are moving on to the next. Give your audience clear signals as to the direction your presentation is taking.