



PRESENTATIONS:

7 TOP TIPS

Presentations...

... the word itself probably conjures up certain thoughts as soon as you've read it. Many people may immediately and mistakenly translate it from "Presentation" to "PowerPoint" and from that, the image of dull, lacklustre, uninspired and seemingly endless slides of bullet points or (worse still) un-bulleted content may drift past your mind's eye. It may or may not include cringe-worthy bevelled smart-art graphics, the standard Microsoft Office theme colour palette and 80s style dissolve transitions.

But presentations don't have to be painful! Presentations don't even have to be PowerPoint (shock!), and presentations should never, EVER be dull.



Let's break it down... What is a presentation?

A presentation isn't a .pptx file on your desktop. A presentation is the act (and art) of presenting *someone with something* you want the audience to remember.

Often in a business context it is presenting previously unknown information to an audience that needs (or that you would like) to know it. Be it a sales pitch to a new prospect, update to staff or anything else.

Whether you choose to do this with a PowerPoint slide-deck, Keynote presentation, Prezi, video content, interpretive dance (!) or none of the above, is up to you. It depends on the content, the audience and the presenter.

So regardless of the format you choose, we've compiled seven top tips to get your presentation off to a flying start...

1 Remember: show don't tell

Writers have to remember this mantra, and it's the same for presenting.

For example, in a sales pitch, don't simply tell your audience a list of stuff you can do.

Show them how you have done it before using relevant case study examples; demonstrate how you could do it for them and how you represent the best option.





2 Don't use fifty words when five would do

If you present your audience with a large body of text two things will happen:

1. Some of them will attempt to read all the text while you're talking. Which means they're not giving you the attention you need to convey what you're trying to say.
2. Some of them won't even bother trying to read the text, but instead just switch off and disengage entirely.

Plus, something could happen to you, the presenter. If you're able to see a load of text in full sentences, you may end up hiding behind it and reading aloud instead of presenting naturally. You may even turn your back to your audience (if, for instance, you're using a PowerPoint slide-deck projected onto a wall) while you read a bunch of words.

You could end up being an animatronic version of yourself, and you'll probably find it harder to effectively deviate from your content to interact with your audience should they have questions (once they've finished all the reading!).

If all you're planning to do is read to your audience, you may as well just write everything down and send it to them as a printed asset (brochure or flyer) rather than presenting at all.

Remember, the clue is in the title – '**presentation**'. It's a kind of corporate theatre, with the asset (PowerPoint) being the scenery and you (the Presenter) being the performer. Imagine if you went to see a play and the actors simply read their lines from a script projected onto a screen at the back of the stage? Booo!





3 A picture is worth a thousand words

So instead of loads of text, use relevant visual prompts - an awesome, full screen image or compelling video will be remembered far more easily by your audience and will be intrinsically tied in their mind to your message.

Without constraining an image's meaning with loads of descriptive text, this technique also allows a useful level of freedom; your audience can interpret the image differently, relevant to their situation. This is incredibly powerful and while it puts extra emphasis on you, the presenter, it does make your presentation significantly more flexible and engaging.

For example, the same 'slide' can be delivered to an FD in one way, but reinterpreted for a more operational audience. Just make sure you have the scenarios behind each image memorised.



It'll also help you to remember the different things you'd like to talk about while still enabling you to remain agile in your presentation style, adapting and reacting to your audience, which leads us nicely into...

4 Get to know your audience and be agile

A presentation is a two way street. Who actually wants to sit in a board room and be spoken *at* for an hour? Nope, didn't think so. Presentations should be considered a conversation, not a lecture.



Offer the audience the chance to be part of it. Make it clear that you're open for questions, use presentation material that you can interact with in a non-linear fashion (so that you can skip to the bits that the audience actually want to know about) and allow the audience to shape your presenting.

This will instil even more trust and confidence in your ability and knowledge, and ensure that the audience leaves satisfied that they have all the information that they actually wanted, not just what you wanted to force upon them.



5 It's not what you say it's how you say it

Body language and tone of voice count for a lot. In fact, a leading authority on communication, Professor Albert Mehrabain, has undertaken plenty of research in face-to-face communication and concluded that the words themselves account for just 7% of the overall message. Tone of voice accounts for 38% and body language a whopping 55%!

Be open, be confident and be concise. Think about your presenting style and practice in front of a mirror if you need to – if the roles were reversed how would you like to be presented to?

Getting body language and tone of voice right will put your audience at ease and give them peace of mind that you are someone to be trusted, and an authority on the content you are delivering.

Get them both right and you're 93% there before you even think about the message you're conveying!

As we've said before, presenting is theatre; you wouldn't see a West End actor taking to the stage without a few rehearsals first.

6 On brand content + great delivery = winning presentation

A good presentation should be on brand; any asset you might use to support it should be aligned with every other point of contact your audience could have with you, PLUS you, the presenter, need to be on brand as well. From what you're saying, to body language and tone of voice (see above) and even to what you're wearing, you should be in sync with the brand that you are (re)presenting.

There's another old adage that 'content is king'. For presentations, of course that's true. But remember what we've said about how that content is delivered. A presentation is not a brochure. Depending on your objectives, your presentation may be there to 'hook' your audience and get them desperate to know more – the 'trailer' to your main feature! That 'more' will be the follow-up which contains the details and then it warrants a more in-depth, text heavy asset which is not on screen. It's often why we advise clients never to leave a copy of the PowerPoint with their audience, but to create a complimenting asset, such as a printed document or website landing page.

You should not expect your audience to re-enact your presentation to other members of their organisation. It's like repeating a joke you heard at a comedy show – you may get the punch line right, but the delivery, the theatre, of it will be missing... because you're missing!





7 Turn to an expert (aka the sales bit)

Of course, these are all great tips, but changing the habit of a lifetime (or looking at presentations for the first time) can be a daunting task. We're so often "treated" to absolutely terrible presentations, that it's easy to become accustomed to them, and think that's as good as it gets.

Sometimes a bit of one on one expert advice can go a long way. If you're in doubt, consider some formal one-to-one coaching or presentation workshops from a Brand and Marketing specialist with a wealth of presentation training experience (cough cough [contact us](#)).



About Square1

Square1 is an award-winning marketing communications agency.

By taking our clients back to the beginning, we help them identify their points of difference and define their corporate personality. We then translate that unique essence into strategic, creative, engaging and consistent communication across all platforms – web, print, video, exhibition, social, presentation, campaign... whatever canvas is right to achieve their objectives and to bring their brands to life!

In partnership, we encourage our clients to build and nurture strong, relevant brands that not just stand out, but stand for something.



Consult. Create. Communicate.