



Presentation Planning Tips

Know Your Audience – Keep in mind who you are talking to, what they want and need to know. A presentation that is audience-focused will hold attention and make a bigger impact.

Decide on a Core Message/Central Theme – What do you want your audience to remember? Write it down in one sentence: This is your core message. If your presentation is designed to generate action, decide beforehand what that action should be.

Create the Message; Visuals Will Follow – Resist the temptation to design slides as you go. The resulting weak narrative could mean a boring presentation. Good presenters tell a story that flows. Once you construct the presentation, craft slides to support and illustrate it.

Fill It Up – You will hold their attention with examples, analogies, anecdotes, and appropriate humor. Speaking without these ingredients is like cooking without spices – the meal will fill, but it won't satisfy.

Edit It – No one likes a long presentation – particularly meeting organizers and the speakers scheduled to follow. Keep the good stuff in. Let the rest go. Include only what your audience needs, not everything you know. Remember the 75% rule (prepare as if you only have 75% of the time you have been allotted).

Remember the Visual – Your body language sends the audience a message. Use gestures to emphasize points, but be careful not to flail around, cross your arms, or fidget. The most effective stance is the neutral position of an athlete, not swaying back and forth or bouncing on your feet. Effective speakers make regular eye contact with audience members, holding the connection to complete an idea. This helps draw listeners into your presentation.

Don't Forget the Vocal – If you have ever listened to people speaking in a monotone, you know it is difficult to pay attention. There are several vocal cues to remember: volume, rate, punch, and pausing. It is important to speak clearly and enunciate. If you rush your delivery or speak softly, the audience will have to work too hard to pay attention. Vary your tone and speed, tailor your delivery rate, and keep your chin up while speaking. Emphasize or "punch" certain words for effect and don't forget to incorporate pauses to give the audience time to let important points be understood.

Start Strong – Your audience members' attention is not guaranteed. Tune them in right in the beginning with a planned attention getter: a story, a quote, a question, or thought-provoking statement.

End Strong – People remember what they hear last. Make it memorable and significant to your core message. When they are later asked, "What was that all about?," what would you like them to say?