

# The nitty-gritties of Effective Presentations for Technologists



V. Sunitha, Rajesh Arruri, Nagakala Nanjangud Gopal Krishna

**Abstract:** Presentations are one of the proficient skills, which every professional has to acquire. A Presentation is an effectual tool to execute a plan. Presentations are necessary for decision making, to give training or a set of instructions while handling a project, to learn a skill, to select a service or strategy, to report progress and so on. Technical presentation is one of the soft skills that every Engineering professional needs to familiarize and master. Technical presentations elucidate the design and working of a product, technological progression and a solution to tackle a difficulty. Every technologist despite his/her technical skill and expertise also needs to be an effective presenter in order to execute his project and this is the need of the hour. The present paper prepared after substantial research and knowledge gained through experience, focuses on how to cultivate the skill of presentation in an effective manner so that the audience becomes engrossed and enthralled. The paper also sheds light on the techniques of selecting a topic, preparing a paper, modus operandi of opening, conducting and closing a presentation, memory techniques to remember the content, appearance, tact, body language, tone, innovation and methods to collect audience feedback required for effective technical presentation.

**Keywords-** anecdote, feedback, Presentation skills, Prezi, skills, start a presentation, technologists.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Presentation is a skill and an art. "Talk your way to success is a response to the growing needs of the corporate and academic world to make effective presentations." (Kaul 2005) The tone and appearance of the presenter should be pleasing and convincing as possible. Audience should feel enriched, entertained, informed and interested regarding the information provided and forget the dissipation of time. Reception is more important than the transmission of the message. It should persuade and gear up the audience. It is just like giving a gift to a comrade. The objective of this paper is to develop an insight on how to become an effective presenter to students of technology.

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## II. RESULTS

The results obtained are after substantial research and intense study.

### A. Step by Step Methodology for Preparing a Paper

The following are the steps involved in preparing a paper for presentation.

- i. **Selection of topic:** A well scrutinized and selected topic means half the work done. Based on the main topic and subtopics given in the conference brochure the presenter opts for a topic based on his interest, knowledge, command on the topic and the availability of primary and secondary sources.
- ii. **Collection of material:** This involves referring books, e-books, journals, similar papers presented in conferences and seminars elsewhere, internet sources, thoughts, ideas and suggestion from experienced faculty.
- iii. **Prepare an outline of the paper** that contains three sections: Introduction, description, conclusion
- iv. **Prepare rough draft.** Include table of contents and abstract
- v. **Revise the rough draft** as many times, edit with the help of the experts in the field and make it refined.
- vi. **Prepare works cited list.** It may be an internet site or a text book, journal, a TV program, a speech, a newspaper or a magazine report etc. Quote the authentic source from where the points or taken or referred to avoid the offense of plagiarism.

### B. Spare Utmost Attention for Effective Presentation

A presenter should assure that he/she has completed only half the work by preparing the final paper. The rest of the work lies in practicing on how to present the content effectively. "Greeks relied on three elements of public speaking; ethos, pathos and logos. The meaning of these terms is reflected in three words in common use today: ethical, empathic and logical." (Jalongo 2016) A smart technologist should bear these three things in mind before making his presentation. It is in the hands of the presenter to make a dull topic interesting or an effective topic boring. Hence utmost attention is required to make presentation. The following anecdote emphasizes the importance of thorough practice before presentation.

### C. Anecdote

"A young man was elected to the House of Lords. He was not good at making speech. Once, he stood up in the house to speak on a certain subject under discussion. "Ladies and gentleman, he said, "I conceive... he could speak no further. He made another attempt and said, "I conceive...once again he faltered.



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He was bold enough to make another attempt and said, “I conceive...once again he stumbled. A lady member who was one of the audiences got frustrated; she stood up and said, “Look here ladies and gentleman. This young man conceived three times and brought out nothing but I conceived only once and brought out three.” Thus the presenter should not become an object of mockery. A good practice always helps for effective presentation.

### D. Ways to Initiate Presentation

There are five ways to start a presentation. The presenter may initiate with a **startling statistic** regarding his topic. For example, if the topic is on “Addiction to smart phones”, the statistics may be, “Do you know an astonishing fact. In India nearly 80% of the college studying youngsters are addicted to smartphones.” The other way is to start with a **quotation**. For example, if the topic is “Innovation-the need of the hour”, the presenter can make use of the following Bernard Shaw’s quotation. “All reasonable men adapt themselves to the world, only few unreasonable ones persist in trying to adapt the world to them. All the progress in the world depends on these unreasonable men and their innovative and often non-conformist actions” (Kalam 2004). This sort of quotations may arouse curiosity in the audience mind and trap their attention. The next way is the **central message**. The presenter can give a central message of his topic and thereby proceed with his presentation. He can initiate his presentation by **posing a question** related to his topic and eliciting response from the audience. For example, in order to teach presentation skills as aforementioned he can pull the audience attention to soft skills by asking them to list the qualities that attribute to the success of the Indian cricket team and then from their responses substantiate that presentation is also one of the soft skills. A smart presenter can also opt for an interesting **anecdote** to enhance his introduction.

### E. Narrate Anecdote related to Topic

“The way you deliver the story can affect the thinking, emotions and behavior of the listeners. He is able to imagine the experience and will produce a response” avers Srinivasa Krishna. (2008). If the presentation topic is “Importance of Training” the following anecdote can be narrated. “Last week I went with my 10 year old nephew to a circus. A clown was walking on a rolling drum with perfect balance. My nephew asked, “How can the clown perform so well without losing stability? After the show we met the clown and questioned his dexterity. He replied, “I am able to walk on the rolling drum without losing my poise is because of my training.” This accentuates the importance of training. This anecdote would be an effective one to connect with the topic, “Importance of Training.” In this way the presenter should be smart enough to correlate his experience as an anecdote to his topic. At the same time one should be cautious of being objective and not subjective in narrating anecdotes.

### F. Acronym Method and Mnemonics Technique

While delivering a list of points the presenter may sound unnatural if the content is learnt by rote. Hence acronym method aids to overcome this issue. By assembling the first letter from each point a word can be framed and recalling this word enables to present without any interruption. It impresses the audience and projects that the presenter has a mastery over the subject. Visual reminders can also be used to recall the

hints. As such Mnemonics technique is a brilliant way to recall 50 to 100 pictures or words instantly. For example, if a presenter wishes to remember things like house, table, garland, bike, photo, cell phone, computer, rose, a man etc. He can imagine that there is a house, inside the house there is a table, where a cell phone is lying in one corner. In the middle of the table is a photo and a garland on the photo. A gentleman who comes in a bike has a rose in his pocket; he sits and works on the computer. Likewise any number of pictures can be recalled by connecting it in as an imaginary story.

### G. Take Precaution in Handling Electronic Gadgets

Apart from all this the presenter should also think of various visual aids that he can use to highlight his presentation. He can utilize the youtube videos, animation, short clippings, GIFs or posters, newspaper cuttings, the traditional black board and the white chalk piece and so on. He/ she should also be prepared to make a presentation without any aid. Electronic gadgets may lead to embarrassing situation if not handled with precaution. Compatibility of the file, viruses, system without CD drive, (if the presenter stores everything in CD) mal functioning of the gadgets and over all the power cut may hinder the presentation. Thus a presenter should anticipate and be smart enough to proceed even without the planned things.

### H. Consider ‘Wh’ Questions before Presentation

If the presenter is making a presentation on behalf of his company he should consider all the ‘wh’ questions before making presentation.

**Where** -This means the venue, whether it is a room or hall? ventilation, air circulation, seating arrangements, number of audience that can be accommodated, electronic gadgets, its availability etc.

**What** – connects to the content or meat of the presentation.

**How** to grab the audience attention? What new technology or devices can be made use of? If so, I should prepare power point presentation. What sort of pictures or videos need to be included? Will it be effective if short animation video is played related to the topic? Am I going to make use of posters? Is it an ordinary poster or digital poster? What sort of video clippings, audio files, pictures, charts, cards etc would effectively convey the message?

**Why** am I making this presentation? On what aspect do I wish to educate or train the audience?

**To Whom** should I give my presentation? Here the presenter needs to think on the audience age factor, their sex, education, career, intellectual level, background etc.

**When** is my presentation? This relates to time factor. Is it morning or pre-lunch or post-lunch or evening session? Based on this the presenter can adjust and modify his presentation. Normally pre and post lunch sessions are tough to handle than morning session. A presenter should be resourceful to maintain the audience' enthusiasm throughout by some activities related to the topic.

### I. Power Point Presentations- A Congenial Tool to the Presenter

The following things are kept in mind while preparing slides.

#### Outline



First slide is the title of the presentation with the name and official address of the presenter. Second slide should contain the outline of the presentation. The forthcoming slides should adhere to the outline. This makes things streamlined and systematic.

#### Slide Structure

Prepare limited slides. A slide may contain 3-4 points, not as complete sentences but as phrases. The audience may spend time only in reading the content and rarely listen to the speaker or get diverted easily if the content is more. Hence the focus should be on minimum content.

The presenter should plan to distribute his allotted time in accordance with the number of slides, introduction and query session.

#### Font size of PPT

Times New Roman font can be used if one wants to be too formal. Otherwise different fonts can be availed according to the presenter's aesthetic sense. But the size of the letters should range from 18- 36 point. Different font sizes are used for headings and subheadings to show variation. Capitalize proper names and the beginnings of the sentences/phrases.

#### Color and Background

Dark background with light colour letters is a good combination. Color variations can be used to highlight important points. The presenter should avoid using different colors for each letter. Multi color background is distracting and has to be avoided. Overall a formal appearance to the slides will enrich the presentation.

#### Graphs and Pictures

A picture will always be effective in driving home the point. A graphical representation has a far reaching impact and immediately conveys the message rather than charts and words. It enables the audience to retain and recall the points with accuracy. A suitable title given adds more information and minimizes presenter's task.

#### Spelling and Grammar

The slides prepared should be thoroughly proof read to avoid spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, repetition etc.

#### Conclusion Slide

It is obvious that the conclusion slide should sum up or give an overview of the presentation. The conclusion slide should carry avenues for further research. (Because there is no end for research and the success of the presentation lies in how far it enables further research or effectuates implementation)

#### J. Questions

No presentation is complete without the question and answer session. The questions slide invites questions from the audience.

Many TED speakers these days do not use Power point or slides. To have a visual feast and explore the content of the talk, "TED has invested in the company Prezi, which makes presentation software that offers a camera's-eye view of a two-dimensional landscape. Instead of a flat sequence of images, you can move around the landscape and zoom in to it if need be." (Anderson 2013)

#### K. Hand Outs

This is a one page sheet which contains presentation material in brief with the name, e-mail ID, contact number and address of the presenter. A brief explanation to difficult terms in the presentation can be given in the hand outs. These hand outs leave a lasting impact in the minds of audience even after a

few months of presentation. It also aids in extending rapport and enriches our network. The presenter can distribute hand outs that contain a brief description about the names of different software or technologies related to the specific technology that he speaks about. The hand out may also contain sources or website addresses that provides training on the same.

The presenter can prepare a few cards that consist of the main points or hints that will aid his presentation. It would not be fine if he carries a book or pile of papers during his presentation. Carrying small sheets of paper or cards would be a dignified way that would elevate the image of the presenter. Even notes in smart phones can be used to store information and the same can be referred while giving presentation

#### L. Appearance

Appearance is the key to any presentation. Hence the presenter should take care of his appearance. A formal dress with impeccable attire will add magnificence to speech. Wearing gorgeous clothing and more jewellery will diminish the entire efforts.

#### M. Body Language, Eye Contact, Gestures

"When we speak in public, we have three basic kinds of tools at our disposal. (1) Visual (2) Vocal and (3) Verbal." (Gamble 2010) Body language, eye contact, appropriate gestures etc are the other essential factors that the presenter should practice by standing in front of the mirror. Video-recording the presentation with smart phone will help to rectify mistakes if any and also aids to polish the mode of presentation. Thus self- appraisal, friends and teacher's suggestion go a long way to enhance presentation skills.

Presenter should take care of avoiding cross posture, crossing hands or legs while making presentation. Hands above the shoulders convey anxiety and lack of confidence. Audience will be much distracted and could not get the presenter. Fidgeting, scratching neck collar, adjusting dress, hair, rubbing hands, playing with the key chain, watching the ceiling etc are a few negative gestures to be evaded.

#### N. Take Care of Tone and Grammar

"Face is the index of mind" but "Tonality is the index of our mood". It is important that the presenter needs to have a thorough training before presentation regarding intonation. A mobile phone is the best device to record and train voice according to the needs of the presentation. Even 'Good Morning' if said in sullen tone would kill the enthusiasm and spirit in audience mind. Hence practice on tonality would make the presentation effective. By recording and listening to the voice for one or two times, the presenter can think about introducing pauses to break monotony in his speech.

Ambiguous sentences should be pronounced distinctly with appropriate pause. The following sentence is the judgment given by a judge. 'Hang him, not leave him.' 'Hang him not, leave him.' It should be noted that how variation in pause would change the meaning while pronunciation. Similarly prepositions, conjunctions, articles should be handled effectively. Ex: Raj went to Mumbai to sell his house along with his wife. Correct form: Raj went to Mumbai along with his wife to sell his house.

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Members of a notorious family pronounced 'electricity' as 'electrikity', capacity as 'capakity' and publicity as 'publikity' which sounds ridiculous. A Google check on phonetic symbols and sound files of a particular word will save one from the indignity of embarrassment.

### **O. Speak to people and not speak at them**

The presenter's words should leave a lasting impact. He should make words his friends by enriching his vocabulary. For eg: "Gandhi clothed him in voluntary poverty" is a touching sentence. To highlight the greatness of a person during the condolence message one can say, "He is not a person but a personality." This type of succinct and legible usage of words is an art and needs to be developed. After three minutes speech it is absurd to say, "Coming to the point." One need not convey to the audience that that was his first experience in delivering speech nor statements like "I am feeling nervous, see my hands are shivering (in order to arouse soft corner) or "please bear with me for 15 minutes" and so on.

### **P. Use Tact to Tackle Audience**

Presentation is not only preparation in terms of content and speaking but also maintaining poise and composure. During presentation if any audience interrupts (a few audience purposefully interrupt) the presenter should not lose his stand. On the other hand if the presenter keeps on addressing the audience issue during his allotted time, his presentation time will be completed and he cannot go with his intended thought. So the presenter should make very clear the ground rules stating that he is interested to clear his doubt and persuade him to ask the doubt only at the end of the presentation during queries session. Civility and amicable tone would make anyone a best presenter. If the doubt is within the presenter's knowledge limit it is fare and well that he could answer it by all means. If not he should take the responsibility to clarify the doubt by e-mail. It should be understood that the presenter's job doesn't end with the presentation. Clarifying and substantiating after the presentation are also predominant.

### **Q. Variation- Enchants the Exhausted Mind**

To captivate and sustain the audience' attention is a great skill. If the presentation is too long in between the slides small anecdotes or silly questions, brain teasers, puzzle, riddles, tongue twisters etc can be kept as a slide. Pronouncing the tongue twisters and answering the puzzles or riddles would make the audience sit in the tip of the seat; they would be engrossed and never lose their attention. Teaser: "At my grandparent's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including me and my grandparents, there were three children, two mothers, two fathers, three grandchildren, one brother, two sisters, one daughter-in-law and one mother-in-law. How many attended the party and who were they? Ans: Seven people attended the party; they were me, my sister and brother, my parents and my grandparents."

As a variation, the presenter can also insert mild music in his slides. Especially, if he feels the audience need to jot down a few points from his slide, he can insert mild music only to that particular slide to soothe their mind. Music certainly refreshes the exhausted mind. This is a fine technique to gain complete attention on the presentation.

### **R. Games and Activities**

Not only by using slides, the presenter can also prepare a

few charts to refresh the audience' mind. For example he can cut alphabet 'H' into four pieces in a cardboard chart and give the same to the audience who are divided into groups. The group that joins the pieces quickly in its correct shape is given applause. This would make them forget their stand or boredom. Any point that needs to be conveyed can be conducted as an activity as any human mind inclines towards games and activities.

### **S. Finishing point of the presentation**

In line with the initiation methods there are five ways to close a presentation. The presenter can make his audience awestruck by proclaiming some statistical information at the end of the presentation or anecdote, quotation, central message (summing up all the points discussed), a question etc. Above all it is the preliminary duty of the presenter to thank his audience at the end of the presentation. (For listening to him patiently)

The following would enhance students' perception regarding presentation.

### **T. Choose the Correct Option**

1. Introduce humour in presentation

a) Often b) spontaneously c) very little d) deliberately

Ans: b

2. How many words per minute can be spoken to maintain maximum speed in presentation

a) 200 w/m b) 50w/m c) 75w/m d) 100w/m

Ans: b

3. Will you allow the audience to interrupt?

a) Often b) occasionally c) Clarify the ground rules before you talk.

Ans: c

4. Will you use the same presentation for all the presentation at different places?

a) Yes b) may be c) make necessary changes if essential

Ans: c

5. Dressing matters

a) To a great extent b) to some extent c) doesn't matter d) depends on the company.

Ans: d

6. Can tell examples from your own life?

a) Often b) never c) if required d) always

Ans: c

7. If an audience opposes your point of view what should you do?

a) Argue b) not care c) substantiate d) accept audience's view point

Ans: c

8. Do not speak continuously for ----- minutes

a) 30 m b) 40 m c) 20 m d) 35 m

Ans: c

9. While explaining for a long time what should be done to the visual aid?

a) Switch on b) Switch off c) Stop the speech for a while and then switch off

Ans: c

10. a) Insert hands in the pocket b) Move around a little c) Interrupt when audience speak d) Discuss controversial topics because it is interesting.

Which of the above statements are true?



Ans: Only b is true.

11. While speaking hands should move above the shoulders?

a) True b) false Ans: false

**U. Usage of Appropriate Vocabulary**

1. I would like to begin with a preview/ an introduction/ **an outline of the main points of my talk.**
2. The first thing I am going to say/tell/**talk** is why we need to change our pay policy.
3. I'll then go on to inform/**share**/ confide with you some of the viewpoints of our executives.
4. Please feel free to interrupt/ **ask**/ enquire me with any questions you may have in the course of the presentation.
5. I'll be glad to call/ **answer**/ invite any questions that you may have at the end of the presentation.
6. May I say the vote of thanks/ I **would like to propose the vote of thanks.**

**III. FINDINGS**

**A. Self- Introspection**

The presenter may contemplate on the following questions after his presentation.

- i. How was the audience body language while I was speaking?
- ii. How did I present myself?
- iii. How was my eye contact?
- iv. How was my body language especially what did I do with my hands and arms?
- v. How was my pronunciation, accent, tone? Was it clear and understandable?

The following Peer Assessment Sheet would give a valuable feedback and aids for effective presentation.

Name:

Kindly assess the speaker's performance with the following rating scales.

- a) Excellent- 5 b) Very good- 4 c) Good-3 d) Satisfactory-2 e) Poor-1 f) Unworthy-0

S. No	Norms	Grade
1	Topic Selection	
2	How was the topic introduced?	
3	How did the presenter organize the topic?	
4	Did it carry introduction, body and conclusion?	
5	How was the pronunciation and clarity?	
6	Is the tone audible and effective?	
7	How was the presenter's body language and eye contact?	
8	How was the language aspect?	
9	Was the presentation interesting?	
10	Were the examples/anecdotes relevant to the topic?	
11	How was the seating and room's ventilation?	
12	Comment on presenter's time management skill	
13	What do you feel about the relevance of the slides/ video/ audio used in presentation?	
14	Was the presenter's appearance dignified?	
15	Opinion on hand outs	

(The above questions can be altered or removed according to the situation and need.) Feedback can be obtained by Google

forms too. This gives a scope for self- appraisal and promotes effective presentation.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

'Respect your audience' 'Practice makes perfect' are intrinsic to any presentation. A presenter should know the logic, empathise with the audience and should be ethical in presentation. There is neither any hard and fast rule on how long a presentation should last nor on the style of the presenter and usage of slides. A shrewd presenter scans the audience mind, maintains his energy level and creates an emotional bond with the audience. Mikes may fail but the voice of the presenter echoes and creates a lasting impact in audience if the presenter is confident enough in delivering the speech.

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