Professional Presentations

Professional Communications
In a Nutshell:

- Plan your presentation
- Organize the parts of your presentation
- Practice your presentation
- Practice with technology
- Be presentable
- Speak in a normal voice
People Hear Selectively

Planning The Presentation

• Plan for your audience
  – Determine how to be relevant
  – Listeners hear selectively
  – Ask yourself standard profile questions
    • What is the nature of the gathering?
    • How many will be present?
    • What is their knowledge level and expectations?
    • How much time do I have?
    • What happens before and after I speak?
    • How will I know whether or not the talk was a success?
Planning The Presentation

• Plan for the situation
  – Investigate site or room
    • What is the seating capacity of the room?
      – If you have a choice, a smaller seating capacity is preferable to a larger seating capacity
    • Where you will stand?
    • Where are the electrical outlets? Is there wireless access?
    • What are the acoustics like?
  – Investigate technology needs/systems
    • How will you hook up your laptop to the projector?
Planning The Presentation

• Choose your organizational pattern
  – Introduction - Body - Conclusion
  – Problem - Solution
  – Goal - Methods - Results - Discussion
  – Narrative
    • Set the stage
    • Introduce the dramatic conflict
    • Resolve the conflict
Planning The Presentation

• Determine your relationship to your slides
  – A presentation consists of two things:
    • Your voice and personal presence
    • The information on the slides
• You are the main source of information during the presentation
• Determine which combination of information from you and information from the slide will best convey the ideas to the audience
Planning The Presentation

• Choose foreground or background strategy
  – With foreground slides, you explain in detail the implications shown on the slide
    • Tables, graphs, complex visualizations
  – With background slides, you summarize key points
    • Help the audience stay on track and follow and remember points that have been made
    • Project the main points on a slide and discuss each point in turn
    • Help the audience to stay aware of their place in the presentation
Planning The Presentation

• Create an outline
  – A good outline shows both the sequence of the topics and the content of the slide or slides devoted to that topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Visual Aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Outline of main topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Examples of similar technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Features</td>
<td>List of features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages/disadvantages</td>
<td>Discussion points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Table of costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demo of main features</td>
<td>Live demo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Summarize findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Planning The Presentation

• Create appropriate slides
  – Use easy-to-read fonts
  – Use subtle transitions and animations
  – “If your words or images are not on point, making them dance in color won’t make them relevant.”
    – Edward Tufte
  – Do not distract your audience from the main point of the slide!
Planning The Presentation

• Understand the parts of the slide
  – Title
    • Largest font size - 44 pt. or larger
  – Text or graphic
    • Use phrases that convey specific content rather than generic topics
    • Graphic refers to a table, chart, drawing, or image
  – Border
    • A line that provides a frame around the visual
  – Background
    • The color or design that appears behind the text or graphic
    • Light text on a dark background for a dark room
    • Dark text on a light background for a light room
Planning The Presentation

• Help the reader
  – Use landscape (horizontal layout)
  – Give a title to each slide
  – Use a template master to establish a visual logic
  – For tables, graphs, images, etc:
    • Each visual should make only a single point
    • Interpret the visuals for your audience
    • Use a table for presenting numbers - be prepared to point out the numbers you want your audience to notice
Planning The Presentation

• Fonts
  – Use a single, simple font for all slides
  – Use different sizes, boldfacing, and italics sparingly
  – Use larger font sizes for titles
Planning The Presentation

• Colors
  – Use color to establish a visual logic
  – Use red and green sparingly (color blindness)
  – Avoid low contrast colors such as yellow on white or violet
  – Check your color scheme on a screen
    • Don’t assume that just because it looks good on your laptop screen that it will project well
Planning The Presentation

• Animation
  – Use sparingly! (If at all)
  – If you use transitions between slides, use the same transition for all slides
  – Consider fading the previous bullets when new information appears
  – Be consistent when using animation to convey a complex point
Planning The Presentation

• Sound effects
  – As with animation, use sparingly or not at all
  – Use the same sound transition for each slide
Planning The Presentation

• Slide transitions
  – The goal of transitions is to let your audience know that another type of data is about to appear
  – If your audience concentrates on the transition rather than the message, you’ve lost the audience
  – Select transitions that will help the viewer
Rehearsing The Presentation

• Practice developing a conversational quality
  – You should sound like you are speaking to people
  – Do not memorize words
    • If you memorize, you will tend to grope for memorized words rather than concentrating on the listeners and letting the words flow
  – Do not use “up-talk”

• When you practice, wear the same clothes you will wear in the actual presentation
Rehearsing The Presentation

• Practice handling your technology and visual aids
  – Understand how to open and navigate your presentation
  – Consider having the presentation on several different media
  – Have a backup plan in case the technology does not work
    • Overhead transparencies?
    • If you use transparencies, arrange them in the order they will be needed, and decide where you will place them when you are finished with them
  – If you have handouts, decide whether to distribute them before, during, or after the presentation
Rehearsing The Presentation

• Rehearse!
  – Practice your presentation at least once under conditions similar to those in which you will make the presentation
  – This is particularly important for group presentations!

• Commit to the following statement:
  – “This is not about me. As a person who has something significant to share, I will get out of my own way.”
Rehearsing The Presentation

• Begin well
  – The first few sentences should show that the talk will be interesting
  – Make a surprising claim, argue that some familiar or intuitive solution is incorrect, or show why the problem to be solved is of practical consequence
Delivering The Presentation

• Explain where you are going before explaining how you will get there

• Example of a poor introduction:

  This talk is about new graph data structures. I’ll begin by explaining graph theory and show some data structures for graphs, then I’ll show my new algorithms. I’ll show experimental results on our cluster machine and then show why the algorithms are useful for some practical graph traversal algorithms.
Delivering The Presentation

• It is better to start a talk with interesting material

• Example of a good introduction:

My talk today is about new graph data structures. There are many practical problems that can be solved by graph methods, such as the traveling salesman problem, where good solutions can be found with reasonable complexity so long as an optimal solution isn’t needed. But even these solutions are slow if the wrong data structures are used. I’ll begin by explaining approximate solutions to the salesman problem and show why existing data structures aren’t ideal. Then I’ll explain my new data structures and show how to use them to speed up the algorithm. I’ll conclude with examples of where the new method makes a difference.
Delivering The Presentation

• Some talks can be introduced with a tale or an anecdote to motivate the need for a solution to the problem or to illustrate what would happen if the problem were not solved
Delivering The Presentation

• Navigate the body
  – Use verbal transitions liberally
    • Indicate how the next main idea fits into the overall presentation and why it is important
  – Emphasize important details
  – Be aware of time limitations
    • It is better to present one or two main ideas carefully than to attempt to communicate more information than your audience can comfortably grasp
Delivering The Presentation

• Develop a conclusion
  – Say, “In conclusion ...”
  – For a proposal, stress the main advantages, and urge your listeners to take specific action
  – For a recommendation, emphasize the most important data presented, and clearly present your recommendation
  – End by asking for questions from the audience
Delivering The Presentation

• Additional tips for effective presentations
  – Use a note page if you feel it is necessary
    • The note page should contain clear main headings and subheading, with plenty of white space so you can easily find your place
    • Do not read from the note page; use it only to jog your memory if necessary
    • Watch the “uhms” – silence is much more professional
  – Adopt a comfortable style
    • Smile
    • Look directly at each listener at least once
    • Do not speak too rapidly, project your voice, and modulate your vocal pitch (no monotone!)
      – Imagine you are reading a book to a 5-year old
    • Eliminate distracting mannerisms
    • Stand firmly on both feet without swaying or slumping
Use “Verbal Punctuation”

• Emphasize certain words
  – It SIGNALS to your audience that which you assign greatest importance
  – It signals to YOUR AUDIENCE that which you assign greatest importance
  – It signals to your audience THAT which you assign greatest importance
  – It signals to your audience that which YOU assign greatest importance
  – It signals to your audience that which you assign GREATEST importance
  – It signals to your audience that which you assign greatest IMPORTANCE

• Especially important for statistics:
  – “Eighty-two percent of software project managers are looking for other jobs. That’s FOUR OUT OF FIVE top staff members.”
Checklist

✓ Identify your audience
  – What is your listeners’ level of knowledge about the topic?
  – What is their level of interest in the entire speech?
✓ Create an outline showing the main point and sub-points
✓ Assign a time limit to each point
Checklist

✓ Create a list of visual aids
  – What visual aid will illustrate each sub-point most effectively?
✓ Decide whether you will include handouts
✓ Review the speaking location
✓ Select a method for pointing to the screen
Checklist

✓ Prepare a clearly written note page — with lots of white space between topics
✓ Rehearse the presentation
✓ Check the compatibility of hardware and software at the site
Evaluating an Oral Presentation

✓ Did the speaker tell you the point early in the presentation?
✓ Could you tell when the speaker moved to a new sub-topic?
✓ Did the speaker sound conversational or speak in a monotone?
✓ Were the visuals clear enough to understand? Did the speaker use visuals effectively?
Evaluating an Oral Presentation

✔ Did the presentation have any annoying transitions?
✔ Was the design of the slides effective?
✔ Did the speaker focus on the audience and not on the slides?
✔ Do you remember the main point and the main support?
Questions?
Questions?