

Chapter 1

Winning Traits of Innovative Presentations

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A *formal presentation* is when you make a speech at a conference or introduce your product or service to a potential client, in each case accompanied by visuals in the form of slides, videos, or props. However, when you hone your presentation skills, you find you can use them when you talk about a project in a staff meeting, when you introduce yourself at a networking event, or when you ask for donations for your favorite charity. In this chapter, we outline the different types of business presentations and introduce you to the concepts that make an innovative presentation, which we cover in depth in other chapters of this book.

Understanding the Different Types of Business Presentations

In business, any structured conversation with a specific goal and strategy can be construed as a presentation, however informal.

For example, when someone asks, “What do you do?” you present yourself in what we refer to as an *elevator pitch* — a brief, 30- to 60-second introduction that prompts the listener to say, “Tell me more.” Or, when you want to convince your manager to increase the budget to hire a social networking specialist, even if it’s an informal conversation, you must present your idea and the potential return on investment.

The following list defines the most common types of business presentations. The steps to creating the presentations listed here are the same, but the objectives and delivery vary. We made this a comprehensive list; however, you may know of other kinds of presentations, too.

- ✓ **Boardroom:** When you come face-to-face with the executive staff of your company or of a (potential) client, you must prepare yourself for acute scrutiny. Your presentation should include high-level information, but you must be ready to provide details if asked. More than in any other type of presentation, you need to be precise and concise when making a boardroom presentation.
- ✓ **Conceptual:** When you have an idea that's yet to come to fruition, you present a concept. However, you don't throw out your concept willy-nilly, you need to think about and consider your ideas. A conceptual presentation often includes plenty of time for discussion with the audience, as they usually have questions and feedback, which help you better define your idea.
- ✓ **Elevator pitch:** The most succinct, yet in some ways most difficult, presentation lasts not more than about one to two minutes. In that short time, you should be able to clearly describe yourself, your product or service — with wit and aplomb. (We tell you how to compose your elevator pitch in Chapter 21.)
- ✓ **Financial/operational:** The challenge with a financial or operational presentation lies in making numbers interesting. Of course, if you're talking about a 400 percent increase in profits, you have it easy, otherwise, you need to incorporate graphs and visuals that keep your audience interested. With these presentations, you generally discuss outcomes, trends, relationships, causes and effects, implications, and likely consequences shown by the numbers.



We recommend Perspective (<http://pixxa.com/perspective>), which turns your numbers into interesting charts and graphs. The app itself is free; you purchase the graphs that you create or purchase a yearly subscription.



- ✓ **Formal/informal:** Most presentations fall into one of these two categories, determined by many factors such as the industry, your familiarity with the audience, your presentation goal, and the setting.

Informal doesn't mean sloppy; even in an informal, more conversational and discussion-oriented presentation, you should show up prepared and be polite and professional.
- ✓ **Informational:** Most presentations convey information, but in an informational presentation, the objective is to — drum roll, please — share information that an audience needs and wants and will use in some fashion in their job. If you conduct research and then present the results at a professional conference, your aim is to give an unbiased, informational presentation.

- ✔ **Motivational:** If you're asked to give a keynote speech at an event, chances are you'll give a motivational presentation. Your presentation will contain several personal anecdotes, examples, and memorable stories that your audience can relate to — probably of how you faced a difficult situation, overcame it, and what you learned from it. You want to convey enthusiasm and passion about your topic and instill inspiration in your audience.
- ✔ **Persuasive:** As opposed to the informational presentation, here you build your case — in a methodical, studied manner — and end with a call to action, which may be to persuade a potential client to hire your firm, a venture capitalist to fund your idea, or your manager to promote you to a higher position.
- ✔ **Planning:** If you manage a team or committee, planning presentations is a key element of your responsibilities. Although often informal and conducted in a meeting setting rather than a formal presentation setting, you need to be prepared to state the current situation, the situation you want to create, and the steps to get from the first to the second. You need to persuade others to buy in to your plan — or contribute to developing it — and to participate and complete their assigned action items.
- ✔ **Progress updates:** When you give a progress update, whether to colleagues or to a client, you give more than a simple state-of-affairs presentation. If you have to report a delay, you want to explain the reasons and provide a solution; likewise, if you're ahead of schedule or under budget, you want to highlight the good news.
- ✔ **Solutions:** When you sell a product or service, what you really sell is a solution to a problem the audience, customer, or client is experiencing. Although all presentations should be developed with the audience in mind, that consideration is the foundation of the solutions presentation. We dedicate Chapter 20 to selling solutions.
- ✔ **Technical:** Technical presentations can be some of the most interesting to prepare and the most entertaining to watch. Convey enthusiasm about the process or product you discuss and display great visuals that take advantage of the latest technologies available and you'll have the audience on the edge of their seats.



The presentation types aren't mutually exclusive. For example, you can give a conceptual boardroom presentation to venture capitalists.

Rewards of your halo effect

Why the extreme fascination and adulation with famous actors, singers, and other celebrities? Singer Katy Perry has over 50 million followers on Twitter! Many of us tend to put famous people on a pedestal simply because of the roles they play on television, in movies, or on stage. There's something larger than life about seeing a person brilliantly act out a character who conquers fear, does amazing stunts, becomes a heroine, saves the day, or is the romantic swashbuckler who wins the hand of the fair maiden on the big screen.

Yet in real life, these talented folks are generally fairly average, not very educated or too exciting, and in some cases quite shy and insecure. But being an impressive performer gives celebrities a *halo effect*, whereby, because you see them in fictional contrived situations, you attribute all sorts of positive traits to them that aren't necessarily justified. Just because someone plays a brilliant doctor on television doesn't make him smart, but the halo effect of repeatedly seeing him perform brilliant diagnoses and surgical miracles every week means that the perceived characteristic is often attached to him and follows him in real life.

There is also a positive halo effect associated with being a terrific innovative presenter, and it can be a real and justified image. Being

an articulate, poised, and polished speaker does wonders for your public image. In many instances, people view you as a competent and passionate leader — a person of action who gets impressive results. Depending on your presentation, they may be impressed with you as a visionary, grand strategist, innovator, technical expert, or problem solver. Because you gave a motivational, inspirational, and entertaining keynote speech, your status and credibility are elevated. If you give an impassioned presentation advocating a noble cause, you may find yourself being featured in numerous newspaper or magazine articles and suddenly being invited to talk on the major broadcast and cable networks.

Becoming that special innovator presenter — a consummate performer who communicates in different and immensely better ways than other speakers — will change your career and life. You'll find people clamoring to get your advice, beckoning you to be involved in new business ventures, and eagerly inviting you to talk at major conferences or social events. There is usually no quicker and surefire way to catapult you up the career ladder of success than to give a blockbuster presentation in front of the senior executives in your company. This book shows you how to outperform all other presenters and light up that warranted halo.

Finding Common Characteristics of Consistently Winning Presentations

Regardless of type, presentations share a similar flow and format, and preparing for them with our proven method results in an innovative, winning presentation every time.

Factoring for effectiveness and efficiency

The recurring message you hear when talking to people is “I’m so busy.” With that in mind, when someone gives you the time and respect to attend and listen to your presentation, you owe it to them to be as effective and efficient in your delivery as possible.

In order to be effective, you must leave your ego and needs at the door and consider your audience. Your presentation is not an opportunity to boast about your accomplishments, but an invitation to provide useful information or a solution that makes the audience’s life easier.

Your efficiency will be appreciated and remembered. Although people may remember a windbag, they probably won’t remember what he said. Keep your statements simple and tell them in a logical order. By all means, tell a story — people remember stories better than charts and bulleted lists — but make sure the story is relevant to and conveys your message.



While developing your presentation, you can make bulleted lists if that’s the way you think about things, but then come up with a story or anecdote that relates the same information. If that’s not possible, rather than one slide with five bullets, make one visual for each bullet and display a single image that’s relevant to the point.

We say it for the first time here, and you’ll read it repeatedly throughout this book: rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. With good preparation and consistent practice leading up to the actual presentation, you’ll deliver a natural presentation without hesitation and in keeping with the established time limit.



Different types of presentations require different intensity of rehearsal. If you must present your status report at a staff meeting, gathering your notes a day or two before and doing a quick run through is probably enough to make sure you present in a logical order, whereas for a keynote that uses multiple types of technology in front of several hundred people, you may need more than 20 hours of rehearsal. (Chapter 8 explains rehearsal methods.)

Remembering the Five Cs: Being clear, concise, compelling, captivating, and convincing

In addition to being effective and efficient, any presentation you make should pass the Five C’s test.



Your presentation should be:

- ✓ **Clear:** Use words and speech your audience understands. Jargon is fine for an industry or staff meeting, but if you have any doubt your audience is familiar with a term, either don't use it or define it immediately upon using it.

Make your points in a logical order. You can make your introduction, briefly tell your conclusion, and then explain how you get from the beginning to the end — this style sets an expectation and curiosity for the audience, and gets them wondering and paying attention to see how you prove your point.

- ✓ **Concise:** “Brevity is the soul of wit,” wrote Shakespeare in *Hamlet*, and his point holds true today. In other words, say what you have to say in as few words as possible. People will love you for that! Preparing an elevator pitch is an excellent exercise in being concise, and we explain how to do that in Chapter 21.
- ✓ **Compelling:** A compelling presentation, by its very definition, is irresistible! Use your words, voice, visuals, and powerful information to demand and deserve total interest. If you show enthusiasm and interest in your subject, your audience will mimic you. Throughout the book we give you specific tactics for vocalization, gesturing, and using creativity and technology that rivets your audience's attention.
- ✓ **Captivating:** A compelling presentation is typically about information that is powerfully convincing, but a captivating speaker holds an audience spellbound with his energy, passion, charisma, and stage presence. As a captivating speaker, you keep the presentation moving forward filled with anticipation, you tell impacting stories and incorporate stunning video, guest speakers, and/or audience activities. The audience can't wait to find out what's going to happen next.
- ✓ **Convincing:** When all is said and done, this last point ultimately determines the success or failure of your presentation. Have you swayed the audience to your point of view? Have you persuaded your audience to buy what you're selling?



For important speeches, one of the best ways to determine whether your presentation meets these criteria is to videotape yourself and do a self-evaluation; even better is to ask someone similar in position or mindset to your audience to listen and give you honest, constructive feedback. Again, even brief, informal presentations, such as those you give at staff meetings, should meet these criteria — even recording yourself with the camera on your computer or smart device can be helpful to see and hear how you appear and sound.

Combining the Message, Messenger, and Medium

Your presentations have three components:

- ✓ **Message:** What is said.
- ✓ **Messenger:** Who says it.
- ✓ **Medium:** How it's said.

A successful presentation combines these three elements seamlessly to create a coherent argument.

Creating the message

Your message — what's often referred to as *content* — can be simple or complex or somewhere in-between, but it should always be relevant to your audience's needs and be structured to satisfy the Five C's mentioned in the previous section (clear, concise, compelling, captivating, convincing). Sometimes, the audience need only know what's going on, other times you want to give them a call to action.

If you were stranded on an island and decide to put a message in a bottle in the hopes of being saved, which message is more effective:

- ✓ I'm on an island in the South Pacific.
- ✓ I'm stranded on an island in the South Pacific; come find me, please!

When the first message washes up on shore somewhere in Australia, the reader might think, "Oh, how cute, a message in a bottle." Whereas after the second message is read, the Coast Guard will be on their way.

Your message must align with the audience's needs: if they want only information, give that; if they want a solution — which is more likely the case — provide a solution or a call to action that can bring them the solution.

Prepping the messenger

As the presenter, you are the messenger. If you work in sales, your message may have been prepared by someone else, and you must practice and deliver it as if it's part of your DNA. If you create your presentations, you have the advantage of knowing your material, or researching it, while you develop the message and accompanying visuals.

Choosing the medium

The technological options available for how you present your message can be overwhelming, but it pays you to choose carefully. In some circumstances, your voice and posture provide an adequate medium. For example, if you have 30 seconds to introduce yourself, and you pull out a pico projector attached to your smartphone to show a video, your time is up before your video begins. In an informal progress update meeting where you have 15 minutes to talk about the status of a construction site, quickly setting up your pico projector and smartphone to show photos you took on your way to the meeting adds interesting proof to back up your words. Pull out your pico projector and smartphone in front of 300 people in a conference hall, however, and you risk being laughed off the stage.

Not only do you want the right equipment for the presentation, you also have to feel comfortable using it. You can reach a comfort level through practice and rehearsal, but if, for instance, you don't feel ready to command your visuals from a tablet and have remote speakers broadcast into your presentation, choose one option at a time and add them as they become familiar. We talk about technology options in Chapters 18 and 19.



The technology should support and enhance your message; if it distracts or overwhelms your message, don't use it.