



## Getting the Most Out of Your Conference Presentation

Presentations can be positive experiences. There are a few things you can do to ease the strain and ensure that your presentation runs smoothly. This resource has been prepared as a guide to assist you with the planning and delivery of your next oral presentation.

### Plan

- Know your audience, to be able to pitch at the right level.
- Do you want to inform them, inspire them to think about your topic, or convince them of a particular point of view?
- No one style is necessarily the right style, consider the pros and cons of using mediums such as PowerPoint, Prezi, or tabletop presentation boards. Decide which format will be appropriate for you, your presentation, and the audience.
- Make a plan and stick to it. If you digress you might go over time and miss out on articulating valuable information.
- Identify your key messages:
  - look at interesting ways to emphasise the key points
  - get to the point early; tell the audience what the presentation is about; explain the key points and then repeat them in your conclusion
  - keep in mind that the audience wants to know: why should I care? How will this improve my life? What must I do with these findings?
- Prepare notes or cue cards so that you can speak freely. If you are using slides, try not to read directly from them or your notes.
- Get to the venue early to meet and greet your audience as they enter the room. It can help to reduce anxiety and create a positive relationship between you and the audience.
- Be aware of the room size, layout, and equipment you are intending to use before the presentation and adapt the presentation to suit your environment.
- Having a warm drink to sip before you start (and during your presentation) will help warm up your voice. A cold drink can constrict your throat.

### Rehearse

- Gain feedback to improve the design, legibility, and content of your presentation.
- Timing is essential. Aim to complete your presentation within a minute of the recommended length. Rehearsing your presentation is an excellent way of checking that your presentation runs to time.
- Practice, practice, practice. Rehearse until your delivery is fluent and you are confident with your pronunciation.
- Tape your presentation and listen to yourself, it might be painfully embarrassing but it could prove invaluable.

## **Delivery**

- Don't waste time early on. Use your opening line to get straight into the purpose of your presentation.
- Don't read text verbatim. Talk about your work and bring it to life. Put your presentation in context by using stories or examples to illustrate key points.
- Try not to go over the top with facial expressions, hand gestures or voice volume. Don't rush the delivery, instead speak clearly and slowly. Vary your pitch and tone to create interest.
- Try to avoid using words such as 'um' and any other word you might overdo when nervous. Make an effort to identify when you use these words and just pause instead.
- Laser pointers can be a handy tool. But if you are nervous and your hands shake the laser pointer will bring attention to this.

## **Body Language**

- Smile!
- Be animated, but don't overdo it. Pacing up and down, and a lot of hand movements can distract the audience.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience; talk to them, not the screen.
- When using visual aids be careful not to block the audience's view. Stand next to the screen so the audience doesn't have to split its attention.
- Keep an eye on the audience's body language, it will let you know to move on or create more interest and excitement.

## **Tips**

- Relax. Taking regular, deep breaths will help you to avoid gasping for air at the end of paragraphs. In addition, deep breathing will aid in relaxation and help you to overcome nerves.
- Make yourself familiar with the equipment before your presentation.
- Number your cue cards in case you drop them.
- Be prepared for IT or equipment problems. Always have a Plan B.
- Distribute handouts before or after the presentation, not during.
- Think about the best and worst presentations you have seen and try to identify the qualities you believe made the presentation interesting and memorable, or boring and forgetful, adapt your presentation with these issues in mind.