

15 Minute Guide to Winning Presentations

Simple tips
and techniques
to boost the
effectiveness
of your
presentations.

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Introducing the “Power of Wow.”

Congratulations! By requesting this guide, you’ve shown yourself to be a presenter committed to the “Power of Wow.” That’s the confidence to walk into a room and quickly have the audience in the palm of your hand.

This mini-guide was prepared to help you continue to build that confidence. It covers winning techniques designed to add the “Power of Wow” to the content, delivery and visuals of your presentations.

Whether you’re a beginner, or highly experienced presenter, we’re confident you’ll find a tip or two in this guide to make your presentations more impressive and effective. It’s a quick refresher course you can complete in 15 minutes or less.

This guide has been prepared and provided by InFocus with our compliments. As an industry leader, InFocus offers an extensive line of multimedia projectors created to enhance your effectiveness as a presenter. We are committed to serving the presentation market in any way we can. This guide and our Presenters University Web Site discussed on Page 13 are part of that commitment.



Recommended by Presenters University.

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Focus on the needs of your audience.

Whatever the subject of your presentation, it's important to understand what your audience wants to gain from attending. The key to winning over an audience is to make their needs and desires the prominent part of your message.

Selling goods and/or services

To capture attention, tell listeners what rewards they will personally enjoy using your product or service. Even if you are selling complex technology, your audience wants to know how it can save time, make money, reduce effort, or make them more successful.

Training employees or customers

While you cover the "how to" steps, be sure to interject the personal advantages each customer or employee will gain by having these abilities. The advantages may include working faster, reducing stress and effort, and many others.

Producing investor support

Why your company wants investor money is important. Support can be better built, however, by focusing on the benefits to the investor. These are usually financial, but can also be such things as satisfaction of contributing to an important advancement or being part of historical innovations.

Informing stockholders

The usual goal of this type of presentation, good news or bad, is to reduce investor concerns, or sell stock. If you make these presentations, you are probably already emphasizing your investors' needs. We suggest you review your material to be sure you haven't missed an opportunity to say "you" instead of "we."

Informing the community

Community presentations usually concern something your company has done, or plans to do. To make the work acceptable, be sure to cover the benefits the community (your listeners) will enjoy from the work. Then prove what you say by listing the actions that will create these benefits.

Direct the message.

Employ this essential practice at every presentation. Mentally put yourself in the audience. Imagine their attitude. Are you glad to be there? Are you comfortable? Understanding how your audience feels gives you the information you need to make an essential connection with them.

Attitude

Is your audience happy to be there, or did you have to convince them to come? As you prepare and present, include a statement showing you understand and share their enthusiasm, or that you're confident you can make them glad they attended — then do so.

Timetable

Is your audience taking a break from work to be with you? Once they start looking at their watches you've lost them. Start and end at a pre-established time. If circumstances cause you to start late, assure your audience you understand the value of their time and that the presentation will end on time. Then speed up, or edit your talk accordingly.

Comfort

Is the room cool, hot, noisy, crowded or uncomfortable in any way? If you have control over making it better, do it. If not, mention the mutual discomfort early in the presentation. It will help your audience relax and create a personal connection with them.

Age

Younger audiences require more visual stimulation. Older audiences may have difficulty hearing or seeing small images. Remember who your audience is, and adjust the presentation if their age requires it.

Education

The Wall Street Journal is written to a tenth-grade education level. When preparing, choose language easily understood by the person in the room with the least education and knowledge. By doing so, everyone can understand what you present, and you won't be talking down to the highly educated.

Build on a proven success tool.

Are you selling a product? Prospects want to know “what will it do for me?” Are you presenting to stockholders? Investors want to know how the news will affect their pocketbooks. Are you training employees and customers? They need to know how to accomplish a task, but also what advantages will come from the knowledge. The proven tool salespeople have been using for years is to focus the presentation on benefits. Then cover the facts or features that bring those benefits about.

Benefits are fulfilling basic human desires. These include:

- Make money
- Save time
- Save money
- Save effort
- Gain comfort
- Be appreciated
- Enjoy pleasure
- Be in style
- Be praised
- Feel secure
- Be successful
- Look smart
- Be admired
- Be an individual
- Have beautiful possessions
- Emulate others
- Take advantage of opportunities
- Keep possessions
- Avoid criticism
- Avoid pain
- Avoid loss of reputation
- Avoid loss of money
- Avoid trouble
- Avoid effort

Here are examples of focusing on benefits and supporting them with features:

Benefit: Save time giving branch offices weekly updates. (save time and effort)

Feature: The auto-dial feature can connect up to 25 numbers in 3 minutes.

Benefit: Your dividends will increase by 5% next quarter. (make money)

Feature: Company profits met first quarter projected growth figures.

Benefit: Look like a hero at your next managers meeting. (be praised and appreciated)

Feature: Hit Command-F3 to produce a profit and loss statement, automatically.

Benefit: Use these techniques with confidence. (feel secure, be successful)

Feature: Each technique has been used successfully by experienced presenters nationwide.

Remember the above tool when organizing and presenting your message.

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Employ your personal advantage.

As the speaker, you are the center of the presentation. Your visuals and hand-outs are there only to support you. It's important to look and sound comfortable and appear honest and believable. The surest way to do this is to build your presentation around your own personality and style. It's an old adage, but "be yourself" is the secret to success.

Voice

Are you a strong, dynamic speaker? Use your own voice to provide the attention-getting drama and emphasis needed to make important points. Then support them with visuals.

Presence

If you have a strong presence, or are agile and limber, take advantage of who you are. Move around during the presentation. Do live demonstrations, be animated when talking, and use movement to accentuate major issues.

Style

Attempting to be strong and dynamic when you are basically a warm, soft-spoken person works against your believability. Write and present your talk from your heart. When you are not in front of an audience, how do you communicate? Use that style in your presentation.

Humor

An amusing anecdote, quote or funny story at the beginning of a presentation puts your audience at ease. Humor is entertaining and keeps audience attention. If you are good at telling humorous stories, use this to your advantage. But make sure the stories relate to the subject and don't offend anyone in the room. If you are not known as a good storyteller, don't attempt humor. If your comedic timing is not good, humor can detract more than it adds to your presentation.

Background

Business audiences respect experience and past success. If you have this advantage, use it to establish believability. Then promise your audience that learning through your experience saves them from making the same mistakes in the future.

Incorporate result-getting techniques.

Here are a few techniques guaranteed to add strength and power to your presentations.

One-on-one contact

Eye contact is the best way to build trust and acceptance with your audience. Treat each person as if you are presenting to him or her personally. Depending on the size of the group, make eye contact with everyone at least once, if not multiple times. If this is not natural to you, it's an important skill to practice and perfect.

Strong, accurate language

Studies have found that delivery has the largest impact on presentations and words a relatively small influence. However, review what you have written and look for the following style errors that weaken what you say.

AVOID

Passive Voice

Later it was decided to...

Negative Form

Did not have confidence in

Redundant

New breakthrough

Current status

USE

Active Voice

Later we decided...

Positive Form

Mistrusted

Correct

Breakthrough

Status

Interactive devices

Including audience participation in your presentation commands attention, boosts learning, and builds interest in your subject.

Ask questions of the audience — Build a relationship with your audience by immediately asking questions about their backgrounds or areas of interest. Then, if you can, adjust your message based on those answers.

Integrate questions into the talk — Pose questions during the presentation. Ask such things as “what do you think happened next?” “Does anyone know the outcome?” “What is the next step?” Ask whatever is appropriate to your subject. Then call on the audience for answers.

Ask for questions from the audience — If you're a flexible speaker, tell your listeners they can ask questions during the presentation. If not, invite questions at the end. The first option will be more stimulating for the audience.

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Test your visual aid needs.

Most presentations will be more successful with the addition of visuals. Studies show that different people rely on different senses to absorb information. Some respond better to audio, while others must see something visually before understanding it. You'll be guaranteed to reach everyone in your audience if you present your material both ways. How important are visuals in your presentation? Take this quick quiz and find out.

- Your product is visual or creates visuals.
- You have more than two or three major points to make.
- Your message is controversial or could be misunderstood.
- You are training and the "how to" involves multiple steps.
- Your subject is basically dry and needs to be made more exciting.
- Numbers and/or mathematics are part of your presentation.
- You are presenting language, terms and other material your audience may not be familiar with.
- The age or interest level of your audience requires visuals to maintain attention.
- You are not a strong speaker and need visuals to enliven your message.
- You want to add powerful emphasis to your major points.
- Your product is complicated or the material is complex.

If you checked any of the above items, some type of visual support is essential to make your message understood. If you checked many items, your presentation may require dynamic visuals, motion or even sound.

Enhance the impact of your visuals.

Here are some tips on making sure your visuals properly support your message.

Use color to influence mood and emotion.

The colors for type, illustrations and backgrounds influence the way they are perceived. Here is a basic guide to using color in your business presentations.

Red – excitement, alert

Green – growth

Yellow – confidence, warmth, wisdom

Purple – dignity, sophistication

White – professionalism, new, innocence

Blue – truth, trust, justice

Black – authority, strength

Orange – action, optimism

Brown – friendliness, warmth

Grey – integrity, maturity

Apply appropriate typestyles for readability.

For hand-outs or take-home material print the paragraph copy in a serif typestyle. This style has been proven to be 30% easier to read. Type that is projected on a screen, using a slide, overhead or multimedia projector, should be in sans serif type. That's because in the projection process letters lose some of their sharpness, and serif type can look muddy when projected.

This is "Times Roman." It is a serif type. Notice the tiny scrollwork on the ends of each letter.

This is "Helvetica." It is a sans serif type. It does not have the tiny scrollwork on the ends of each letter.

Include photographs to inject realism.

The more true to life you make the issue you are presenting, the better your audience will understand and identify with it. Remember the impact you can add by using photos or video of people on location, using products or talking to the audience.

Insert illustrations to clarify or emphasize.

If your product is complex, an illustration lets you simplify the way it looks. Call-outs can be added to point out major features. Also, illustrations allow you to show exploded views or views normally not seen, such as product interiors.

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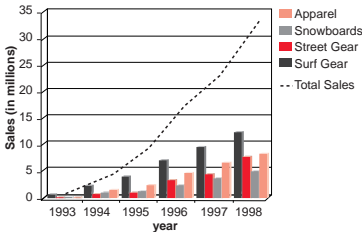
Add motion, sound or music when necessary.

Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Add animation, sound effects or music to enliven your presentation when it's appropriate. Animation is valuable when you need to attract attention, demonstrate how something works, or tell a story without words. Animation without purpose detracts from your message.

Keep charts and graphs simple.

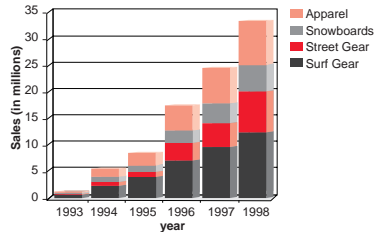
Charts and graphs that are used to support a point should be simple and instantly understood. Audiences are confused by complex visuals. Here are examples of the wrong and right ways to design charts and graphs.

Big Kahuna Surf Shops
Product Sales



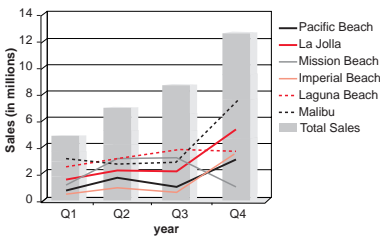
WRONG: Multiple graphic elements force the audience to study the chart in order to understand it.

Big Kahuna Surf Shops
Product Sales



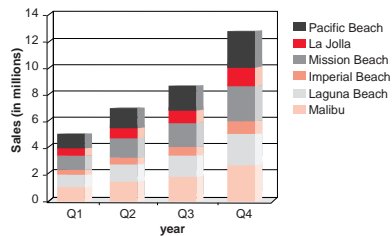
RIGHT: Combining sales figures into a single graphic element makes the point instantly.

Big Kahuna Surf Shops
1998 Sales By Store



WRONG: Using both lines and bars in the same chart make it busy and confusing, and muddy your message.

Big Kahuna Surf Shops
1998 Sales By Store



RIGHT: Charts can dramatically support your point when complex information is visually simplified.

Consider visual aid options.

Here are the primary advantages and disadvantages of most common visual aids.

Flip charts

Advantages

The simplicity eliminates the possibility of mechanical problems. Requires only an easel, which is available in most settings. Using a marker, you can draw or write on the pages during the presentation and make it interactive. A darkened room is not required.

Disadvantages

Creating images is time-consuming as visuals must be drawn on paper, or drawn and mounted on boards. Too small to be effective with a large audience.

Overhead transparencies

Advantages

Easy to create and revise images with a computer and laser printer. Can be marked on with a grease pencil during the presentation for emphasis.

Disadvantages

The projector is too large to carry on the road and may not be available in offices or small conference rooms.

Slides

Advantages

Excellent for photographic images and other art. It's now easy to make attractive slides of charts, graphs and other material on a computer. The projector is portable enough to travel.

Disadvantages

Slides require a longer lead time for production and are not intimate enough for small conference rooms or office settings.

PC-based multimedia projection

Covered in more detail on page 12.

Advantages

Presentations can be easily written, revised, and personalized to each audience as you travel. By allowing the use of sound and movement you can make your visuals alive and dynamic.

Disadvantages

Requires computer knowledge and experience.

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Eliminate audio-visual distractions.

Annoying distractions can irritate your audience and reduce the effectiveness of your message. Try to avoid these common problems.

Poor advance work

Check the facility and equipment thoroughly before your audience arrives. Set up your equipment, then make sure your visuals can be seen clearly from any seat in the room. Find light switches and know in advance how they should be set while visuals are being shown.

Awkward room layout

Determine where you will stand or walk while the visuals are being viewed. Will you be in the way? Do you plan to use pointers or slide changers? If so, where will you be when using these? Don't be your own audio-visual distraction.

Distracting equipment

Be sure you carry backup parts necessary to make your equipment work — extra light bulbs for projectors, batteries for computers, markers for boards, or grease pencils for overhead cells. Bring a long extension cord in case outlets are far away. Equipment difficulties make you look unprepared.

Overusing visuals

Visuals should support and emphasize important points; they should not be the presentation. “You” are the heart of the communication. Relying on visuals too much prevents you from connecting with your audience.

Under-using visuals

An old adage states “tell me once, tell me twice, tell me three times, then maybe I'll believe you.” No matter what your subject, your purpose is to affect the attitude of your audience. If you underuse visuals, you miss an excellent opportunity to repeat your important points.

Is a multimedia projector right for you?

Today's business audiences have grown up with television. The livelier your visuals, the better your chance of capturing their attention. A multimedia projector and PC give you more options than other support media. This technology is effective in large auditoriums and small conference rooms. PC-based presentations are easy to write, revise and enhance. Use this list to see if it's a good choice for you. Check any that apply.

- You travel to make presentations.
- Your presentations are given in a wide variety of settings, from office conference rooms to auditoriums.
- The needs of your audiences vary, so you must adjust the message for each group.
- You show financial or other changing information that must be current.
- Your presentation is interactive. You ask the audience to provide data you plug into formulas or calculations.
- Your story requires a demonstration.
- Your message is complex or highly technical.
- You make presentations at trade shows.
- You need to overcome language or cultural barriers.
- You want to play audio statements from your company president, customers, or other influencers.
- You want to incorporate VCR-based video footage into your message.
- Animation or motion is an essential part of your story.
- You represent a small company that wants to look big.

If any of the above statements apply to you, you should investigate how this technology can work for you.

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Want more tips?

Are you new to making business presentations? Want more details on how to write, structure and support an effective message? Here are a few of the many excellent publications covering the topic in more depth.

*High-Impact Presentations:
A Multimedia Approach*
Jo Robbins

*Creating Cool Powerpoint
Presentations*
Glenn E. Weadock,
Emily Sherrill Weadock

*A Funny Thing Happened on the
Way to the Podium: The Speaker's
Complete Guide to Great Jokes,
Anecdotes, and Stories*
Herbert Victor Prochnow (Preface)

*Loud and Clear: How to Prepare
and Deliver Effective Business and
Technical Presentations*
George L. Morrissey, et al

*Do Not Go Naked into Your
Next Presentation*
Ron Hoff

*Purpose, Movement, Color:
A Strategy for Effective
Presentations*
Tom Mucciolo,
Rich Mucciolo

*101 Secrets of Highly Effective
Speakers: Controlling Fear,
Commanding Attention*
Caryl Rae Krannich

*Speaking Globally: Effective
Presentations Across International
and Cultural Boundaries*
Elizabeth Urech

Already using a multimedia projector?

For valuable hints, tips and techniques on how to make the best use of this versatile technology, visit our Presenters University web site.

Presenters University Web Site
www.presentersuniversity.com

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