

## **Presentation skills**

### **1. Plan the structure and format of your presentation**

#### (a) Clarify the aim

- What is the aim (i.e. the exact purpose) of the presentation?
- If you are woolly about the aim, your presentation won't be clear
- Spend time establishing the aim
- What do you need to cover to ensure you fulfil the aim

#### (b) What do you know about the audience?

- Who are you presenting to?
- Analyse your audience and target your presentation to their knowledge and understanding.

#### (c) What do you need to cover to ensure you fulfil the aim?

- Ensure that what you are going to say is appropriate to both the aim and the audience
- Prioritise your material. You don't have to say everything.

#### (d) How much time do you have?

- Don't go over the allotted time and remember to allow time at the end for questions

#### (e) Venue and equipment

- Where will you be presenting?
- What audio-visual equipment will you require and what is available?
- Check the venue and equipment in advance, if possible.
- If not, then allow yourself enough time on the day to have a look at the set-up.

### **2. Plan the content**

#### (a) Beginning

- Introduce yourself and the others who are doing the presentation
- Explain and put up the main points you will cover (e.g. as bullet-points)

#### (b) Middle

- Go through your points logically and in sequence
- Summarise (give sign-posts) as you go along

#### (c) End

- You could use your original introductory summary of main points to summarise
- Give a conclusion

### **3. Questions**

- Plan for questions; don't be taken by surprise. Be prepared to clarify if someone interrupts during the presentation.
- Ask for them if none is forthcoming
- If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification
- Don't be afraid to admit you don't know
- Tell them you'll find out and get back to them
- Get back to them!

### **4. Visual Aids**

- Whatever you use, whether it is OHP or computer presentation, keep it simple and clear.
- Visual aids should add to the impact of your presentation.
- Learn to use a software package like Powerpoint that is specifically designed to produce presentation material (this is useful to produce slides - i.e. even if you are not using a computer presentation on the day).
- Bullet points are most effective – keep to a large font size
- Use 18 – 24 point font size, with up to 32 point for titles
- Choose a clear font style (experiment!)
- Keep diagrams and figures large and simple.
- Where possible, use colour to differentiate elements
- Label graphics, graphs and figures clearly

### **5. Notes**

- You may want to use both notes and the prompts given by your slides etc.
- Prepare a handout to circulate to the audience.
- If you use notes, make them easy to read.
- Use brief notes as an “aide-memoire”. Don’t read out the text word for word!
- Number the pages and clip them together.
- Don’t fiddle with your notes whilst presenting!

### **6. Presenting**

- Vary the tone of your voice and the pace at which you speak (though better slower than too fast).
- Be careful of little verbal tics e.g. “um”, “er”, and “you know”.
- Make eye contact with your audience, not the floor, your notes or the OHP.
- Use pauses. It gives you thinking time and the audience time to reflect.

### **7. Before the day**

- Check that you have everything you need sufficiently far in advance of the presentation to allow you time to deal with any unforeseen mishaps e.g. mislaid slides or notes.
- PRACTICE your presentation
- Ask you colleagues/peers to be a mock audience
- Ask them to give honest, constructive feed-back
- Revise bits that don’t work e.g. add an extra background/explanatory slide
- Practice it again...and again
- And ENJOY yourself!

GOOD LUCK!

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