



Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VII

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Evaluate presentation issues and methods.
2. Compile strategies for designing effective presentation deliveries.
3. Design an effective oral presentation.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 11:

Developing Your Professional Presentation

Chapter 12:

Delivering Professional Presentations

Unit Lesson

“I read a thing that actually says that speaking in front of a crowd is considered the number one fear of the average person. I found that amazing—number two was death! That means to the average person if you have to be at a funeral, you would rather be in the casket than doing the eulogy.” Jerry Seinfeld

“You can speak well if your tongue can deliver the message of your heart.” John Ford

“Speech is power: speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

Confident Communication

Many people, throughout history, have addressed presentations and speaking in public. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle spent a great deal of time presenting and analyzing presentation skills in the mid-400s BC. In our current business environment, leaders are expected to have the ability to give presentations.

Do you love to present to others or does the thought of presenting cause you to break out in a cold sweat? Dale Carnegie, an American writer, lecturer, and the developer of famous courses in presentation and speaking skills (n.d.), once said, “There are always three speeches, for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave.” Josh Russell, contributor to the UK Elite Business (2013), states, “Knowing how to pitch and present is a vital skill.... And, as with any skill, practice very much makes perfect” (p. 1). According to Russell, people have varied skills when presenting and need to practice in order to develop confidence (p. 1, 2013). Even the best presenters get nervous. Survey after survey reports that speaking in public is a common fear. Natalie Sisson (2012), Forbes writer, suggests that “the fear of public speaking is the most common fear and prevents many people from achieving their potential” and asks readers to “Imagine if you were comfortable speaking in public and took every opportunity presented, how would your life improve? According to Sisson, if you choose to address your fears and present anyway you will be viewed as a brave leader because you are trying, expose yourself to new clients and opportunities, gain the trust of your clients, reduce your competition because you are willing to face your fear, and accomplish great things because every time you speak you improve (p. 1).

Understanding why you are nervous is a great first step to dealing with anxieties. Beebe & Mottet (2013) offer a few tips for building confidence. They suggest that you do not procrastinate so that you have plenty of time to prepare, know your audience so you can connect with your listeners, and rehearse in the same type of environment you will be presenting in so you can give your brain and body the same type of experience you will have at the actual presentation (p. 258). They also suggest visualizing your presentation as a success,

and breathing deeply because nerves tend to cause us to breathe in short, shallow breaths. More tips include: 1) channel your nervousness by releasing tension as you hold on to the podium or try squeezing and releasing your hands as you grasp a chair; 2) give yourself a pep talk instead of focusing on negative thoughts; 3) look for friendly faces in the audience that can encourage you as you present; 4) seek out opportunities to speak so you can improve by actually decreasing your nervousness over time; and 5) be prepared because preparation helps you feel less anxiety (pp. 259-260). Managing your fears will help build your confidence in leadership and as a communicator.

Designing a Presentation

Developing the ideas for a presentation can feel overwhelming at first. Who you are presenting to is your audience and this is the best place to start. This should be at the center of your development process. Both presenting and marketing are areas where you must consider who you want to reach, why you want to reach them, and the best way to go about reaching them. Beebe & Mottet (2013) offer an audience-centered model for developing speaking presentations. This model features eight steps that focus on considering the audience (p. 261). The first step is to select and narrow your topic so you don't try to put too much into one presentation (p. 267). Have you ever listened to a presentation that was hard to follow or felt overwhelming? It can be confusing and frustrating to the audience if you go off topic or try to cover too much material. The next step is to decide why you are presenting this speech. Decide what you want your audience to take away from the time they have spent with you. Ask yourself if you are trying to persuade, inform, or entertain your audience (p. 268). Once you decide your purpose for your presentation, you need to develop your central idea. Beebe & Mottet (2013) refer to this as the essence of your presentation. They suggest that it should be one sentence in length, clear, direct, and have one main major idea (p. 269). Your main ideas should flow out of this sentence and then you should gather supporting materials that specifically address the main idea and keep your audience interested. Finally, you need to organize your presentation. This organization includes an introduction that tells the audience where they are going, a body that presents the main ideas, and a conclusion (pp. 281-288).

The Harvard Business Review Blog Network (2013) has a great three-minute video presented by Nick Morgan, CEO of Public Words, which explains five key steps to engage any audience and provides tips for creating a great presentation. The five steps include finding a story to tell, drawing the listener in quickly, explaining the threat which is the problem you are addressing so the audience can see that your topic matters, outlining the solution, and giving them an action step to take with them. Lynn Jacobs and Jeremy Hyman (2010), contributors to US News & Education, also suggest that you should do your homework and know your audience as well as the topic you are presenting. Before you present, they suggest practicing and planning your presentable appearance. According to Jacobs and Hyman (2010), you need to make sure you talk and not read the presentation from a paper, use aids such as PowerPoints or handouts to help the audience grasp the main points, and slow down your presentation so the audience can understand you.

Presentations and speaking in public were a part of everyday life even in the times of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; people seek to educate, persuade, and/or inform audiences. In our global communication explosion, leaders can often be found making several presentations in one day to people around the world. It is a skill all leaders should practice and master. As you take time to learn the art of presentation, you will be taking steps towards becoming a successful leader.

References

- Beebe, S.A., & Mottet, T.P. (2013). *Business and professional communication* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Jacobs, L. & Hyman, J. (2010, February 24). *15 Strategies for giving oral presentations*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2010/02/24/15-strategies-for-giving-oral-presentations>
- Morgan, N. (2011, March 23). *Create an effective presentation*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.hbr.org/video/2011/03/create-an-effective-presentati.html>.

Russell, J. (2013, March 5). *Presentation is everything*. Retrieved from <http://elitebusinessmagazine.co.uk/sales-marketing/item/presentation-is-everything>.

Sisson, N. (2012, October 9). *Five reasons why the fear of public speaking is great for you*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/work-in-progress/2012/10/09/five-reasons-why-the-fear-of-public-speaking-is-great-for-you/>.

Suggested Reading

Article from the CSU Online Library:

Psenicka, C., Kos, A., & Vendemia, W. (2012). The determinants of effective presentations: A factor analytic investigation. *International Journal of Management*, 29(3), 314-320. Retrieved from <https://libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.libraryresources.columbiasouthern.edu/docview/1040715947?accountid=33337>