# Presentation Skill Tips- Handout

1. General appreciation of presentations

People, in general, tend to say that more than half of the presentation there are listening too are not worth their time. Some even feel than only 10% of the presentations at conferences are good. Nowadays, where the world is all about communication, how is it possible than such a high ratio of presentation is perceived as bad. This brief document will try to explain the reasons of this problem and specially give some tips to be able to improve the way of making and delivering a good presentation.

2. Reversal of roles

During most of person's youth, the only presentations that someone has to deliver was related to school. Furthermore, it is almost exclusively in order to pass an exam or at least get analysed, criticised, and marked. In this case, the student have to present to his or her professor or to an expert, which, normally, knows more. This results in a presentation full of details and complexities in order to impress the expert(s) and/or to show the knowledge of the student.
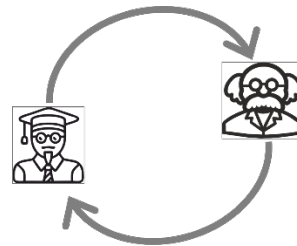
However, when, often later in life, someone need to present outside school, the roles shift: the audience become the students and the presenter is the expert. The habits of filling a presentation with complexity and details is often hard to get rid of and that is one of the reasons of the majority of conference presentation being crowded with deep details and complex elaborations.

Another reason is the fact that we see most of the same presentations having the same style and we tend to think that it the normality or the standard way of presenting.

3. The three laws of communication

In order to be able to give a good presentation one need to thing about why is the presentation about. Most of the time it is simply to get pass a few core messages. Here are three simple rules to understand and master to be able of transmiting your core message or messages in the best possible way. There are sometime called the three laws of communication.

3.1 Adapt to your audience

The degree of freedom is simple: you, as a presenter, can modify your presentation slides (if there are any) and you can also modify your presentation performance. However, you cannot change anything about the audience you are presenting to. The key here is to be well-informed on the audience to be able to better match the level of information and details it can understand and digest.
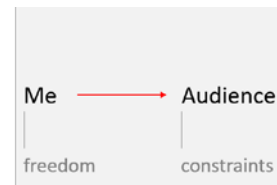
3.2 Minimise the noise-to-signal ratio

To be able to grab the attention of the members of the audience there should not have any distraction, or noise, between you & your message, and the audience. The noise can be verbal –for example too complex explanation- or visual –non-useful text of information on the slides.
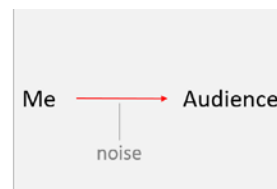
3.3 Repeat effectively

It is knows that the best way to remember something is by repeating it again and again. The same goes if you, as a presenter, want that the audience remember your core message(s). However, to be more efficient, one need to repeat effectively verbally and non-verbally throughout the length of the presentation.
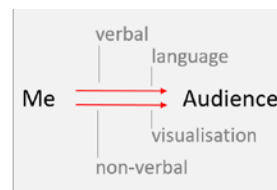
4. Repeating effectively

To prove that mixing verbal and non-verbal clues help remembering a piece of information, a small study has been made. A few test subjects were split into three groups. All of them had to try to remember 30 words. The first group was only hearing the words, the second group could only read the words and the last group could see the words and heard them at the same time. The subjects were tested a week after they heard or saw the 30 words. The results are shown of the image on the right.
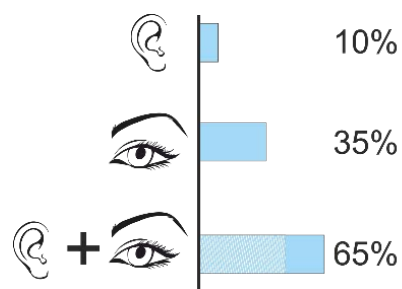
The test group who only heard the words remembered in average 3 words. The test group who saw the word remembered about between 10 and 11 words. The group who could hear and see the words at the same time remembered between 19 and 20 words, which is more than the sum of the other two groups. This short experiment highlight the effect of the mixture of verbal and non-verbal cues on memory.

5. SUCCESs

The acronym SUCCES stand for Simplicity, Unexected, Concreteness, Credibility, Emotions, and Story. Each word of the acronym is a tip to improve a presentation.

Assume that the audience is **not** interesting in your topic
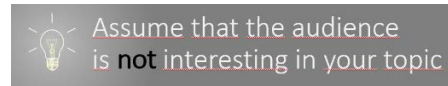
5.1   Simplicity:

It is important that the presentation, explanations, and slides, stays simple. However, simple does not mean simpler. To be able to stay simple, quality needs to be emphasize as regarded to quantity. Practise makes it easier to explain a concept simply and more effectively.

5.2   Unexpected:

To keep the attention of the audience, it is useful to do something unexpected. Another acronym can help to precise where a presenter can add unexpected touches to a presentation: PUNCH which stand for Personal, Unexpected, Novel, Challenging, Humour.

5.3   Concreteness:

The presenter should use "I", "we", or "my team". It is also very important to use examples. If a subject is too abstract using comparaison with common and concret example is always a good idea.

5.4   Credibitlity:

Crediblility is not demonstrated by the subject of the presentation but exclusively by what and how the presenter performs and speaks. A presenter needs to look at his or her low and high-status.

5.4.1   *High-status:*

"The professional", it involves the competence delivery, the dramaturgy, the visible competence, and the seriousness.

5.4.2   *Low-status:*

"The human", it involves personal stories, jokes, admiting mistakes, and showing emotion.

5.5   Emotions:

Showing emotion does not only make the presentation more credible (see point above) but it also allows to grab the audience attention and make the presentation more memorable.

5.6   Story:

Finally the story told by the presenter is, of course, extremely important. Next chapter is focused on that.

6. Story:

A story has to be interesting and well-structured. A good structure for a story is to start with a problem, then to find the cause, and then to develop the solution. Implementing suspense in the story will make the audience to be captivated and wanting to hear more. Having a good ending will make the memory of the presentation last longer. Throughout the duration of the presentation, having a clear core message or messages is crucial.

To write a good story a good advice is to do it in a quiet place. Trying to create a presentation by typing it or starting with the design of the slide is not a good practice. The next chapter presents the basic steps to produce a presentation the most effective way.

7. Storyboarding

Storyboarding is, basically, the recipe to elaborate a good presentation. It does not necessarily produce a good story and a good way to present it but it allows having a good global view of the presentation and describes the steps to being able to best integrate the core message(s) to a presentation. Here are the nine steps:

7.1   Generating ideas:
The first step is to create the ideas for your presentations.

7.2   Making a selections:
Not all the ideas generated will make it in the presentation; a selection has to be made.

7.3   Clustering the info to generate topics:
The ideas should be cluster around the same topic.

7.4   Formulating messages:
For each topic, a message or messages need to be formulated. This will be the core messages of the presentation.

7.5   Rearranging the messages:
Rearranging the cores messages to be able to have consistency and a well-structured story throughout the presentation.

7.6   Creating the slides:
Creating the slides means to simply design the slides to explain to best way possible the messages

### 7.7   Establishing the structures and creating turning points:
Once the slides are designed, they need to be well structured. Then the turning points needs to be well done.

7.8   Verifying contrast:
Verifying the contrast throughout the all presentation is often underrated. It consists of making the pace and the performance interesting by changing adding some personal stories, jokes, or even visual contrast to the whole presentation

7.9   Visualising messages:
Finally, when all the other points are done, it is time to make the slides using computer programs.
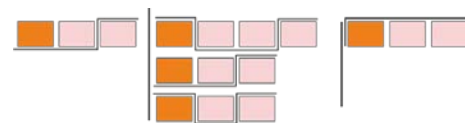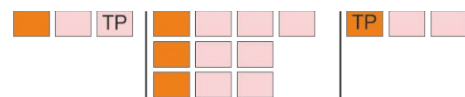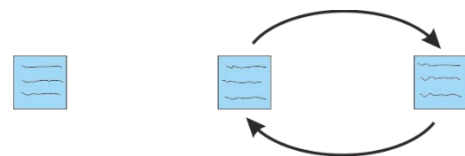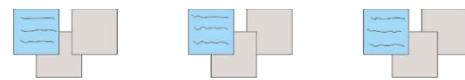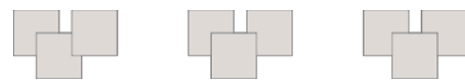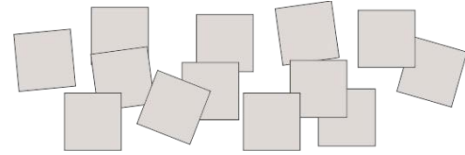
8. Signal-to-noise ratio

To be able to communicate at the best the core message, it is important to remove all the non-necessary information. A good tip is to not using abbreviation unless necessary. Simplify the graphs is also a good practice, the next chapter explains it in details. Finally, a very good tip, which is unfortunately not often use, is to use slide title as statement. That allows the audience to know directly the point you are making and better understand your core message. Finally, if a template is not obligatory, it should be avoid.

8.1   Increase SNR in graphs:

Graphs are a necessary help to convey results to the audience. A graph in a presentation should not be designed like a graph in a document or an article. The example below shows on the left a graph made for an article and on the right the same graph designed for a presentation. A graph in a document should have enough information to be analysed and even reproduced, whereas a graph in a presentation should be able to show just enough details to support the point the presenter is making.
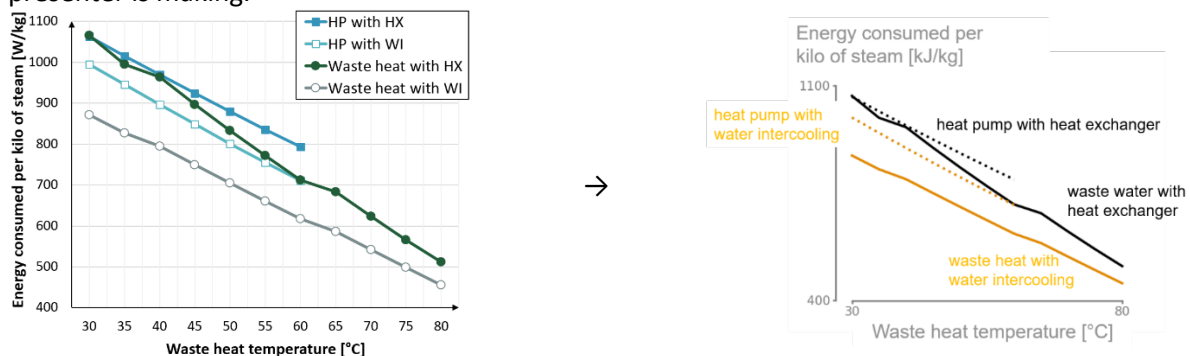
All the text should be displayed horizontally to be easier to be read, furthermore, the axes ticks does not really matter as long as the range is displayed. If a value is important in the graph, just add the relevant tick or ticks. A graph in a scientific publication is optimized to be able to be readable if printed in black and white, whereas a graph in a presentation does not have this issue and thus colour can be the only distinction between data lines, dots, or bars.

Another step to follow when presenting the graph is the way it is displayed. A graph, which appear instantaneously on a slide with a lot of information, can be too much to get for the audience. It is therefore recommended to use the "blackboard step-wise presentation" which consist to draw the graph gradually to build up information. It does not take longer to present and it will be more effective and will have a lasting trace in the audience's mind. Here is a list of proposed steps to present a graph:

1. Start with a title and an empty graph. The title should be a statement not a description.
2. Describe what the graph is about.
3. Add the lines/bars/dots one after each other.
4. Remove the title once you are focusing on the graph.
5. Add the title again at the end.

The usage of animation can be a great effect if it is used properly, for example when the horizontal graph is related to time, however, animation should be used parsimoniously. For consistency, using the same axes throughout the presentation slides is also helpful.

9. Slide Design

9.1 Slidement:

A slidement is the contraction of slide and document. It consists of having a slide with many sentences and many explanations. It is important not to confound a slide, a handout, which should be a written document separated to the slides, and the notes. Notes can be redacted to help the presenter not forgetting some important messages if he or she did not have enough time to practice or if the presentation is long.
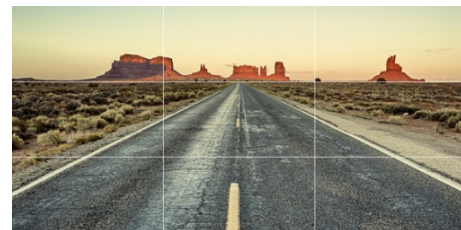

9.2 Rule of third:

The rule of third is often used by photographers and cinematographers. It consist of splitting the image in third horizontally and vertically, the four crossings between the lines are where the focus of the image should be (see figure on the right).
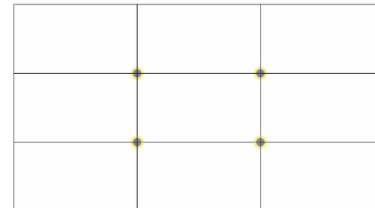
The two photographies belows shows of the use of the rule of third. A person on the left hand side of the image will imply motion in the right direction. The photo on the right is a typical landscape photography, the horizon line is exactly on the first horizontal separation. It implies that the land is the focus of this photography.

The image on the right shows an advertisement photography for a heat pump company. The logo on the heat pump is exactly on one of the focusing point given by the rule of third.
Presentation slide should also try to use the rule of third if possible that can amplify important visual on them and make the slide more elegant and balanced.

10. Tips on Q & A

After a presentation, it is commun to have a few minutes for questions and answers, here are some tips for these Q & A.

- Give short answers or as short as possible.
- To answer incomprehensible question: rephrase, reask the question but only once, otherwise say "we can discuss afterward".
- If a mean question is asked: stay polite.
- If a question is very difficult: be honnest, if you don't know say it.

11. Ten tips from Oliver Steuble

1. know your audience
2. formulate core message(s)
3. correct labelling (no legend, no abbreviation)
4. disturb the template
5. maximise the signal-to-noise ratio
6. effective use of colour
7. integrity in communication
8. consider media aesthetics
9. content before design
10. select effective tools

12. General Tips

- A Comparaison between graphs or other visuals needs to appear on the same slide.
- Do not write to many words per line (use return to line wisely).
- The design of a slide should be used to lead the reader/viewer.
- It is important that a slide design elaborate the hierarchy whithin itself.
- For a interesting ending using a picture, a metaphor, or a quote makes a great impact.
- Practicing in front of your peers allows the presenters to test his or her presentation.

13. References:

- Youtube video of **Jean-luc Doumont**
- Book "brain rules" & "brain rules for baby" by john medina

14. Personal tips and notes

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Name of presenter: ....

Title/topic of presentation : ....

Name of feedback provider: ....

Date: ....

	Requirements	Comments
Length of presentation	Presentation does not exceed given time-frame [1]	
Target audience	Presentation content and form is adapted to the target audience	
Verbal	Clear and captivating beginning of the story; provoking/engaged middle part; stringent end	
	clear and comprehensible	
	Figurative language	
Non-verbal	Recognisable core message(s)	
	Making eye-contact with audience	
	Proper posture; positive aura; present and conscious delivery	
	Gestures match with content	
Presentation technique [2]	Presentation tools match with content and form of presentation/story	
Visualisation [3]	Visualisation creates (content-related) added value [4]	
	Visuals are consciously created and individual elements are organised	
	Visual design makes presentation more effective	

[1] length of presentation: 5 minutes

[2] beamer, overhead projector, monitor, flip chart, or similar

[3] if slideware (e.g., PowerPoint, Keynote, or similar) was used in the presentation

[4] increases clarity and comprehensibility; illustrates complex circumstances; supports story-telling, etc.