

7 Pitfalls to Making Presentations

Making presentations is one of the key business skills that many of us fear. Here are some thoughts on the pitfalls that can befall us and how you can overcome them.

Pitfall 1. Not being prepared.

Even the best presenters need to know what they are talking about and what they are going to say. You can be the expert in your subject, but if you haven't ordered in your mind how you are going to put that across, then you may well fail to engage your audience and fail to get your message to them. Take the time to do your preparation well and thoroughly. It is also worth checking where you are in the running. What is the speaker before you likely to say? Will it be easy to follow it? Can you incorporate it into your own material by reference?

Pitfall 2. Believing your slides will do the talking for you.

Spending too much time designing slides to support you and not enough time thinking about what you are going to say. There is nothing more boring than just talking through your slides. Make sure that you are the star of the show not them. That is not to say that your slides should be boring, far from it. You must make sure that your slides are simple, visible by your whole audience and use colours wisely. Use them to illustrate your talk, not dominate it.

Pitfall 3. Not thinking about your delivery.

Good presenters have variety - variety in their voice, their stance and their material. People judge you on your body language so it is worth thinking about how you stand - feet apart with your weight evenly distributed. Use your voice to introduce variety into the presentation. Think about which points require emphasis and then how you can use your voice. Slow down, speed up, louder or quieter. Watch what others do. Listen to some great speakers from the past.

Pitfall 4. Not checking about the technical equipment.

How often do you turn up to talk to find that the PC and the projector are not compatible? Or there is no extension cable? Will you be using a microphone? Is it fixed or mobile? Will you get a chance to practice? It is worth spending sometime find out as much as possible about the venue, the facilities and the organisers expectations as possible.

Pitfall 5. Not knowing who your audience are.

Expecting an audience who know your subject well and understand all the references and get an audience who are new to the subject? Or get a group of experts who are looking for something new



of the subject? Expecting 300 and only get 30 or maybe the other way around? The size and knowledge of your audience can make a huge difference about how you are able to interact with them. So check them out beforehand if you can.

Pitfall 6. Failing to practice.

Regular speakers making the same speech may not need to practice much. But for the rest of us, it is important to practice to ensure you are familiar with the material. Check your material isn't going to cause you to overrun your allotted time slot. Or that you are not going to run out of material half way through. Also think through any questions that might be asked and how you are going to answer them.

Pitfall 7. Failing to have a backup plan.

What happens if your worst nightmare happens and things go wrong? By thinking through all the things that might happen and planning for them you will feel more confident and able to relax. If the equipment is not working, does it really matter if you know your subject and can talk about it with confidence and ease? If your audience is bigger than you expected, embrace the challenge and work with them. Good planning will ensure that you can get through your presentation with the least possible trouble.

Good luck!