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PART 1



Empowering Yourself with Professional Presentation Skills

Developing a professional, memorable presentation is like building a house from scratch. To prepare any presentation, you need to lay the foundation for professional performance by knowing the target audience's profile, understanding the purpose of the presentation and what you plan to achieve, and highlighting the main points.

Part 1 contains six chapters that help build solid presentation skills to empower public speaking ability. The **first three chapters** discuss the importance of profiling the audience, knowing the purposes, and identifying the main points.

Chapter 4 outlines the organization of making a professional presentation, and **Chapter 5** discusses the importance and design of visual aids in presentation. Finally, to conclude Part 1, **Chapter 6** discusses strategies that enhance the power and effectiveness of the presentation.



Chapter

1

Knowing Your Target Audience

Knowing the target audience is one of the key elements when preparing a presentation. Analyzing the target audience and anticipating their reactions allows you to understand how to organize the presentation better and adjust to audience needs if necessary. In doing so, you have to accurately analyze the target audience to capture the audience's attention and ensure the audience forms interpretations in your favor.

Different audiences have different agendas and interests. Moreover, each audience is unique in demographic and psychographic composition. Take the next occasion as an example:

Nathan bought a mobile phone, which cost him \$5,500, after getting his \$10,000 salary at the end of the month. To not be patronized by his frugal mother, Nathan told her, ***"You know, it only costs me \$5,000 something. It is not that expensive actually. The most expensive one on the market is priced at \$6,500."***

However, when speaking to his materialistic friends, Nathan exclaims excitedly, ***"This is one of the most expensive masterpieces in the current market; it cost me nearly \$6,000!"***



Even though Nathan was talking about the same occurrence, he tailored his message according to the demographic and psychographic profile of the people he encountered. So, to get the audience in tune with your intended meaning, you have to research and anticipate their attributes or demographic data to adapt the angle of your presentation.

When preparing a presentation, you should consider the target audience in terms of (A) size, formality, and background and (B) culture and norms.

A. Size, Formality, and Background

The size of the audience determines your presentation style. With a small, informal group or an easy-going audience, the speakers might make the presentations casually without audio or video devices. Even if the presentations are blended with numerous games or jokes, it could be appropriate. However, if you are presenting to a large group of well-known professionals, you should give meaningful presentations aimed at their interests. For example, business professionals care about profits and costs; medical doctors care about effects and recovery rates.

The following video clip is an example of knowing your target audience and tailoring your presentation to arouse their interest.  01

Commentary Notes

The group presented their business plan to a relatively large audience, including renowned business leaders, professionals, and colleagues, in a competition for innovative business proposals. The primary concerns of the business sector are invariably costs, profits, and the innovation brought to society and human beings. Consequently, the group highlighted time, money, and environmental impact in their speech.

The second example is extracted from the judge's comments in a question-and-answer session. The judge's comments illustrate the importance of knowing the target audience, their background, and what the audience wants to know. The judge made three comments on the group's presentation, and one of the comments below illustrates the importance of what the audience knew and wanted to know. The judge's comments are as follows:

"I don't know how much time you have for your presentation, but I think you spent about 70% of your time preaching to the converted. All these talks about the environment, and everybody believed in that already. It would be best if you used more time going into the feasibility instead of telling us what we already wanted to do, i.e., protect the environment. That's number one."

B. Culture and Norms

People's beliefs are greatly influenced by the culture and norms of their groups. For example, "face" is an essential issue in Chinese society; therefore, the Chinese seldom explicitly criticize others, particularly when commenting on someone's appearance or body shape. Consequently, it is better not to bring up the issues that may cause someone to lose face or feel discomfort. Equally important, making fun of someone in front of other people you do not know well is inappropriate. If you do so, you might be considered mean or otherwise inappropriate. As an effective presenter, you must avoid infringing on these subtle yet crucial rules while delivering speeches, as negative impressions are difficult to alter once they are formed.

Let's look at the following transcript describing a series of conversations between the group members and comment on its appropriateness for the peer to make fun of the body shape of the other presenter.

Minty: I would like to start with a question. What is the meaning of life to you? I suppose [that] life has different meanings to all of you, so how about you, Michael?

Michael: Life for me is full of delicious food from different countries.

Minty: Well, you like to eat?

Michael: Yes.

Minty: That's why you look a little bit fat.

Commentary Notes

The presentation group brought up body shape in the presentation “well, you like to eat; that’s why you look a little bit fat.” Appearance can be a sensitive topic for people across different sectors, as this kind of perception is independent of their professions, i.e., business and commerce. Also, it is rude to use the word “fat” to describe a person when “well-built” might be more tactful. Therefore, it would be wiser not to make fun of this matter unless you know your audience exceptionally well. Bad humor is best avoided.

Practice

To check whether you grasp the materials presented in Chapter 1, please go to the Exercise section at the back of the book and do Exercises 1.1 and 1.2.