

How to get your message across— powerfully, persuasively, and with personality.

Well done – you have accepted the challenge of giving a presentation to your colleagues or presenting at a conference.

Your best place to start is the trusty **5 P principle – Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance**. This holds true whether you have 10 months, 10 days, 10 minutes, or 10 seconds to prepare.

You have some great ideas or concepts to put forward. Presenting them in a positive and thoughtful way is your best shot of creating some influence. If you don't want to prepare, why should anyone spend their time listening to you? Are you part of the 98% who don't, or the 2% who do?

1. Make a picture

The presentation or speech will be so much more effective if your audience can visualise what you are saying. Present ideas, stories or examples you are interested in and familiar with. Reinforce your message with a couple of powerful statistics or one strong story.

2. Make it personal

It is you presenting. Use your humour, your personal stories from your workplace (that are OK to share), use conversational language to make it engaging, so you can connect with your audience. Eye contact: so easy, so feared.

3. Use a structure

Introduction – use a fact, statistics or story that will have impact and hook the audience

Body – these are your key points – keep it to three (max) and build out content for each.

Conclusion – bring it all together and restate key points.

4. Practice makes permanent

Unless you are in a speaking competition, I would advise against trying to memorise your presentation. BUT you absolutely must practice. Rehearse using any visual aids you are using. Set chairs out at home to imagine you have an audience. If it is super important practice in front of an audience. No death by *PowerPoint* or *YouTube*. If using slides keep words to an absolute minimum.

5. Practice makes permanent (yes, again)

Stick to the time you have been given. This is an issue of respect for others. Time your presentation at least once. Allow plenty of time for pauses – they are your powerful allies in getting your message across.

6. Pace yourself (pauses, again)

We all tend to rush when we are excited (or nervous). Your message is so much more effective if you appear to be confident, calm and in control. (Here it is about appearance.) When practising take care to use an easy conversational pace. Pause. Listen to your audience listening to you. There's the power.

7. Punctuality

Check out the venue beforehand if it is unfamiliar, even if you know it. If you haven't actually presented there before you might not have noticed some important details. Furniture may have been moved. Find out how the room is to be set up for the meeting or event. Arrive early. Be sure to test mic or audio if using, or acoustic if no amplification. Test visual aids.

8. Relax

Breathe and stretch before you speak. If you are in a meeting, wiggle your toes, clench and unclench your fingers, take a few deep breathes. Count to 3 before you begin.

9. Visualise your success – trust your audience.

Imagine your audience applauding; imagine your colleagues congratulating you. You got this! Your audience WANTS you to succeed. The rest is down to you and your 5 Ps – that's your magic bag of tricks.