

PowerPoint Presentation as a Valuable Communication Aid for Effective Teaching

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Abstract— PowerPoint is a valuable communication aid that is now being used in many classrooms. PowerPoint is a type of presentation software that allows one to show colored text and images with simple animation and sound. PowerPoint is just one of many types of presentation software. Hyper-Studio is another. PowerPoint is the most popular because it comes bundled with Microsoft packages. PowerPoint will run on either Macintosh or Windows PC's. The files are easy to create and can be e-mailed as attachments. They can be posted on or downloaded from websites, and can be converted to html webpages. Not only can PowerPoint presentations be traded and exchanged, they can also be modified to fit any individual classroom setting. Although other presentation software may have the same capabilities, PowerPoint is the most common, and it is user friendly. PowerPoint can be used to teach new ideas and concepts to students. I have used PowerPoint presentations much more for practice and drills.

Index Terms— PowerPoint, Valuable, Communication, Presentation, Software, Classroom.

I. POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

PowerPoint presentations are great for reviewing ideas which have already been taught. After the students have learned and practiced something, it is good to see a presentation. PowerPoint presentations are easy to obtain, modify, and create. They are versatile and a great asset to any classroom. Good presentations may take time to produce or adapt, but they can be shared and used year after year. They can be used for whole class presentations and reviews, for drills, or for individual work. PowerPoint presentations run on both Macintosh and Windows platforms. Files are small unless many pictures and sounds are added. Small files are easily stored. These presentations can be viewed with a computer monitor, TV, or a projector. There are some technical points that need to be considered when using PowerPoint or other presentation software. First we must have a computer. Second, there are several ways to present to students. There are three basic ways to display presentations.

- A regular computer monitor
- An ordinary television set
- A special projector

My view is that whether a PowerPoint presenter is the Centre of attention or more of a stagehand will be a function of the communication ability of the presenter. Good presenters will

most likely still be the Centre of attention, using PowerPoint appropriately as a valuable communication aid to buttress their rhetoric. Teachers, public speakers, and business seminar presenters are rhetoricians, engaged in acts of persuasion: they seek to persuade or to educate, and to use PowerPoint as a visual aid to make “the logical structure of argument more transparent” (Parker, 2001, citing Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of psychology, Steven Pinker, p. 6). Parker (2001, p. 6, citing Nass) argued that PowerPoint “empowers the provider of simple content ... but risks squeezing out the provider of process—that is to say, the rhetorician, the storyteller, the poet, the person whose thoughts cannot be arranged in the shape of a [PowerPoint] slide.” All users of PowerPoint should respond to Postman’s (1993) call and pause to reflect about any new technology, such as PowerPoint, and how it affects, however imperceptibly, their engagement with *what* and *how* they teach. They should engage in conversations and critique of new technologies, rather than to accept them blithely and unquestioningly. As a society we should be mindful that PowerPoint, in concert with allied computer and Internet-based technology, is having a profound effect on higher education. PowerPoint is not merely a benign means of facilitating what educators have always done. Rather, it is changing much (perhaps most) of how we engage with our students and the disciplines which we profess. In the past three decades there has been a decisive shift in the media that have been used to communicate messages in educational settings. We have gone from the era of “chalk-and-talk” and occasional flip-charts to overhead transparencies and to PowerPoint slides. And, consistent with Warnick (2002), we feel it is important to recognize that any “new forms of communicating call for new ways of thinking about communication processes” (p. 264). It is a powerful and ubiquitous communications technology and aid to teaching and business presentations. In 2002, it was estimated that more than 400 million copies of PowerPoint were in circulation and that “somewhere between 20 and 30 million PowerPoint-based presentations are given around the globe each day” (Simons, 2005). Those numbers seem likely to have grown exponentially since then.

A **presentation** is the process of presenting a topic to an audience. It is typically a demonstration, lecture, or speech meant to inform, persuade, or build good will. The term can also be used for a formal or ritualized introduction or offering, as with the presentation of a debutante. It Includes:

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- The process of offering for consideration or display
- A social introduction, as of a person at court
- A demonstration, lecture, or welcoming speech
- A manner or style of speaking, instructing or putting oneself forward
- The manner of presenting, esp. the organization of visual details to create an overall impression

A presentation program, such as Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, OpenOffice.org Impress or Prezi, is often used to generate the presentation content. Modern internet-based presentation software, such as the presentation application in Google Docs and Slide Rocket also allow presentations to be developed collaboratively by geographically disparate collaborators. Presentation can be used to combine content from different presentation programs into one presentation. The formal presentation of information is divided into two broad categories: Presentation Skills and Personal Presentation. These two aspects are interwoven and can be described as the preparation, presentation and practice of verbal and non-verbal communication. This is an overview of how to prepare and structure a presentation, and how to manage notes and/or illustrations at any speaking event. Many people feel terrified when asked to make their first public talk. Some of these initial fears can be reduced by good preparation which will also lay the groundwork for making an effective presentation.

II. COMPONENTS OF A PRESENTATION

Context- When and where will we deliver our presentation? Will it be in a setting we are familiar with, or somewhere new? Will it be within a formal work setting, or a less formal, social setting? Will the presentation be to a small group or a large crowd? And are we already familiar with the audience?

Presenter- The presenter communicates with the audience and controls the presentation.

Audience- The audience receives the presenter's message(s). However, this reception will be filtered through and affected by such things as the listener's own experience, knowledge and personal sense of values.

Message- The message, or messages, are delivered by the presenter to the audience. The message is delivered not just by the spoken word (**verbal communication**) but can be augmented by techniques such as voice projection, body language, gestures, eye contact (**non-verbal communication**), and visual aids.

Reaction- The audience's reaction and success of the presentation will largely depend upon whether the presenter's message was effectively communicated.

Method- Presentations are usually delivered direct to an audience. However, today there may be occasions where they

are delivered from a distance over the Internet using video conferencing.

Impediments- Many factors can influence the effectiveness of how our message is communicated to the audience, for example background noise or other distractions, an overly warm or cool room, or the time of day and state of audience alertness can all influence our audience's level of concentration. As presenter, we have to be prepared to cope with any such problems and try to keep our audience focused on our message.

III.. TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION

- **Talk naturally to our audience** – although it may be appropriate to read short passages avoid reading from a script for the majority of our presentation.
- **Stand**, rather than sit, and move around a little – but avoid pacing backwards and forwards like a trapped animal.
- **Vary the tone, pitch and volume of our voice** to add emphasis and maintain the audience's interest. Aim to speak loudly and clearly while facing our audience. Avoid talking in a monotone voice or turning our back to the audience.
- **Make eye contact with our audience.** Do not stare at our feet, or the podium and avoid looking directly at any one person for more than a few seconds, gain eye contact with the individual members of the audience.
- **Use visual aids where appropriate**, graphs and charts, diagrams, pictures and video - but don't overdo it. Visual aids should help to illustrate and strengthen our points not be a distraction from what we are saying.
- **Rehearse our talk and check our timings.** Always aim to finish us talks in time remembering to allow time for questions if appropriate.
- **Prepare and structure our presentation carefully.** Introduce the subject – tell the audience what our talk is about. Explain the points we wish to convey. End with a summary of our points.
- **Stay focused throughout our presentation** – avoid irrelevance and unnecessary detail.
- **Learn to channel any nervous energy**, relax but stay alert.
- **Answer any questions as honestly and concisely as we can.** If we don't know the answer then says so and offer to provide further information at a later date.

IV. TIPS FOR A BETTER COMPUTER GENERATED SLIDE PRESENTATION

Presentations given and developed for a computer and data projector are different than traditional slide or overhead projector presentations. The primary difference is that all images, text and graphics are incorporated into one file. This means that photographic images such as gels, photomicrographs and specimens must be scanned and imported into the presentation software in order to show them in our talk. Electronic presentations offer many advantages over other forms of presentation media, but there are some

limitations as well. The most significant limitation is resolution. Because of this limitation the rule is “less is more”. Keep everything as simple as possible. Below are some pointers that should help us produce a clean, legible and professional presentation.

Software Selection-All presentations will be shown using Microsoft PowerPoint, version 7 for Windows. It is very important to either create our presentation in that version or convert our older version Windows or Macintosh presentations prior to the Conference. Many problems can arise during this conversion. Most, if not all can be fixed but they take time.

Page Setup-Our presentation should be sized for an on-screen show, not letter or 35mm slides. This can be easily changed under the “File/Page Setup menu”. This should be done prior to creating our presentation graphics because if it is done after, our scanned pictures, graphics, and text margins will be stretched and distorted.

Let the Audience Know Where We Are Going-The more we help an audience know where we are, the more they will stay with us and learn. List the key points; use topic headers at the top of slides; use full screens to announce major presentation transitions; post conclusions.

Font Size/Style-As a general rule type sizes below 14 point in size are difficult to read on the projected computer image. Try to use 18-30 point type for body text and 30-44 point type for titles. A simple test for readable text is to stand away from our computer monitor at least six feet. If we can read the text it is large enough for the big screen. The type size difference between the title, subtitle, and body copy should diminish by at least 20% in size so that the eye can distinguish the differences size.

V. FOUR STAGES TO PERFECTING OUR PRESENTATION

Plan – Determine how our topic relates to the audience. Define the purpose of our talk as it relates to the outcome we seek. Plan the content of our presentation around our purpose, our audience’s interest, and the audience’s level of understanding of the topic. Use words and phrases common to our audience, and focus on our purpose.

Prepare – Establish a positive mindset by valuing our message and preparing the structure and timing of our presentation. The structure consists of three parts:

- **The attention-getting opening** – Use a question, make a startling statement, or relate a relevant incident to elicit the audience’s interest. The opening makes up 5 to 10 percent of our presentation.
- **The key ideas** – Our presentation should contain 4 to 6 different points that we must back up with evidence such as statistics, testimonials, demonstrations, and analogies. Make sure that the key ideas all support a coherent message. Our

discussion of these points should make up 80 to 85 percent of our presentation.

- **The memorable closing** – We can close by summarizing or restating the message or by throwing down a challenge to our audience. A close that relates back to our opening can also be effective. Whatever we choose for our close, be sure we tell our audience what action we want them to perform. The close should make up 5 to 10 percent of our presentation.

Practice – Review our content, rehearse, and get feedback on our presentation, and build enthusiasm and confidence to present. Rehearse the timing of our presentation to be sure that it falls within our time limits. Be sure to allow time for questions, if it’s appropriate. Consider videotaping ourselves rehearsing, and then review the videotape for distracting mannerisms and other signs of nervousness. Remember that the best cure for nervousness is confidence and that confidence comes with practice.

Present – Make a positive first impression. If possible, establish eye contact with our audience. Be ourselves and relax. Own our subject and build rapport with the audience to hold their attention and project the value of our message. When speaking, be natural. Speak in a heightened conversational tone. Slow down and emphasize important points, pausing before and after key points to set them apart.

VI. PREPARING A PRESENTATION

Preparation is the single most important part of making a successful presentation. This is the crucial foundation and we should dedicate as much time to it as possible avoiding short-cuts. Not only will good preparation ensure that we have thought carefully about the messages that we want (or need) to communicate in our presentation but it will also help boost our confidence. There are effective and ineffective ways to use visual aids in presentations. Ineffective use is very common in both academia and industry. Good visuals used in the right way can help our audience stay attentive and retain information. The tips below will help us decide when and how to effectively use overhead projectors and slides, blackboards, handouts, and computer programs like PowerPoint. Following things to be kept in mind while preparing presentation.

1. **The Objective**-We have been asked to speak to a group of people. First, ask ourselves ‘why?’ What is the purpose of the presentation, what is the objective, what outcome(s) do we and the audience expect? It is useful to write down the reason we have been asked to present so we can use this as a constant reminder while we prepare the presentation. There are many reasons for giving a presentation or talk, but never lose sight of our objective as determined when we were asked and accepted the invitation.

2. The Subject-The subject of what we are going to talk about comes from the objective but they are not necessarily one and the same thing.

3. The Audience-Before preparing material for a presentation, it is worth considering our prospective audience. The size of the group or audience expected. The age range - a talk aimed at retired people will be quite different from one aimed at teenagers. Gender - will the audience be predominantly male or female?

4. The Place-It is important to have as much advance information as possible about the place where we are going to speak. Ideally, try to arrange to see the venue before the speaking event, as it can be of great benefit to be familiar with the surroundings. It does much to quell fear if we can visualize the place while we are preparing our talk. Additionally, it would also give us the opportunity to try out our voice. If at all possible, we need to know: The size of the room, the seating arrangements and if they can be altered, the availability of equipment, e.g., microphone, overhead projector, flip chart, computer equipment. The availability of poor points and if an extension lead is required for any equipment we intend to use.

5. Length of Talk-Always find out how long we have to talk and check if this includes or excludes time for questions. Find out if there are other speakers and, if so, where we are placed in the running order. Never elect to go last. Beware of over-running, as this could be disastrous if there are other speakers following us. It is important to remember that people find it difficult to maintain concentration for long periods of time, and this is a good reason for making a presentation succinct, well-structured and interesting. Aim for 45 minutes as a maximum single-session presentation.

VII. CONCLUSION

A presentation is a means of communication which can be adapted to various speaking situations, such as talking to a group, addressing a meeting or briefing a team. To be effective, step-by-step preparation and the method and means of presenting the information should be carefully considered. A presentation concerns getting a message across to the listeners and may often contain a 'persuasive' element, for example a talk about the positive work of our organization, what we could offer an employer, making a presentation is a way of communicating our thoughts and ideas to an audience. Thus, PowerPoint presentation as a valuable communication aid used for effective and fruitful teaching

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