



HOW TO
COLLECTION



CREATE &
DELIVER GREAT
PRESENTATIONS

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So you've volunteered or have been volunteered to give a presentation, it needs to be informative but to the point, serious yet not boring and delivered with assurance.

Fear not, you are in the right place.

I've spent almost 20 years in the corporate world where presenting to small/large audiences was a regular occurrence. As an added 'advantage' I frequently had to present on topics that were not exactly crowd-pleasers. I believe that 1/great presenters can be made, 2/you never reach perfection in this field, you can always improve.

You may wonder why you should pay attention to your presentation skills. However shallow you think this is, it's likely that many people will judge you on your presentation as they don't see you in action in everyday work situations. Therefore it's in your interest to be at your best and to do this you should have good content and eliminate potential concerns so you can concentrate on your delivery.

I won't pretend I've created all of this content, some I've gleaned from training but if it's here it's because it's been tried & tested and I use it.

A final point before we start, the style of this 'How to' is to the point to save you time, no pretty pictures and there may be a bit of colourful language. You are warned.

Carine

This guide is split into 4 parts:

Part 1- Creating your content

Part 2 - Preparing your presentation

Part 3 - Delivery day!

Part 4 – Some challenges

PART 1- CREATING YOUR CONTENT

Time is key

We all agree this is true so why do we still end up running around the day before rushing to finish a sub-optimal piece of work? Oh, and for those who tell me they work better when the adrenaline kicks in...I'll keep my opinion to myself. Hopefully if you have been burnt once you don't need any other tips, for the others:

- Write **an honest timeline**, including other deliverables you have or days when you cannot work on your presentation.
- Choose between **big or small chunks of time** to work on your presentation, it depends on your style: 1h quick burst every day or a whole dedicated afternoon. **Diarise this time** so no meeting/deliverable can be added and stick to it.
- **Over-estimate** the time required to accomplish the job. As a general rule of thumb: if you think it will take you 1h times that by 2.
- **Create deadlines**, if you're junior or a student I hope that your boss/supervisor has requested at least one review before D-day. I'd plan several catch-ups to ensure my colleague is able to raise questions/issues and doesn't face a mountain of re-work right at the end. And if no-one is asking just create deadlines for yourself, it will feel good as you tick them off.

Scope out the content

Once you've planned your time then you must scope out the content. It's worth focussing on this step as, **if you do it well the rest of the task is easy**. I've seen many people throwing themselves straight into writing and realising half-way through they don't know where it's heading. In order to scope out your content you must be crystal-clear on the following:

- *What is the objective?* to sell X, to inform on Y, to update on Z... If you have any doubts speak to your boss/supervisor to clarify the objective, ask questions, do not leave until you fully understand your objective. No-one will thank you for not bothering anyone and producing something that misses the point.
- *What messages deliver my objective?* In other words, if your objective was a question how would you answer it. I say messageS because your answer will be clearer if you break it down into several parts/messages. You shouldn't end up with a dozen messages, if you have more than 5 I suggest you look at them and see if some couldn't be merged together or check your objective, it may need 'tightening'.
- You want to end up with a '**Content**' page covering **all your key messages** in the right order. Write a sentence or two to explain each key message/section or sub-section. You can use it later as the content page for your actual presentation (remove the explanatory sentences).
- Ideally you should now catch up with your manager/supervisor to confirm you're on the right track. Catching up with a colleague is also good just to get someone else's perspective and be confident you are meeting your objective.

Now you have the skeleton of your presentation and you can start fleshing it out.

Get great content

Research your topic

In most cases writing your content will involve some research. Good research will give you good information making your content rich, interesting and compelling for your audience. Therefore you shouldn't skimp or rush this step.

- **Allow time to do your research** properly. You need time to think about where to look, time to look for what you want, time to sieve through data, time to make it useable for your purpose. You get the message, you need time!
- **Go beyond the obvious material** that everyone uses. My presentations were often well-received because I'd go off-piste to find compelling facts & arguments thus giving my clients not only food for thought but info they could impress their colleagues/boss with. Keep newspaper clippings, ear-mark certain TV programmes to refer to, if you have a PR agency they can obtain audio or video clip of certain programmes. Many public bodies share reports and other data on-line, make Google your friend (within reason)!
- **Check your sources and feature them** in your content. I've noticed many business presentations with no source mentioned at all, pretty sloppy and a potential issue if the 'source' doesn't appreciate the lack of recognition. If you use the same sources in the entire presentation, put a page at the start of the presentation listing all your sources, job done.

Making choices (or Big vs Small)

When we've spent a lot of time researching we are usually left with a fair amount of information. The temptation is to chuck everything in, either because we find it all interesting or because we've run out of time to sift through it.

- **The simpler the argument, the stronger it is.** If you state a lot of data your audience may think you're struggling to validate your point. Think about politicians, they rarely share a long list of facts & figure but they hammer a couple of 'killer' facts. So spend time sifting through your information, **keep the elephants and dump the ants.**
- Obviously there are certain fields where a large amount of data is necessary but always ask yourself if that is the case for your message. I recommend you are harsh on yourself on this point.

Write your story

You have your objective, the supporting messages, you've done your research. It's now time to start writing the story you want to tell.

Get in the flow

Keep your story clear and tight, choose your words carefully so there is no ambiguity, avoid too much jargon or play on words.

Find out about the audience: quiet or rowdy, formal or informal, a lot of detail or not, potential contentious topics. The more you know the more you can tailor to your audience's needs and make the experience more beneficial for all.

For the flow I advise an tried and tested method:

- Tell'em what you're gonna tell'em (intro)
- Tell'em (main part)
- Tell'em again (conclusion/summary)

It's not sophisticated but **it works in ensuring the audience remembers your key messages**. It sounds simple but it's hard to achieve and look effortless. Trust me it can take several iterations so don't lose heart.

Refine your story

Less is more. The most effective presentations I've seen were 10-15 slides, and for participating in the writing of some I know it takes a long time and many iterations to get there. It's worth it as I want my message to land with my audience, it's not just another *yawn* presentation no-one remembers after they've left the room.

- step 1 - when writing your story put EVERYTHING you believe is relevant, all the facts & figures that your message requires.

- step 2 - Refine & only present the key content, the rest can be put in hidden slides or in the appendix. It can be referred to in your speaker's notes and/or shared with the audience afterwards as an appendix.

- step 3 - Are the key messages still clear and the objective met?

- step 4 - Check the grammar is correct, check for spelling mistakes.

- step 5 - Refine and Check again, and again!

PART 2 - PREPARING YOUR PRESENTATION

Packaging your story

Powerpoint, flipcharts, video, whatever you choose to deliver your story is fine, just **do not let style rule over content**, a snazzy support is purely to help you get your message across.

I admit that I've sometimes put style ahead of content, either because I wasn't confident about my subject or had bad news to share, unless you are a certified master bullshitter DON'T DO IT, you will be found out. No-one may actually say anything to your face but you'll lose credibility.

Remember that **Powerpoint and others are a SUPPORT** and not an end in themselves. You can waste hours playing with some new wizardry a software can do but unless the purpose of your presentation is that very wizardry you are just procrastinating or wasting valuable time.

Keep it simple, **make your slides as visual as possible**: text and graphics should be large enough to be seen from the back of the room. If working with a given template, stick to the fonts/colours as it will give a more polished look. Think about the context: in a business presentation steer clear of funky fonts (& Comic Sans, enough said) and too many dizzying effects.

Secondly, take it easy, **don't have too many bells and whistles**: it loses its impact, can be too distracting for the audience and it increases the risk of something going wrong on the day. Here are some suggestions of support to deliver your story:

- *Image*: an image is worth a thousand words so use images to share a message you want remembered, liven up your content with some relevant images so your slides are not too text-heavy. There are many royalty-free image banks or use your own pictures. You can easily create images yourself with sites such as [canva.com](https://www.canva.com).

- *Graphs*: I like graphs, like an image it can be a powerful way to make a point when using data. All labels/numbers must be legible without straining, ensure there is a key/legend and axis are labelled.

- *Flipchart*: it may feel a bit 80s but it works in engaging your audience: draw a simple graph for a 'tadaa' moment, ask the audience a question and write the answer. It can also be used to 'park' audience's questions for later.

- *Video/Audio*: I once made a 2mins video to do a 'state of the nation' which would have taken a good 30 slides, it went down a storm. If your topic is a bit heavy or long it is a great tool. Think of films or TV/Radio programmes that support your message (Youtube or your PR/Ad agency can help). Film an interview with someone relevant, it can add some cred to your message.

Check if you have videos already available that you can use (whole or part), ask Corporate PR or Marketing colleagues for a contact (usually Advertising or PR agency can do this).

- *Props*: engaging your audience with several of their senses is a great idea. People love playing around with things or tasting food so it is a good tool to engage your audience. However make sure you take into account the time taken up as the prop makes its way around the audience. It can also be distracting so you should be assertive enough in case you need to rein in the audience's enthusiasm.

Finally, if you are using slides **remember that they are not your personal notes** (ie don't write everything you want to say), they are a support for the audience to understand the key messages. Furthermore if you are presenting in a forum where competitors are present, keeping your slides 'top line' will avoid them being able to take away too much info.

Don't forget about the basics, ensure **the font and colour are easy to read**, check as sometimes colours can be distorted via the projector and the font may not be big enough when you sit at the back.

Practice Practice Practice

That is the key whether you're a veteran or not and don't believe anyone that tells you otherwise. A presentation is far more engaging when a speaker is not searching for his words, he can delve into more details effortlessly and he is in sync with whatever props he's using. There's nothing worse than a speaker that seems to be discovering his presentation as he shares it with his audience.

Practice so **you know your timing**, if you're asked to do a 15mins presentation and turn up with 30mins worth of material it won't work, you'll be cut short or you'll have to hurry through, either way it will be bad for you and your audience.

Practice so **you know what to do when**: when to move to the next slide, when to explain a particular point on the screen or the board, when to hand over to or introduce the next speaker.

Practice so **you know what you're going to say**, it's as basic as that. Remember when you had to learn poems at school, unless you knew the poem off by heart all the niceties such as rhythm or tone were lost. It's the same if you don't know your content, you could be the wittiest, cleverest, most charming presenter, the presentation will not be brilliant if you hesitate or lose your flow. Coach yourself out of bad habits. Better still, ask someone to help you. Someone that can point out what you do well and not so well so you can adjust. I'm not saying you should become a bland, robot-like presenter just a better one.

This step is critical if you're a beginner and even if you are not. It's as simple as presenting in front of the mirror or finding an honest friend to present to.

Check out your posture, a bad/weird posture will be, at best, a distraction for the audience and at worst prevent you from breathing properly and therefore speak easily. Any **expressions or words you overuse?** Get those 'err' out of the way. And... leave your hair ALONE!

It's checking time!

Give yourself the time to check and re-check, I may sound like your mum but it can save you embarrassment or worse on the day.

Read your content, does it still cover your objectives? Are your presentation slides free from typos? Is the grammar OK? Having worked in an environment where English was the business language but not the mother tongue for many, mistakes such as "loose" vs "lose" would drive me to distraction: you can lose market share but a market share is never loose!

Are you working from a different computer or using an event agency? Check that the formatting transferred ok, the hidden slides are still hidden, does the agency know about props you're using or any specific requirements you may have?

If others were meant to cover some aspects of your preparation, take a minute to check the tasks you delegated have been done. In case you hadn't already guessed I used to be a bit of a control-freak when it came to presenting!

PART 3 - DELIVERY DAY!

It's the big day! Guess what you should do first?

Checking time - Again

Your presentation is typo-free and the formatting is ok, good.

Now check you can use **the mic/projector** or any other gizmos and check their **battery level**. If these go wrong you could be wrong-footed during your presentation and lose your flow.

Apologies afterwards are all very well but remember some people will only ever see you in action during this presentation. Ideally **agree on someone knowledgeable to be the go-to person** in case something goes wrong so you can concentrate on your delivery.

Be at your best

This starts with a good night sleep and a proper breakfast/lunch.

Think about what to wear, it must be in line with the theme/venue/audience, enough said. Be clean and make sure your clothes are clean and comfortable.

Have a still drink with you as talking makes you thirsty, a small bottle or a glass is enough.

Take a moment to yourself, preferably in a room but if not even a toilet cubicle will do, if needed book that time in your diary so no meeting can creep in. Once in a quiet environment breathe deeply and centre yourself.

Try not to engage in heavy discussions that could lead to either you being late or in the wrong frame of mind. As you develop in your career you'll learn to quickly centre yourself after a heavy meeting but if you're more junior I suggest you tell people you have an important presentation and you want to prepare for it, they will understand.

Engage with your audience

Don't get there with a "me vs them" attitude, be positive and keen to engage with them.

Set up a few rules at the start to minimise risks of being thrown off course: say if you prefer to take questions at the end or as you go along, ask if anyone is expecting an important call (a good one to gently get the point across that mobiles should be off), you can also directly ask for phones to be on silent (ignore the murderous looks).

When presenting **look at your audience**, don't just hook up to one kind face as you'll make them uncomfortable, don't speak to the wall behind them and please, **DO NOT speak to the screen/board**. Aim to make eye-contact with 1/3 of your audience (that's not scientifically-tested by the way).

Don't just read the slides, it comes across as amateurish and it's quite annoying for the audience as they realise. The likelihood is that your audience can read so if you just read what's on the screen what value are you adding?

Keep smiling

I know you're not a newsreader but, even if nerves are eating you, smile. Remember that ad "if you smile the whole world smiles with you", it's true. No-one wants to sit and listen to a person who looks like they would rather eat glass than be there. A smile immediately **makes you appear friendly and relatable**.

Don't forget, **the audience is on your side**: the topic interests them, they've been in your shoes or they're terrified at the thought of being in your shoes!

Leave comedy alone

With time and growing confidence you will find your style and bring in a few jokes but if unsure of yourself or the audience leave comedy alone. I've learned the hard way!

PART 4 - SOME CHALLENGES

Before you start

You have nothing to say on the subject. Hopefully this is just the nerves talking. If you have been asked it's because your colleagues/boss believe you are the best for the job so have faith in your own abilities. Relax a little, if you're tensed your brain can't work properly. Once relaxed I find the inspiration flows much better.

Take a walk, do or visit something related to the subject, read/watch about the subject, speak to someone about it. **Don't wait for an 'aha' moment**, these are few and far between. If you start working around something small you are more likely to have a breakthrough. And if not, little by little, your presentation will build itself anyway.

NOTE: If you think you really are the wrong person for the job then speak to someone in charge and explain, rationally, why you are not qualified to write the content. I cannot stress 'rationally' enough and be constructive: 'I don't know enough', 'I don't like presenting', 'I think X is better than me on the subject' are unlikely to generate much compassion. If it's a workload issue, then go in with a proposal not just 'I got too much on'

In the preparation

- *Procrastination:* I empathise however you're the only one that can fix it. Realising it is already a good start as you can try to manage it.

Some suggestions: **Build some procrastination time** in your schedule so it doesn't impact the end result. Switch off phones and go off-line whilst working. If you struggle to concentrate in an open-plan environment, **can you book a room? Sit at a different desk**, away from your team? I'd suggest home-working but if you are a procrastinator... Give yourself a reward for achieving certain milestones.

- *Lack of information:* **Think laterally**, don't just use the resources available in your field of work or study. Go and explore, newspapers, blogs, books etc. Look into other fields, you may find interesting facts that will bring your content to life. However this requires time (I sound like a broken record!).

- *It's a team effort:* It's nice the workload is shared but you may struggle to adapt to different approaches and styles.

If you can work together, **scope out the content together and agree it, divide it in chunks** and each work up your part(s), **meet up and 'sew' it together**. This takes time so don't leave it to the last minute, it is a key step to ensure it appears seamless. This is especially important if it is presented by one person..

If the clash of personalities proves too big, scope out the content together and agree it, divide it in chunks and agree that you will each present your own part. You should still **share your work in advance to avoid duplication or disagreement**. It's not ideal but should avoid too much aggro.

On the day

However prepared you are something can go wrong, you can lessen it but you cannot eliminate it, here are some potential scenarios:

- *The audience that knows better:* **acknowledge the person(s)** publicly then carry on, the recognition should do it for most 'know-it-all'. For others it is a sport to try and trip up a presenter. Keep cool, nod in acknowledgment but don't engage in a debate, that's exactly what they're after. After a while they will tire and if they do not, they will come across as the ass not you.
- *The audience that is totally disengaged:* well, just carry on, **try asking a few questions** to engage them. If you're an expert in your field maybe **try a different angle**. If you know your audience try some questions or examples that are specific to them. If it all fails don't beat yourself up but remember it the next time you're in the audience: I always appear engaged & interested even when I'm not as I know how disheartening it is for a speaker.
- *Props go wrong:* **keep calm** and ask the designated person to check what is happening. If there isn't anyone, ask the person most likely to be able to help (office manager, IT person) and don't get bogged down in hierarchy at this time, if your boss is the best one to help just ask him/her. If you need to fix it yourself tell the audience you need a couple of minutes. And if it cannot be fixed it's not the end of the world, **apologise to the audience and carry on**. That's when knowing your content saves the day: even without fancy slides or a working mic you can still deliver your message.
- *Do not to show exasperation or anger:* as the speaker your mood will drive the overall atmosphere of the room and you could make everyone feel uneasy. If difficult conversations need to be had, have them privately and soon after the event.

Relax and bring the situation back to size, trust that you can handle it.

I hope this guide is helpful, if you think so, share it.

Don't forget to print the Presentation Checklist.

If you have suggestions, questions or comments contact me at carine@carinesanjuan.com

Good luck with your presentation!

Carine

PRESENTATION CHECKLIST



Date & Time:.....
Allotted time:.....
Venue address:
.....
.....

Objective(s):
.....
.....
.....
.....

Key messages:
1-
2 -
3 -
4 -

What do I know about the audience?
.....
.....

➤ Title: ◀

now for the detail...

- | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| ppt template received: | <input type="checkbox"/> | props ordered: | <input type="checkbox"/> | Event Organiser briefed: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| content written: | <input type="checkbox"/> | props rec'd & checked: | <input type="checkbox"/> | presentation sent & rec'd: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| content proofread: | <input type="checkbox"/> | props sent to & rec'd by | <input type="checkbox"/> | presentation formatted ok: | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| timing checked: | <input type="checkbox"/> | organiser: | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |



on the day...

- mic connected & working:
- projector connected & working:
- pc/laptop connected & working:
-



Rules for my presentation:
.....
.....
breaks/safety info/who's next

NOTES:
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.....
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