

FURTHER ISSUES IN EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

The principles of 7 Cs for effective presentation

Popularly known as 'SEVEN Cs' these can be applied to both oral and written communication. For composing effective written or oral messages, you must apply certain communication principles. These principles provide guidelines for choice of content and style of presentation suitably adapted to the purpose and the receiver of your message.

These principles are applicable to all forms of communication such as: utterances, sentences, written documents and presentations. You will notice that to some extent these principles overlap. It is so, because they are based on a common concern for the audience, whether that audience consists of listeners or readers.

1. Completeness

Completeness means the state of being complete, wholesome, entire, total, full, unimpaired, perfect, integral, unabridged, undivided and absolute. Your message can be taken as complete if it contains all facts the reader or listener needs for the reaction you desire. All message receivers (either listeners or readers) desire complete information to their questions. Remember that the communicators-senders and receivers-differ in their mental filters, their backgrounds, viewpoints, needs, experiences, attitudes, status, emotions, etc. which have an immense bearing on their communication. Because of these differences, communicators need to weigh their messages through the eyes of receivers to be sure that they have included all relevant and adequate information.

You should maintain sanctity of completeness by providing all necessary information, reply all questions asked and try to give something extra, whenever desirable. Completeness offers various benefits such as: complete messages produce the desired results. The message has huge potential for building goodwill and shows concern for others.

2. Conciseness

Conciseness means brief, short, to the point, condensed, compressed, compendious and epigrammatic. Conciseness is most essential component of effective communication. Conciseness is saying what you have to say in the minimum words possible without compromising and sacrificing the other C qualities.

A concise message saves time and expense for both sender and receiver. Conciseness enhances emphasis by reducing and avoiding unnecessary words and makes important ideas to stand out. When combined with a "you-view," concise messages are inherently more interesting to the choosy and fastidious receiver. The concise messages show respect for the receivers by not cluttering their professional lives with undesired information. You can achieve conciseness by avoiding lengthy expressions, including relevant material and by eliminating unnecessary repetitions.

3. Consideration

Consideration means contemplation, reflection, thought, attention, notice, regard, study, examination, scrutiny, -esteem, respect and admiration. Consideration also means preparing every message with the message receivers in mind. Try to - put yourself in their place. You are considerate, you do not lose your temper; you do not accuse you do not charge them without facts. You are, foremost, aware of their desires, problems, circumstances, emotions and probable reactions to your request. You handle the matter from their point of view. The thoughtful consideration is also called “you-attitude”, empathy, the human touch, and understanding of human nature.

You adapt your language and message content to your receiver’s needs and preferences when you make your message complete. The specific ways to indicate consideration are by showing audience benefit or interest in the receiver and emphasizing positive and pleasant facts.

4. Concreteness

Concreteness means real, material, tangible, substantial, physical, actual, factual, specific, particular, explicit and definite. The misunderstandings of words may have produced tragedies in both war and peace, in business and non-business situations. Communicating concretely means being specific, definite, and general. Often it means using direct, explicit, often dictionary based (denotative) rather than ideas or notions suggested by or associated with a word or phrase (connotative). Thus, the term female may appear in a personnel folder as a part of a job description. Yet widely different connotations may occur when using terms as wife, mother, sister, niece, spinster, widow, maiden, matron, or daughter. Each of these latter connotative terms also refers to the same denotative female but with wide-ranging associations in varied relationship and identities.

The benefits to businessman and professionals of using concrete facts and figures are obvious: your receivers know exactly what is required or desired. Using concrete language has some additional advantages. When you supply specifics for the reader or listener, you increase the likelihood that your message will be interpreted the way you intended. Moreover, concrete messages are more richly textured than general messages, and they tend to be more dynamic and interesting. You may use specific facts and figures, put action in your verbs and choose vivid, image-building words when you compose your concrete and convincing message.

5. Clarity

Clarity means clearness, transparency, purity, lucidity, precision, distinctiveness, comprehensibility, intelligibility, obviousness and simplicity. Getting the meaning from your head into the head of your reader accurately is the purpose of clarity. Practically, you know this is not so simple and easily possible. We all carry around our own unique interpretations, ideas and experiences associated with words. However, we must use precise, concrete and familiar words, construct effective sentences and paragraphs, choose precise, concrete and familiar words in order to reach the point of utmost clarity.

Clarity is achieved in part through a balance between precise and familiar language. When you use precise or concrete language, you select exactly the right word to convey your right meaning. Precise words need not be superficial. When you use familiar language, you select a word that is a part of your personal conversation, familiar to the

audience and appropriate for the situation. Familiar words that are exchanged between two good friends, for example, are often conversational and occasionally may be part of a speech or written communication.

When you have a choice between a long word and a short one, prefer to use the short “and familiar word that your reader or listener will quickly understand without compromising and sacrificing the sanctity of the statement. The grammatical statement, when clearly expressed, moves thoughts within a paragraph. Important characteristics to consider are length, unity, coherence and emphasis. The quality that gives force to important parts of sentences and paragraphs is emphasis. Writers must decide what needs emphasis and then choose the correct sentence structures accordingly.

6. Courteous

Courteous means polite well mannered respectful, civil, gracious, courtly, gentlemanly ceremonious obliging and attentive. Knowing your audience allows you to use statements of courtesy, and to be aware of your message receiver. True courtesy involves being aware not only of the perspective of others, but also of their finer emotions, feelings and predilections etc. Courtesy stems from a sincere ‘you-attitude’. It is not merely politeness with mechanical insertions of “please” and “thank you,” although applying socially accepted manners is a form of courtesy. Rather, it is politeness that grows out of one’s respect and concern for others solidly backed by his or her humanitarian and universal considerations.

7. Correctness

Correctness means accuracy, truth, faultlessness, exactness, fidelity, propriety, decorum and strictness. At the core of correctness are proper grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, a message may be perfect grammatically and mechanically but still may insult a customer. The correctness of business message includes using the right level of language, checking accuracy of figures, facts and words and maintaining acceptable writing mechanics.

Formal writing is often associated with scholarly writing: doctoral dissertations, scholarly articles, legal documents, top-level government agreements and other materials where formality in style is demanded. The style is un-conversational, usually impersonal and often contains long and involved sentences.

Forms of support of your presentation

The oral communication needs to be supported with additional information with the help of examples, data opinion, etc. so that the audience gets the feeling of your credibility, validity and reliability of the information you deliver through your speech as well as the benefit of the opinion you express during) Tour speech. The following are the most important supports you would need to strengthen your oral presentation:

Examples-You should use this form of support more than any other. An example also helps in clarifying in addition to acting as a form of support. Giving examples would help your audience to relate the important point of your discussion with the real life situations

and help them in grasping the central idea of your speech. After giving an example you may offer judgments based on the presented information.

Illustrations-Illustrations are examples explained in greater detail; the illustrations seek to elaborate on the example by laying greater emphasis on the details of a specific situation and sometimes suggesting that the solutions to a problem in your speech have worked successfully elsewhere.

Statistics-A numerical data presented in a processed form either in the shape of a tabulated statement, a bar chart, a pie chart or a graph is of substantial help for your audience to catch up on the idea at a single glance. But the problem with the statistical data lies in its source and reliability, the method of collection and the inferences you draw from them. You should also know what statistical tools to use to prove the validity and reliability of your data. The important precaution is to source your data from a reliable source so that the credibility of yourself and that of the data is not compromised. Such sources are reliable that are confident of their own standard and merit as a result of which these are safe without attracting any adverse remark and criticism from others.

Quotations and Testimony-Quotations refer to citing the words or the sayings of eminent persons, a well- established and recognized expert, an individual, or a book genuinely informed on the topic to reinforce the content of your message. The quotations often have a lot of “ learning” and “replicable” values. The use of credible and sourced quotations would add to your credibility and improve the acceptance of your ideas.

Comparisons and Analogies-By making comparisons between two different things you are in a position to explain to the audience the virtues and benefits of the idea you are going to present or propagate in your speech. But, it must be kept in mind that the comparisons demand similarities between two subjects. The similarities should outweigh the dissimilarities.

Definitions-Keep in mind that definitions are not exactly supports. Still, using them can help both the speaker and the audience to be at the same level of understanding. In either informative or persuasive speeches, words have denotative (dictionary) meanings or meanings that you personally link to your ideas. Use either form to clarify your thought.

Closing Effectively

During the course of your speech, give the audience verbal signposts indicating how many more points you have to make and when the end of your presentation is approaching. By informing the audience that the end is near, you will be sure of having their full attention riveted towards you before you review the main points. It is important that your summary covers all the major points and ideas from your presentation, so that the audience has a final chance to recap on your subject matter.

Points to remember

- Do not leave visual aids on display for long as they may divert the attention of the audience.
- Tell the audience how many points you want them to take away with them.
- Make sure you adhere to your allocated time.
- Workout which points can be cut if you run over your allotted time.

- . If you forget anything, leave it out rather than adding it to the end of your speech.
 - . Remember to close with a good and strong summary.
 - . Pause between your summary and the question- and-answer session.
- Focus on presenting accurate and well-researched facts and do not be tempted into giving personal opinions on your subject matter. Base your conclusion on the facts you have presented during your speech. If your presentation is to be followed by a question-and - answer session, remember that the impression of your own carefully prepared final sentences may be diluted. In such a case, you may choose to accept a series of questions from the audience and then make a short, concise summing up speech reiterating your major points again.

At the end of presentation exercise it is highly important to create a strong and memorable finish that will have an indelible impact on mind of the audience. There are several tips that you must keep in mind for this:

- (i) Recap your presentation in less than six sentences. It is important to be brief when summing up; short and powerful sentences hold the attention of the audience far more effectively than a long monologue.
- (ii) Reiterate the key words. Pausing after key words and phrases adds emphasis to them. It is also a good idea to emphasize the word” and” as you approach your final main point.
- (iii) Employ alliteration. The use of several words beginning with the same letter helps make a summary memorable. Restrict the alliteration to a maximum of five words.

Remind Your Main Points to the Audience

You must have heard the TV newsreader. Follow her technique of saying “to end the news, the main points once again”, because repetition reinforces the speaker’s main points and aids in listener’s retention. For this you must know your major points and paraphrase them, as needed, in different ways throughout your conversation to reemphasize. Further, you should also tactfully ask your listener for feedback and ask questions that will indicate that the listener understands your main points.

Redundancy in Transmission

In order to overcome ‘noise’ and to make the information source get a message to a destination with a minimum amount of distortions, the redundancy in transmission is to be established. The concept of redundancy is to be built up to solve the problem of noise. The principle of redundancy originates from information, and its adoption to the organizational communication is of special interest. Actually, redundancy means expressing an idea which is already conveyed by another word which is also used. In simple words, it means repetition of a message to help prevent noise from occurring in a channel or an exchange. To build redundancy means saying there are enough ways to avoid error.

Myers and Myers say: "It has been estimated that only about half of what we say to each other is really needed to reconstruct a message, and the other half is a sort of noise insurance." Channel redundancy is the best solution in the case of channel noise.

For instance, re-dialing a telephone because of disrupted conversation. It involves the need of a back up channel. In many cases, people try to reduce redundancy, particularly when the charge for the transmission of message is based on the number of words. For example, telegram words. Similarly, in the case of channels, where time is basis of charging a message, for instance, long- distance telephone calls, computer time, radio or television commercials, noise has an adverse consequence and as such redundancy should be used which acts as noise insurance. Redundancy insists on repeating an important point to the listeners, to spell out the key words in the message.

Myers and Myers say that information theory played a vital role in solving the technical problem of signal transmission through noisy channels. However, these principles cannot be literally applied to human communication. For one thing, human beings are generally interested in more than the mere occurrence of a message.

An effective communication system should provide a minimum of noise and a maximum of continuous feedback and sufficient redundancy to eliminate noise in reception. It may be observed here that an excess of redundancy, though, can become awkward and absurd.

Examples

1. The air conducting the sound, the voice carries other sounds.
2. The typing work of a secretary.
3. The telephone ringing down the hall, side rooms, reading room.
4. Flying aeroplanes overhead.
5. Disgruntled workers rioting outside.
6. Television programmes may be distorted by video and audio interference.
7. Telephone lines may be affected by static.
8. Resound effects.
9. Erasure, overwriting, striking off of a written or typed matter.
10. Printed words may be obscured by lack of lighting.
11. Every channel is associated with some sort of noise.
12. Any minimal intensity of noise unnoticeable.

Handling the audience

You should be aware that you are making a presentation for the benefit of your audience and not for your own practice, rehearsal or benefit. You should, therefore, possess the requisite skills of reading the mood of "your audience, their likely responses to your speech and their anticipated reactions to the answers you will give against the questions raised by them.

Judging the mood of your audience

To judge the mood of your audience in advance, it is advisable for you to reach the *venue* at least half an hour early so that you can watch your audience arriving and taking their seats. Events like this are prone to reflect on their mood as well as their behaviour during the course of their attendance through your presentation. You must watch for visible signs of tiredness, boredom, or anxiety on the faces of your audience and, accordingly,

formulate your strategy for their mood elevation through some pep talk and light jokes or a funny and humorous short story, etc.

Involving the audience

If you notice that some of your audience are feeling drowsy or yawning which may be due to an uninteresting speaker just before your presentation or due to their engrossment in their own thought, you must stimulate them by engaging their attention and involving them by asking simple questions that can be answered simply by a nod or by raising the hand. This exercise of asking questions from the participants of your audience may be repeated at short intervals so that all participants of the audience remain continuously tuned to you. But, make sure at the same time that you should transmit positive signals through your body language and also keep a watchful eye on the signals emanating through the body language of your audience.

Attention spans are short. After we have created our talk, go through it and make sure that every 2-4 minutes we use some kind of attention gaining device. We can increase voice inflection, show a visual, hold up a prop, move around the room, tell a story, throw out a one liner, write on a flip chart, show a picture of your kids if you want to.

Just make sure that no more than a few minutes goes by between attention gaining devices. The audience won't know we are using a technique on them, but at the end they will say, Wow! That time sure went by fast!

Noticing signs of negativity

The participants of the audience can display the signs of hostility towards you and disapproval of some of the issues being discussed by you in different ways. You can look for the people leaning over and criticizing your speech to a neighbour, people creating noises or people waving their hands or something in their hands to cause distraction. Alternatively, look for people frowning directly at you with their arms folded or looking in the air as if the ceiling is more interesting than anything you have to say. You have to convey, accordingly, your response based on your understanding. Remember very carefully and certainly that actions by impulse or knee-jerk reactions by you will rob you of your credibility in the eyes of your audience thereby demeaning you.

Spotting signs of interest

It is very easy and simple to spot the signs of interest in your audience. People smiling or nodding, leaning forwards in their seats, sitting on the edge of their seats and watching you intently are clear indicators of their intense interest in your presentation. The gestures of their faces may show faint frowns of concentration. People exhibiting any of these signs can probably be won over to your point of view, so make sure that you try your best to involve or engage them during your presentation.

Dealing with questions from the audience

Having made a good presentation before your audience using all the skills at your command is not the end of the show because you cannot take it for granted that the entire audience present has understood all that you have already said and showed in your presentation. Obviously, this means that some participants in the audience may have points to clear with you or may have a different line of thought on one or more of the

points made by you. Some of them may be in the habit of outwitting you, the speaker, and even at times there may be someone in the audience who derives pleasure as a matter of course by even asking something out of context just to unnerve you. Your job as an effective presenter will be treated as nicely done if you are able to handle the question-answer session of your presentation to the fullest contentment of your audience. In order to do so, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the importance of the following aspects:

- Preparing well
- Appearing confident
- Staying in control
- Handling questioners
- Analyzing questions
- Gaining time
- Being honest with the audience

Just before conclusion of your presentation, the final part of your presentation is taking questions from your audience. It is, therefore, necessary that to ensure a real success of your presentation requisite thought must be invested and ample time be devoted at the initial stage of-preparing your presentation.

The purpose

In the minds of the participants in your audience the purpose of asking questions could be:

- To raise matters which they want to clarify,
- Challenge, expand or test.

In any case their intention should be to contribute to the proceedings, but, sometimes, they may have some hidden agenda to demonstrate their own expertise and thereby try to belittle you.

But, for you as a presenter, the purpose is to bridge any gap of understanding on any aspect of your speech the questioner may have in his or her mind. Besides, it is an opportunity to impress on the audience that you really know your subject. If you handle the questions with tact and skill, it definitely adds to the good rapport you have already established with the audience.

Preparation

When you invite questions for the first time in your presentation, you are giving control to participants of your audience. Your aim must be to regain that control as quickly as possible and retain it until you yield it to the next questioner. The best preparation is to spend time beforehand working out the questions that your audience ought to ask and, especially, those you would prefer they did not. Your answers must be spontaneous, satisfying and convincing.

Handling questions and answers

It is important to invite questions in an encouraging and pleasant manner. So, face the audience with a confident and charming smile.

Expect questions

If you do not get a second question after that, you have no alternative but to move to the end and climax of the talk. Usually, audiences do ask questions and the suggested sequence for dealing with them is outlined below.

Listen

Listening carefully is a most important but often neglected skill. Do not interrupt the questioner to give an answer before you have really understood what is the question and, more important, why you are being asked a question. Focus hard and concentrate. Let your body language show that you are listening, by maintaining eye contact with the questioner throughout.

Acknowledge

Acknowledge the question by saying ‘thank you’. But, take care not to patronize the questioner by complimenting him or her on an “excellent”, or “well thought out” question unless you really mean it.

Pause

Pause after the question to show that it is valid and requires some thought. This prevents you from rattling off an unconsidered reply that misses the point or is poorly constructed. During the pause:

Decide

What the questioner wants. Is it:

- More information about what you have said?
- To clarify an issue you have raised?
- To express doubt about your argument?
- To express their own views and ideas?

Decide

What type of question you have been asked. Is it:

- Simple? If so, give a short, concise answer.
- Complicated? If so, relate to your main themes: clarify with a story or an example; summarize your reply.
- One you do not know the answer to? If so, say you will find out and get back to them.

Remember

When you are asked a question, your mind moves into action to identify its nature and intent. If you think the rest of the audience is not clear on the question or worse still you yourself are not sure, then either repeat or paraphrase it. This gives credit to the questioner while allowing you more thinking time. You are then back in control and ready to give a clear reply, which enhances your rapport with the audience and also increase your reputation in their estimation.

Answer

Keep your answers short, concise and to-the-point. Whenever possible, link them to your earlier comments but, if appropriate, give new examples or narrate new anecdotes.

Confirm

Check with the questioner that you have answered his query. By asking a question such as “Does that help or answer or clarify your question?” You confirm that you have closed the information gap, maintained your control and this also gives you the opportunity to say more. Invite further discussion afterwards or move on to your next point.

Move on

Do not linger over your answers; move on to the next question at a brisk, business-like pace. The next step is to be ready to decide on the right moment to stop the question and answer session and enter the concluding part of your presentation.

Types of questions that can be raised

During a speech or presentation you may wish to ask a question or start a discussion with your audience. It is worth remembering that the nature of questions you ask and the way you ask them will dictate the sort of answer you will derive.

The different types of questions could be as under:

- **Rhetorical:** This type of question is not a real question, as it requires no answer. Though a useful ploy for presenters, it should be used sparingly.
- **Close-ended:** Possible answers to these types of questions are few and often predictable. They will not get a discussion going but are useful in verifying what has been said, thought or done.
- **Open-ended:** This type of questions will draw an answer beyond ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and is the best method of developing discussion. The more open the question, the greater the quantity and quality of information offered. These questions will begin with: how, what, when, where, why, tell me about.
- **Probing:** This type of question is a follow-up to the open question which enables the questioner to probe a specific area or develop an argument.
- **Leading:** This type of question is an attempt to gain the respondent’s agreement with the speaker’s statement.
- **Multiple:** This type of question is a series of related questions. For the presenter, multiple questions can be a useful way of creating ignition at the start or to get discussion underway.

With the question-answer session successfully over, you are now ready to move into your summary and your final memorable statement. You are firmly back in control and a forceful ending will ensure that it is your message that stays in the audience’s mind.

Visual Aids and The Use of Pictures

Let us first be clear about the disadvantages of visual aids, They take up a great deal of time and thought, they can divert attention away from what is to be said and on to how it is to be said, they diminish flexibility, they cost money, and if they go wrong the result can vary from mild confusion to the ultimate in catastrophe and humiliation. So why do we use them at all?

We use them because a picture is worth a thousand words, because they can portray vividly and instantly things that are impossible to convey verbally, they save time, they create interest, they bring variety, they add impact, and they remain in the memory long after the words have left it. There is no question that a good presentation, which employs visuals, is enormously more effective than a good presentation without them. Usually the advantages outweigh the disadvantages

Your First Speech

Without speech there would be no community. . . . Language, taken as a whole, becomes the gateway to a new world.-Ernst Cassirer

Jimmy Green worried about his introductory speech. How could he give a speech about himself when nothing exciting had ever happened to him? Jimmy opened his speech on growing up in Decatur County by referring to a popular song, "A Country Boy Can Survive." Then he captivated his urban audience with delightful descriptions of jug fishing for catfish and nightlong barbecues where "more than the pig got sauced." Jimmy was surprised that the class found his speech not only interesting but fascinating.

In the discussion following her introductory speech, Sandra Baltz told her classmates that she was taking the course on a pass-fail option. She had dreaded the class and had put it off as long as possible because she felt she wasn't good at talking to groups and was afraid she would do poorly. Her successful speech of self-introduction appears at the end of this chapter.

Anne Gilbert, an engineering student, introduced Spider Lock ridge, defensive halfback on the football team. She told the class that although Spider was best known for his fierce tackles, there was another side to his personality. Spider's hobby was writing poetry. Anne read several of his poems to the class, revealing him as a sensitive and witty person. Later, Anne said she was surprised her audience was not more aware of how nervous she had felt.

Many of us do not appreciate the value of our experiences or realize that others can find us quite interesting. Most of us underestimate our speaking ability. Even though we spend a lot of time talking worry that everyone will know how anxious we are and are amazed when we discover that listeners are so caught up with what we are saying that they don't even notice our nervousness. All the students just described surprised themselves by giving excellent introductory speeches.

The initial speeches in a class can help build a communication environment that nurtures effective speaking and listening. No matter what the exact nature of your assignment, your first challenge is to present yourself as a credible source of ideas. In this chapter we show you how to begin building credibility as you introduce yourself or others. We

discuss how to find the best topic for such speeches and how to develop and present them convincingly.

Before the first speeches, you and your classmates are usually strangers. You may even be a stranger to yourself. Introductory speeches give you a chance to explore your personality. These speeches also serve as an icebreaker, giving members of the class a chance to know each other better. You will probably find that your classmates are a diverse and interesting group, and you should begin to develop an appreciation for them as individuals. What you learn about other class members also will help you prepare your later speeches. It will give you insights into the knowledge, interests, attitudes, and motivations of your listeners that you can use to adapt your messages. Because it is easier to communicate with people you know, you should also feel more comfortable about speaking before the class.

Even more important, regardless of the type of your introductory speech assignment, your first speech can be helpful in establishing your credentials for later messages. Indeed, whenever you speak to a new audience, you will have to establish your credibility on your topic. As we noted in chapter 1, people are more likely to respond favorably to those they respect and like.

Gaining skill in introducing yourself also may help you in later life. Although formal speeches of self-introduction are rare in the world beyond the classroom, the skills you learn in this chapter will help you learn how to present your best self to others. They may enable you to make a favorable first impression at a job interview or at a social gathering. You deserve to make a good impression on others, just as people deserve to have their best cases presented in a court of law. The analogy is good, because others are constantly judging us from such impressions.