LESSON-36

STAGES IN WRITING OF A PRESENTATION

Determining the Task at Hand

The presentation (and author) was tasked with creating a presentation to deliver to CEMA, the Computer & Electronics Marketing Association. She knew she wanted to provide a broad-based presentation dealing with “Beyond the 1-Page Web Site” for marketing professionals. She also knew the audience would be diverse. Some audience members would come from organizations that had hearty Internet budgets and educated management. Others may be relative Internet neophytes. The real challenge for the presenter was to create an interesting, substantive presentation for all attendees.

So, What is Covered?

The presentation is full of valuable content. In order to hold the audience’s attention and provide structure to their learning, the author organized the topics to cover in a detailed outline.

General Order of Work

When the author began to work, he did not sit down and begin to design a template for his presentation. Nor did she begin to randomly write slide content. Many people begin with these tasks, because they are familiar and tangible. Quite frankly, they are also often perceived as the most “fun”. What is wrong with this? Simply, you take the chance of spending too much time on less important items, and not enough on the ones that truly demand the most effort. Fortunately, this presenter used a diligent logical method for developing her presentation.

Sequence of events

1. Define audience
2. Set Objectives
3. Write outline (PowerPoint)
4. Flush out outline. (Provide examples. Details needed for graphics, screen shots, flowcharts)
5. Write supplementary content to outline. (PowerPoint Notes)
6. Create template. (Modify existing one.)
7. Combine template and outline = working presentation
8. Edit content
9. Create graphics: screen shots, flowcharts, etc.
10. Edit graphics: optimized and added “art for art’s sake”
11. Edit entire presentation
12. Insert transitions
13. PRACTICE

Focusing on Goals/Objectives

One of the strengths of this presentation is that the presenter defined clear goals for his audience. He focused on four key areas of understanding, and stated these in a slide. (This is Slide 2 of the presentation). Remember the old adage, "tell the audience what you are going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them" . . . Well, it works. An audience needs to know what they are expected to glean from a presentation.

STAGES OF WRITING

Acquiring the ability to write in a logical, coherent manner requires a lot in terms of preparation. It can almost be compared to making a presentation where the key mantra is *rehearse, rehearse* and *rehearse,* prior to the final appearance *before* the audience. Similarly, the amount of time consumed in preparing the written message should far exceed the actual writing process.

The *three* stages in the writing process are (a) predrafting, (b) drafting, and (c) postdrafting. On most occasions problems arise because of the improper assignment of time for the *three* stages of business writing. Maximum amount of time is spent on writing the draft and minimum time on either preparing *for* the material to be drafted or revising. The schematic pattern observed for writing is mostly as follows:

STAGES OF WRITING-I

The amount of time that goes into revising occasionally equals that of preparing for the draft. Contrast this with the situation in which maximum amount of time is spent in revising, followed by preparing for the draft and then, finally, writing. The output is definitely better, well thought of and clearer. Take a look at the following suggested diagram for the various stages of writing:

STAGES OF WRITING-II

If the process of writing were to be understood in terms of, say, a twelve-hour timeframe, the writer can safely assign one hour for the incubation of the idea, approximately four hours for revising. The one-hour that is surplus and not accounted for is needed as time spent in taking a short break after writing. It is a well-known fact that the writer, after completion of his writing if he were to re-read the original text. Hence it becomes imperative that for an unprejudiced correction of the errors we go back to the original text after a short break.

Within the framework suggested, the task of the writer gets simplified if he identifies the following steps prior to commencing work:

1. Define the problem
2. Gather material
3. Organize material
4. Complete the task.

1. Define the problem. A proper definition of the problem and clarity of purpose makes writing meaningful. The purpose could be to inform, to persuade, to regulate or to collaborate. A change in this would also result in a change in the style of writing as the level of participation from the reader either increases, decreases or remains stagnant. If it is the first, the style of writing can be passive as minimum involvement from the recipient is expected. Persuasion would necessarily require a high level of involvement on the part of the reader. Unless and until the tone is very convincing, the purpose of the writer would be defeated. Finally, when it comes to either regulation or collaboration, the participation from the receiver is going to be the highest. With the above specified purpose, the style and the tone should, as far as possible, be active so that the receiver is forced to take c9gnizance of the material. provided.

Writing becomes more focused when similarities and dissimilarities between the existing systems and proposed ones are studied and suitably explained. Similarly, the relevance of the issue within the existing timeframe is also important. If business writing could reflect concerns of the above specified nature, it would be easier to arrive at an effective definition of the work problem.

2. Gather material. After the problem has been defined, the stage comes for gathering the material. What are the sources that need to be tapped for procuring information? Is the material to be collected internal, that is, it belongs to the organization where the individual is working or is it external, that is, it is to be collected from sources outside the organization? Browsing through the library, the previous reports and other written communication pertaining to the problem can also provide sufficient information. Most of the above mentioned sources would be there in the library.

External material, not available in the library, can be collected through interviewing people. Much preparation goes into preparing for such interviews. People are almost always reluctant to part with information. The first step for preparation of such interviews is rehearsal of techniques for breaking the ice. One of the strategies could be to start with "empty conversation", that is, interaction which really does not have any bearing on the aim of *the* communication. It is almost always inane, but important from the point of view of building relationships or breaking the ice. Interviewees could be of two types: acquaintances and non-acquaintances. Interaction with the former could begin with almost any topic under the sun-the family, weather, work at office, colleagues etc. Communication with a non-acquaintance could begin with the mention of a friend, or a colleague who had referred the interviewee to the interviewer. Do not plunge straight into business talk. Instead, start with the basic, the most elementary questions revolving round the five W's: What, Why, Who, Where, When and the one H: How. Let the interviewee take on the lead. As an interviewer, the most important task ahead of you is to listen carefully. Do not disturb with too many ifs and buts. Let the person speak. To ensure that your understanding of what is being said is correct, follow a three- tier process of listening, paraphrasing and responding. This would ensure that there is no listening error. Take down notes or jot down points. Together with this also ask follow-up questions just in case you get stuck at a certain point and need further clarifications.

3. **Organize the material**. The material gathered through research can now be collated and given a systematic ordering. This again is contingent upon the definition of the problem. More often than not, more material is collected than is needed. Sifting through the gathered information, retaining the relevant and discarding the non-relevant material should
be done in a systematic manner. A good way of going about it is to jot down the main points on cue cards. Once all material has been written on the cards, it can be sifted easily and an order or pattern can be assigned to the relevant information. This is part of the pre-drafting stage that takes up quite a substantial amount of time.

Now begins the second stage of writing or drafting the message. The basic rule is: do not spend too much time on trying to correct your grammar and language in the initial phase of writing. Just let the content unravel as you move through the points. There is a reason behind not spending too much time at the drafting stage. The mind cannot perform two activities at the same time. If we try to be very particular of the style and attempt putting all the points in an aesthetically appealing manner, we will end up with either unsatisfactory results or spending more time than is required. Therefore, it is essential that the correction of the written communication be left for the final stage of revision in which the piece of writing can be given both an aesthetic and a logical appeal.

4. Revise the text. Maximum amount of time should be spent on revising the piece of written communication. This is the stage when all kinds of errors in writing and of logic are evidenced as we attempt to give the entire writing a coherent picture. However, before we come to this stage of revision, there is a "no man's stage" when we take a brief break from the usual work. When we get back to our writing after the short interlude, we view it from a fresh perspective and are able to notice errors, if any. The writer should never be in a rush to send forth the written message. If possible, it should be withheld by the writer, for a brief time or as the situation permits, so that perusal, revision and correction can be systematically carried out.

5. Finish the text. Revision does not bring the written piece of information to a close. The text now needs to be carefully pruned to ensure all formatting, and incorporating of structural details is complete. This is the final stage, and though not time consuming, definitely requires careful reading.

PREPARING NOTES

Preparing notes is a tedious process and requires a high level of concentration. If notes were to be prepared in a systematic manner, they would necessarily follow a five-step process:

I. Read the text carefully.
2. Select the key words in the passage or words that communicate the main idea.
3. Construct a sentence that captures the essence of the paragraph or state it in brief, that is, without verbs or conjunctions. The process can be expedited if the first line of the paragraph is carefully studied and key words searched for. If the statement needs to be copied as it exists in the original, care should be exercised at the time of copying it, so that there are no punctuation or spelling errors, e.g., the writer might be using the American spelling “behavior” instead of the British spelling “behavior”. If the writer is not careful, he might jot down the British spelling which would lead to presentation of an erroneous quotation.
4. Note down the page number.
5. Note down the bibliographical details.
Points (4) and (5) are essential because the reader may wish to refer to the original for cross verification.
Notes can be prepared in the following manner:

PREPARING NOTES

Name of author: Page No. Name of BookPublishers: Place of Publication:
1. Goal-oriented communication2. Relationship oriented communication. Communica

If notes for letters or reports are being prepared, reference numbers are used instead of bibliographical details so that it is easy to retrieve the information when the need arises.

Choosing the Right Colors for Your Next Presentation

Keep Your Color Choices Simple

You’re working on an important slide presentation. You’ve followed all the steps on your PowerPoint template: you’ve organized your information, created headlines, and positioned your charts and graphs. All the elements seem to be in order, but the slides are lackluster. You wonder what your audience will think . . .

You figure out what you need . . . COLOR . . . lots of bold, bright color - color to make your information stand up and be noticed, color to shout out your message, color to hit your audience over the head. You add red, green, blocks of blue, and orange. By the time you’re done, your slide presentation looks like a circus. Instead of livening up your slides and emphasizing your message, you’ve wound up with a muddled mess.

What Went Wrong?

Most people (or at least those of us without a graphic design background) don't know the colors they choose are not as important as the relationships the colors create. Some colors work well together, others fight against each other. The key to using color effectively is ESTABLISHING A SOUND RELATIONSHIP.

Color is never viewed in isolation. Rather, it is always judged in its environment. Color is influenced by neighboring colors. For example, place a bright yellow ball in a child's nursery and it fits right in. Place the same ball in a boardroom, and it sticks out like . . . well, a bright yellow ball in a boardroom.

How Do You Know What Colors Work Together?

How do you select colors that will get your message across with the appropriate tone and style? How do you establish colors in a successful relationship? One solution is as simple as looking out the window . . . When you think of creating a color palette for your next presentation, consider nature's color palette: the crisp blue-greens of the ocean, the deep green fir trees, and the cornflower blue sky. These colors work in harmony with each other. They create a sense of balance and order - they work together to evoke a feeling and create a mood.

You Need A Plan

Selecting color should never be arbitrary or merely subjective. "I like it" is not sufficient criteria for creating a palette. You need a plan.

The first thing to determine is the "feel" you want for your presentation. Color has thermal qualities of either warm or cool. Colors that range in the reds and oranges are warm; those in the blues and greens are cool. Begin by selecting either a warm or cool hue. Then, choose only one or two vivid hues. If you want to expand your palette, use a broader range of colors. Do this through the use of tints and shades.

A tint is a hue mixed with white. Pink is a tint of red.

A shade is a hue mixed with black. Brown is a shade of orange.

By experimenting with tints and shades, you can create palettes that range from direct and playful to serious and somber. Consider the following two examples.

Below is a sample web page using the green palette. Consider the tone and mood of the page: serene and professional.

Palette 1: Green

Below is a sample web page using the orange palette. Consider the tone and mood of the page: vibrant and unique.

Palette 2: Orange

Final Thoughts

The best rule to follow when selecting color is . . . keep it simple - more is not always better. It is the color relationships that make or break visual effects. Try to choose only one or two vivid hues and use their tints and shades to broaden your palette. Following these guidelines will help keep presentation slides clear, elegant, and to the point!

Presenters Online would like to thank Margo Halverson for her article contribution. Margo is an award-winning professional designer and an Associate Professor at the Maine College of Art. For information about Margo, please visit Proximity Learning at www.designsense-cd.com.

Clarify Your Speaking Goal

For an informative speech, your goal is to present new information for the appreciation or enlightenment of your audience. Search engines are a good choice to find subject areas of general interest. Sometimes, you can find informative topics using sources from health, scientific or technical fields.

The purpose of a persuasive speech is to provide the audience with good reasons that support a change in attitudes, beliefs, values or behavior. Common types of persuasive speeches include advocating for a solution to a societal problem, arguing for action on legislative matters, or stating one's opinion on legal and judicial questions.

Back to top

Browse for General Topics
Need more help using search tools?
Notes from the Instructor
Notes on Using Search Tools
Argus Clearinghouse http://www.clearinghouse.net
The clearinghouse is organized by what it calls "topical guides." These are lists developed by users who have investigated particular subjects.

Demographics

How does one relate to the audience in terms of social groupings such as age, sex, religion, family status, sexual orientation, educational level and socio-economic class?

Psychographics

How does one relate to the audience based on ideology, values, beliefs and attitudes?

Credibility

How does the audience perceive your competence & confidence, character and goodwill?

Public Opinion Polls

How do the views of the audience compare to national surveys on a variety of social and political topics?

Journals in Public Opinion

Use journals in the field of public opinion research to learn more about polling methodology.

The Archive

Check out resources for historic examples of how speakers analyzed their audience and adapted their speeches.

Character
The perception that a speaker exemplifies moral qualities and identifies with personal values that members of the audience hold.

Goodwill
The perception that the speaker identifies with the audience in terms of shared background, cultural values, and expresses concern for the well being of the audience

Interactive Exercise
Credibility Self Assessment

Listen to a recording of Dr. David Korten's speech, "The Failed Paradigms of Globalism," presented at the Public Teach-in sponsored by the International Global Forum and held at Riverside church in New York City, November, 1995. You can also listen to some of the other presenters at conference from the Peacenet page.

Competence and Confidence
Competence is the perception that you know what you are talking about on the basis of your education, professional expertise, personal experience and research on the topic.

You create the perception of competence by explicitly identifying how you developed your knowledge to speak on the subject.

Your burden of creating competence may also be influenced by the topic and how much the audience is predisposed to agree or disagree with you. In general, the greater the degree of resistance for most members of the audience, the more will you need to provide credible evidence and expertise.

In addition, the perception of confidence is often communicated through smooth and dynamic delivery. Unfortunately, some highly knowledgeable speakers will undermine their credibility by using poor and under rehearsed delivery.

Consider as an example the competence of David Korten, participating in a "Public Teach-in" on third world development. Korten's topic was "The Failed Paradigms of Globalism."

Korten was a credible source to speak on this topic as a result of holding an MBA and PhD in economics from the Standford University Graduate School of Business. In his career he had been affiliated with the Harvard Institute for International Development and conducted research with the Ford Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development.

At the time of the speech, Korten was the Chairman of the People-Centered Development Center, a public advocacy group that addresses issues of third world development.

Korten is also the author of a book on the subject entitled When Corporations Rule the World.

Even with very strong credibility prior to giving his speech, and though he was addressing an essentially favorable audience, Korten began his speech by citing sources of evidence. Throughout the address he used a variety of evidence to support his ideas and strengthen his credibility.

Back to top

Listen to and Read the text of the speech by Kate Michelman that was presented to the National Press Club on January 17, 1997

Character
Perceptions of character and trustworthiness are value judgments about your moral virtues. You create the sense of character by stressing how you embody personal values that are meaningful to the members of your audience.

In addition, trustworthiness is earned by demonstrating that you have acted and spoken in a reliable and consistent manner. You will also create trust by presenting yourself as being fair and open minded.

Sometimes, the topic that you discuss can affect the audience's perceptions, especially when you are dealing with controversial issues that are value-laden.

As an example, consider the topic of abortion, about which there is often a sharp division in moral attitudes. In a speech to the National Press Club, Kate Michelman, President of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, stressed personal, moral values related to making decisions about abortion.

Listen to a recording of President Reagan's Inaugural presented in Washington, DC on January 20, 1981. The recording is from the files of C-SPAN. A printed text is available at the Bartleby collection at Columbia University.

Listen to the segment from the speech by Reagan before an audience of senior citizens. The audio file for this speech is from the Michael Reagan Radio Show.

Goodwill
Goodwill and rapport are achieved by stressing that you share common experiences, interests and concerns with your audience.

Sometimes your listeners may also feel a greater sense of rapport with you on the basis of shared demographic factors and the perception that you hold similar cultural and community values.

An excellent historical example of a speaker creating credibility through goodwill can be found in the First Inaugural Address by Ronald Reagan.

The new president identified with his audience by stressing community values and showing concern for the economic well being of the average American citizen.

Goodwill can also be created by using terms of self identification and personal pronouns that emphasize common bonds with the audience.

On another occasion in his presidency, Reagan spoke to a group of seniors and created goodwill by stressing that he too was a senior citizen.

Personal and Cultural & Community Values
In a study of American Values, Milton Rokeach identified eighteen value terms that people in the United States hold. On a personal level, Rokeach found nine values that relate to qualities of character. These are qualities that people identify as the kind of person they would like to be. The other nine terms, which we are referring to as social

and community values, represent values that people would like to attain. Rokeach termed these “terminal”values.

Personal Values: It’s important to be:

1. Honest
2. Responsible
3. Ambitious and hard working
4. Forgiving of others
5. Open minded and tolerant
6. Courageous in standing up for one’s beliefs
7. Helpful and showing concern for the welfare of others
8. Loving and affectionate
9. Capable and effective
10. Social and Community Values (Terminal)
11. Family Security
12. World Peace
13. Freedom
14. Self Respect
15. Happiness
16. Wisdom
17. Achieving a Sense of Accomplishment
18. Living a Comfortable Life
19. Salvation
20. Source: Rokeach, Milton. Understanding Human Values. New York: Free Press, 1979
21. Back to top | Back to Character | Back to Goodwill
22. Public Opinion Polls
23. What does my audience think on various topics?
24. Media Polls
25. Read polls that were published or broadcast by major news outlets.