

10 Essential Tips for Effective Presentations

All senior people should expect to be asked to give presentations, to their staff, customers, suppliers, investors and even their local communities. Most hate doing so, but the more you practice, there is no doubt the better you will become. Experienced presenter Jeremy Thorn offers some essential tips.

1. Be absolutely sure of the purpose of your presentation. Decide for example whether it is to inform, entertain, persuade, propose, explain, motivate or reassure. If *you* are not sure, your audience won't be.
2. Write down each key point you want to make on a separate card. Then sort the cards into the most appropriate sequence. By putting your points on separate cards, you can always change the sequence later if you decide you need to.
3. Be ruthless in editing all side-issues and distractions. Some of these may be dear to you but, if they are not directly relevant, cut them out. Most speakers are fearful of not having enough to say – but most audiences fear that they will have too much! So let 'ABC' be your watchword: Accuracy, Brevity and Clarity.
4. Speak without notes if you possibly can. Have a few bullet points by you to give you confidence by all means, but formal notes can only get in the way of delivering your message. Good ways to remember your text include regular rehearsal, practicing with a recording device or in front of a full-length mirror, typing out your speech and re-reading it frequently, and practicing to yourself as you travel to work perhaps or just before you go to bed.
5. Try to 'stand in their shoes'. Decide: Why are they here? What do they want? What positions have they already taken? What pressures are they probably under? What are their experiences? What will they understand? What will they misunderstand? You need to know the answers to these questions before you deliver your message, not afterwards!
6. Watch your body - your audience will! Stand still and straight, or move purposefully. Don't rock, shuffle or slouch, and don't pace aimlessly. All of these are distracting and will take away from your message. Instead, do try to smile; relax by taking deep breaths and delivering s-l-o-w-ly rather than gabbling; and practice regular eye-sweeps of your audience, concentrating on them and not yourself!
7. Remember how riveting a planned pause, even total silence, can be, especially before or after you make your key points. This is how you will help build both interest and attention.

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8. Remove the anonymity of your audience by mingling with a few before you start, if you can. Find out their names and interests, and address part of your presentation to them as friendly faces in a sea of strangers.
9. Learn at least the opening and ending of your presentation by heart. You will be amazed how much confidence this will give you; first in getting launched, and secondly in knowing where you are headed. As these are the two most difficult stages of any presentation, knowing the start and finish by heart will remove a large part of the difficulty.
10. Make sure you have got an attention-grabbing opener and a strong and memorable ending. These are the hallmarks of all powerful presentations.



***Jeremy Thorn** is the author of the Tips Booklet '115 Essential Tips for Effective Presentation' and a frequent public speaker and workshop presenter on business topics to a wide range of organisations internationally.*