

The 5 Best Ways To Put Together And Deliver A Lousy Presentation

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Plan ahead to avoid these mistakes. DEPOSITPHOTOS

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Mediocre business presentations rarely melt hearts, mend behavior, or motivate listeners to action. After three decades of coaching clients who need to deliver a critical business

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Here goes...

Lousy Way #1: Start by Creating Your Slides

When I question coaching clients about their typical method of creating a presentation, the most common answer is this: “Well, I start with my slides. Either I create new ones or select some from other presentations I’ve delivered for other purposes.”

Such an approach will almost surely result in failure.

This approach would be like starting to build a house by contacting various suppliers and asking them to deliver to your vacant lot lumber, electrical wiring, plumbing fixtures, sheetrock, paint, concrete, sand, and roofing tiles—in amounts and styles based on your guess of what you might need. Who does that? Nobody.

Instead, your first stop is the architect’s office to design house blueprints. And the first few questions the architect will ask you: “How many bedrooms do you need?” “How many baths?” “Tell me a little about your lifestyle. What are you looking for in your dream house?” “Do you do a lot of entertaining?” “Do you do gourmet cooking?” “Do you have in mind a 2-car, 3-car, or 4-car garage?”

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--“What’s the primary message of interest to my listeners?”

--“What do they already know about the topic?”

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--“What do I want them to consider, buy, decide, or do based on my presentation?”

--“Will they be biased for or against what I’m saying or asking?”

--“If so, how can I minimize that negative reaction?”

With these answers, then—and only then—are you on the right track to structure your presentation.

Lousy Way #2: Include a Data Dump to Reinforce Your Message

Sure, data increases credibility for your point or proposal. But that assumes you deliver the data properly. Overwhelming your audience with stats can paralyze them, bury them in rumination, and stymie decision making.

Select only the most salient stats, and round them off so the audience can remember them (“Roughly half of our projects” is easier to remember than “47.9% of our projects.”) If you need to

By all means, avoid dumping it all orally during the presentation. As with many things, fewer stats is more.

Lousy Way #3: Give Them Background So They Understand Your Point

Don't tell people what they already know. I often get push-back on this advice: "But don't I have to go back and fill the group in on the problem? Tell them what's been done in the past and why it didn't work? Don't they need that background before I can propose something new?"

No. No, you don't. People will never understand your background until they know your point. Tell them where you're headed right up front. For example: "We are experiencing delays of 14- 18 days in completing our client projects as guaranteed. To resolve these delays, I'm proposing that we hire two new analysts, extend the 'promised date' to clients, and buy XYZ software."

Once your audience knows where you're going and what decision you expect them to make, then circle back and fill in the supporting details.

Lousy Way #4: Do a Mental Run-Through

Ask the typical presenter if they rehearse presentations, and most will insist that they do. But that "typical rehearsal" looks like this: The presenter flips through each slide, mentally recalling what details he or she will add. They also may print out an outline with the numbered slide headlines. Done. That's it.

at your virtual presentation platform), talking through the presentation. In doing so, you'll become aware of several things to fix: Weak openings. Missing transitions from point to point. Awkward phrasing. Slides that are unclear or out of best sequence. A wandering, rather than crisp, wrap-up.

Lousy Way #5: Temper Your Tone

I'm not saying you have an attitude. I'm saying you need one. Weak presenters fear being too animated, too passionate, too opinionated, too loud, too soft, too direct.

The problem? Your audience takes their cue from you. If you don't show passion and interest in your ideas/information, they won't either. Your interest interests them! They must sense that you believe in what you're saying—its validity, its importance, its urgency.

Packaged, this advice about tone means your body language and voice must support your message with energy.

So unless your goal is creating and delivering a lousy presentation, sidestep all these common pitfalls. Instead, design your message of interest to the audience. Create any necessary slides to support that message. Add just enough data to prove your point. Forget the "background," working in only necessary details as you move along in your presentation. Rehearse. Then deliver your message like you believe what you're saying!

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