



Unit 518
Information Pack
Making Professional Presentations



INTRODUCTION

The manager's role will invariably involve making presentations. What is for sure is that in organisations, people that speak and present well, do well!

Giving a presentation or speech is something that many leaders and managers are required to do. It can, however, strike fear into the heart of even the most confident and seasoned presenter. Whenever you give a presentation, it is important that your message is clear, your ideas are transparent, your delivery is confident, and the overall impression is professional.

Dale Carnegie in his 1945 work 'Public speaking and Influencing [people] in Business' made the now widely accepted assertion that those looking to impress at work and to accelerate their careers should practise public speaking. The simple rationale is that it is an essential skill and that there is no substitute for practice - i.e. just doing it. And through practice it becomes much easier.

Much of the success of a presentation is about application of tools and techniques. This information pack will examine the tools and techniques required to construct and deliver a professional presentation.

SAMPLE

GUIDANCE

This document is prepared to break the unit material down into bite size chunks. You will see the learning outcomes above treated in their own sections. Therein you will encounter the following structures;

Purpose

Explains *why* you need to study the current section of material. Quite often learners are put off by material which does not initially seem to be relevant to a topic or profession. Once you understand the importance of new learning or theory you will embrace the concepts more readily.

Theory

Conveys new material to you in a straightforward fashion. To support the treatments in this section you are strongly advised to follow the given hyperlinks, which may be useful documents or applications on the web.

Example

The examples/worked examples are presented in a knowledge-building order. Make sure you follow them all through. If you are feeling confident then you might like to treat an example as a question, in which case cover it up and have a go yourself. Many of the examples given resemble assignment questions which will come your way, so follow them through diligently.

Question

Questions should not be avoided if you are determined to learn. Please do take the time to tackle each of the given questions, in the order in which they are presented. The order is important, as further knowledge and confidence is built upon previous knowledge and confidence. As an Online Learner it is important that the answers to questions are immediately available to you. Contact your Unit Tutor if you need help.

Challenge

You can really cement your new knowledge by undertaking the challenges. A challenge could be to download software and perform an exercise. An alternative challenge might involve a practical activity or other form of research.

Video

Videos on the web can be very useful supplements to your distance learning efforts. Wherever an online video(s) will help you then it will be hyperlinked at the appropriate point.

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Video

Structuring Presentations

First decide your title - keep it brief and informative. It should tell the audience what your topic is and be relevant to the audience. If you can incorporate a little intrigue, then that is good for arousing interest. Do not try to cover too much - it will confuse your audience. People are overwhelmed with information, so it is important to avoid trying to tell them everything you know! Instead, focus on telling them only what they need to know. Indeed, there is a lot to be said for applying the technique that Churchill applied to his speeches. He spelled out this simple technique:

'Tell them what you are going to tell them' (Introduction); 'Tell them' (Main Body); and 'Tell them what you have just told them' (Conclusion).

This approach has 3 clear sections and is generally divided: 10% to introduction, 80% to the main body, and 10% to the conclusion.

Introduction

The introduction allows you to introduce yourself to the audience, capture their attention or imagination, and set up the main points that you will be elaborating on throughout your presentation. This is the 'tell them what you are going to tell them' phase; it is likely to include:

- A brief introduction of yourself and perhaps an anecdote, fact or quote that engage your audience
- A succinct statement of the presentation's purpose - i.e. what your presentation is about and what you are looking to accomplish
- Background - it may be appropriate to explain what makes the presentation necessary by providing the background history to your presentation
- The parameters of your presentation - what is in and what is out of scope
- State when you will take questions - for example, at the end

- An outline of your key points.

Main Body

You should organise your presentation to align with your key points main talking points. Each key point should be accompanied by explanation or evidence to support your stance. This is the 'tell them' element of Churchill's approach. Consider:

- Using plain language and simplifying complex concepts where possible
- Signposting - having a statement of transition between key points. For example: 'having explained X, I will move now to examine Y'.

Conclusion

As you would expect the conclusion draws in the threads of your presentation to leave the audience with your 3 key points well embedded in their minds. This is the 'tell them what you have just told them' phase. Generally, it would incorporate:

- A brief summary of your key points
- A brief reiteration of the purpose of your presentation - your key message
- Any recommendations that support your key message; keep this positive and upbeat and stress why your recommendations are beneficial or appropriate.

Dealing with Questions and Answers

Trying to anticipate what questions might crop up is an essential element of making professional presentations. Whether you intend to take a short question and answer (Q&A) session at the end of the presentation or whether you are comfortable taking questions during the presentation is often a question of preference. There are advantages to both, just as there are disadvantages! Either way it is best to include a clear statement of what you want.

For example:

- 'Please hold your questions until the end of the presentation'.
- 'Please ask your questions at any time during my presentation'.