

A Lesson in Effective Technical Presentations

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General Tips:

- Engage your audience
 - Eg: Start off with something that can connect everyone (Thanksgiving Break)
- Make a Plan
 - Calculate timeline/schedule
 - Set aside plenty of time so you are not rushed
- Communicate Results
 - Technical Reporting
 - Paper, poster, presentation, oral presentation
- Medium
 - Paper, slides, audio, video, computer interlink, poster board
 - HAVE A BACKUP

Technical Writing:

- Generally non-opinionated
- Content = make sure it is worth reading
- Organization = user-friendly, subheadings
- Style = clear and concise, use shorter wording
- Format = accessibility is key
- Visuals = A MUST
- Audience
 - Primary audience = those who request the document for decision or action
 - Address them with the longer document
 - Secondary audience = those who carry out or continue on with project
 - Address them in supplement with appendices and/or glossary
 - Level of Technology of Audience Members
 - Highly Technical = do not need any definitions
 - Semi Technical = some definitions needed
 - Non-Technical = clear but not long definitions

- Practice disseminating =
 - Practice explaining it to other people who are not in your profession
 - Helps impact more people and get funding
 - If you can describe your topic to kindergarteners = you really understand your stuff
- Drafting
 - Brainstorm
 - Narrow it down to the BEST information = the stuff that provides strongest impact/support
 - Purpose = ask yourself this
- Rough Draft
 - Abstract = brief overview
 - Why is your topic important, objectives, briefly explain methods, succinctly state results/conclusions/recommendations
 - NO “We present the results and recommendations here” etc
 - Abstract is important for getting conferences and papers accepted
 - Intro, body, results, conclusion
 - Part often forgotten = suggestions section
 - Analyze problem, what can be improved, what is the next step, lessons learned
 - Title page = name of project, name, supervisor, code, date
 - Table of contents
 - References
 - Definitions:
 - Parenthetical, sentence, expanded, acronyms
 - Visual aids =
 - Depict relationships, LABEL, condense info
 - Appendices
 - Instrument specifications (eg calibration of instruments used)
 - Computer programs
 - Glossary

Posters:

- Keys:
 - Start conversations, graphic, ordered, focused = a single message, advertisement of your work, summary of your work, essentially an “elevator conversation” = don’t have three hours to explain information
- Use plain language, no jargon or acronyms

- Interpret your findings for your audience = answer “what does that really mean?”
- An abstract can HELP
 - DO NOT put it on your poster though
 - Use it as an outline
 - Have copies of abstract with contact info near poster as takeaways
- Title = be able to read from 15-20 ft away = STANDOUT
- Do not need to include your whole name = use initials
- Sequencing of information = can number and letter sections to make this clear
- Normal text = readable from 6ft away
- Use only 2-3 colors = pastels and grays are easy to look at for long time
- BALANCE WHITE SPACE
- REVISE MULTIPLE TIMES (at least twice)
- Bar charts = can make relatively smaller since data easy to get when look at
- Prepare 30 sec, 2 min, and 5 min tours of your poster for different people
- Get feedback from members
- Cue cards (notes on phone even)
- Leave a pen and paper pad next to poster to invite comments from viewers
- On handouts = include miniature of the poster
- QR codes can be used on posters and handouts
- Oral
 - Seminars, tech presentations, speeches
 - Impromptu, memorized, reading, extemporaneous
 - 10 min plus 3 min for questions
 - Eye contact
 - Read audience feedback
 - If losing them = tell a joke
 - If someone asks a question you do not know the answer to =
 - “Let me get back to you on that”
 - “Can we take it offline?”
 - Dress professionally = people take you more seriously, wear something that makes you feel good about yourself too
 - Do not be afraid to admit ignorance = do not bullcrap the audience
 - Anticipate audience questions (you can even plant a question asker to start the Q&A off)
 - Use moderate volume, just pause versus saying “umm”
 - Appear relaxed
 - Use a conversational tone = realize that people in the audience are just that: people, just like you

- Connect to audience on high level versus nitty gritty
 - Focus on the end product
 - Try to depict the nitty gritty visually
- Ask audience members name, where from, discipline etc at the start

Random:

- Check out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDvizNvaOzY>

Quotes:

- “When you get your foot in the door, SHINE.”
- “Have a great day growing your brains.”