

# THE BASIC RULES OF GOOD PRESENTATIONS

## **KISS - Keep It Simple Stupid**

There are numerous ways to apply this ancient adage. The bottom line is that the more complicated you let things get, the more trouble you can expect:

- New technology is wonderful, but don't break in new equipment 15 minutes before the presentation starts.
- Keep your presentation focused on the message, don't get carried away with special effects and razzle-dazzle.
- Whatever you do, don't have rented equipment scheduled to arrive 10 minutes before you speak.
- Check everything in advance. Then check it again.

## **Rehearse the Presentation properly**

There's something to be said for winging it: "**Forget It!**"

To present the most professional image, you need to know your presentation. It's OK to occasionally leave the main "script" but, wandering presentations that lack focus, or those too dependent on working from notes, or long pauses to compose your thoughts are never acceptable.

Rehearsing the presentation includes more than just going over what you will be saying. Rehearsing includes the entire presentation. Use the same tools too. If you are using slides, or a projector, and have access to the room you will be presenting in, rehearse there. Using a remote mouse and laser pointer for the presentation, a microphone? Rehearse the presentation with these devices.

## **Don't memorize**

Rehearsing is one thing, committing the presentation to memory and performing it by heart, is not the way to go. You need to present, not to recite.

IF you recite or practise more than five or six times, your presentation will be transferred by the brain to your long-term memory and you are likely to encounter more "blank" spots during your delivery.

## **Use your notes very sparingly.**

Too much time spent reading notes may convince your audience that you are unprepared.

### **Dress for success.**

Some say you can never overdress for a presentation. Others will disagree. Our own belief is that other factors come in to play, particularly how you handle yourself in the situation. Humour and how formal your presentation is will impact whether you are "over" presented.

But everyone agrees you should never under dress. How to determine what is appropriate? Worst case: Ask people. It's all part of doing it right.

### **Pace yourself - don't go too fast, or too slow.**

A general rule, every "slide" deserves at least 10 seconds, and none rate more than 100. If you find yourself spending several minutes on one slide, consider breaking it up! (We're not suggesting this as a firm rule, but a good guideline. Obviously, some charts or graphics may take several minutes to properly present.) Then again, perhaps they could be better as multiple "slides."

If you are done with a "slide" - lose it. Don't leave an image up for your audience once you move on to other points.

### **Use presentation tools sparingly**

Slides, LCD and DLP Projectors, Laptops, LCD panels, Video, Multimedia, Sound. Laser Pointers, Lapel Microphones, Overheads, Photo-quality printers, Posterprinters... There are a great many presentation tools available to you as a presenter. Determine your communication needs, the presentation environment, and select the right group of tools to get your message across.

# THE RULE OF FIVE

## Five things to do: Rehearse

- When rehearsing before a live being, eliminate your overview and summary slide. Find out what they found interesting, memorable, confusing. Have them list what they thought was most important! Did they get your message?
- Test all your equipment in advance of the presentation.
- Rehearse using as much or all of the tools you plan use during the real thing.
- Have a backup plan: What if your projector dies, computer crashes, slide tray still on the plane. What is plan B. (And did you practice it?)
- Introduction, Objective, Overview, Presentation, Summary (Conclusion)

## Five things for your audience to do

- Stay awake – or better enthuse the audience.
- Receive the information they seek.
- Get your message.
- Take away supporting materials that help them disseminate the information you presented.
- Act on your information.

## Five things to do when you are done

- Thank them!
- Make materials available
- Make yourself available
- Provide them with a method of reaching you
- Get feedback -- Find out what they thought of you, what they learned, what they were hoping to learn but didn't, how you can improve your presentation.

## Five other things you could be doing now instead of reading this (don't think you can get away this easily)

- Study other people's presentations and learn.
- Start working on your next presentation
- Review your last presentation, analyse it based on what you have learned, and figure out how it can be improved.
- Link to an on-line bookstore and buy a book on better presentations.
- Get to know your subject better.