A PRESENTATION: It’s all about engagement

Like every communication, a presentation is driven by the motivation to engage others. So, who’s the target audience? It’s easy to respond, everyone. But, if everyone is the target audience, then no one is. Do you think Target markets to everyone? No, they target a specific people. To make your communication more powerful, you should too. You may recall that presidential candidate Howard Dean made the mistake of targeting the wrong audience. His screaming at a local audience celebrating his Iowa win became the “Scream Speech” heard 644 times on CNN. Targeting the wrong audience can undermine your ability to influence others. The target audience may not even be present! The challenge is to design your presentation to impact the target audience’s through social networking. Remember the goal is engagement.

A PRESENTATION CREATES A STORY: Using perceptual images to drive people to action

Powerful communicators concentrate on images they want others to value and remember. They use this imagery to create a compelling story that drives people to action. Avoid using the narrative, we are experts! Author James Surowiecki points out that experts have an inability to know when they are wrong.

Narratives shape the influence of your presentation. Stephen Kosslyn, chair of Harvard’s psychology department, proposes that neurological research on imagery reveals three goals for a presentation: (1) connect with your audience, (2) direct and hold their attention, and (3) promote understanding and memory. Add a forth goal that is inherent in these three -- (4) drive people to action.

You should list the key concepts and the perceptual images that give impact to these concepts during Step (1) Researching and Brainstorming. Don’t fall prey to your bias. This typically results in you undervaluing the importance of brainstorming. Use brainstorming to challenge your views.

It’s all about the story. Remember that words are not a medium, but they are objects and susceptible to the same perceptual process. We don’t think in words. It’s the perceptual images that make words have impacts as arguments.

ARGUMENT: Developing compelling imagery

Your communicative actions should enhance the wisdom of the participants. Your talking points should challenge others instead of impairing their engagement. Throughput is more important than input. In its bare essence, a compelling argument is a claim that is substantiated with an impact that drives people to action.
FOUR GOALS FOR BUSI 1200 PRESENTATION

(1) CONNECT WITH THE PARTICIPANTS
   • Who’s your target audience? Why?
   • What are their core values? How can you use these to develop your arguments/messages?
   • How can this presentation change your relationship with the professor? With students?

(2) DIRECT AND HOLD THEIR ATTENTION
   • How will the first few seconds of your presentation capture their attention?
   • Is your story’s organization capable of holding attention? Are you excited about retelling it? If not, instead of the organization working for you, it’s undermining your presentation.
   • Does the language incorporate business concepts in an interesting way?
   • Would the child in each of us pay attention? (Simplifying prevents stories from being boring.)

(3) PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND MEMORY
   • How does your narrative promote a better understanding?
   • What is the knowledge to be gained? Why should this be valued?
   • What are the three most memorable statements? Why? How do you build your story to emphasize these?
   • What question do you fear? Why? How do you respond to it?

(4) DRIVE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS TO ACTION
   • What is the opportunity? Why?
   • What is the specific action you want them to take? Why?
   • What emotional triggers motivate your participants to action?
   • What would be the most valued impact? What could be the worst consequence?
TEN STEPS TO A POWERFUL PRESENTATION — THE BACK-STORY

(1) BRAINSTORMING AND RESEARCHING
• Was this thorough enough? What was missed and why?
• What procedures would make this more effective?
• What was the most powerful emotional argument?

(2) IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
• Did these match your estimates?
• How did the participants’ reactions relate to these lists?

(3) CLASSIFYING PARTICIPANTS: THE FIVE POWER ARCHETYPES
• How did these groups affect the presentation?
• Did you convert reluctant persuadables? Any surprises? Why?
• Were any traders present and was the trade-off worth it?

(4) PRIORITIZING THE AUDIENCES
• Was the targeted group the most significant?
• What was the most compelling argument for them?

(5) WRITING SPEECH MATERIALS
• Any problems encountered?
• What was the weakest argument? How could it be made stronger?

(6) PRIMING PARTICIPANTS AND THE SOCIAL NETWORK
• How extensive and effective was priming?
• Which participants were receptive to priming?

(7) PRACTICING THE SPEECH
• How could you make practicing more effective?
• Which specific skills improved?

(8) RESPONDING IN REAL-TIME
• How interactive was the speech?
• Did you feel that you engaged others?
• What was the feedback and what actions did participants take?

(9) SPINNING THE KEY ISSUES
• How did networking affect the original issues?
• How could spin be done more effectively?

(10) DECONSTRUCTING THE SPEECH
• What discovery during this process surprised you?
• How can the arguments have more impact?
• How would you describe your anxiousness throughout the process?
Most people don’t think about how they breathe. Regrettably, poor breathing can result in anxiety or spiral anxiousness into an anxiety attack. People who speak multiple languages are rarely taught how to breathe a new language. They breathe one language while speaking another. Even people who speak only one language sometimes never learn how to breathe that language.

Posture affects your breathing. The image to the left illustrates a high chin position. This is not atypical. It probably occurs in about 25-35% of BUSI 1200 students. If your head is higher than its natural position (see distractions handout), you probably have shallow breathing. You can check this by testing how long you can speak after an initial breath. Pinch your nose closed to eliminate breathing through your nose. If you need to breathe after four to five words, you probably have shallow breathing.

Ineffective breathing undercuts the power of your voicing. It also increases the likelihood of anxiety. In the following paragraph, // equals a short breath, /// requires a medium breath while //// demands a long breath. Check to see if you breathe at these locations.

Like every communication, // a presentation is driven by the motivation to engage others. /// So, who’s the target audience? // It’s easy to respond, // everyone. /// But, if everyone is the target audience, // then no one is. /// Do you think Target markets to everyone? /// No, // they target specific people. ///
To make your communication more powerful, // you should too. ///

These breathing locations serve as change points for other communication actions (eye engagement, gesturing, movement). Typically, presenters who breathe primarily through their nose have ineffective eye behavior since they do not breathe at these locations. If your speech rate is fast or your eye gaze is not directed at participants, poor breathing may be creating these problems. Communication movements should be coordinated with your voicing. Think of your voice as the energy driving all of your communicative actions. Effective breathing begins with a natural posture. The posture illustrated below provides for better inhalation and exhalation. It also increases the likelihood of eye engagement and gesturing.
COMMUNICATION DISTRACTIONS AND TECHNIQUES

Distractions of Eye Engagement
- Eye avoidance (target three images or objects reinforcing engagement)
- Averted eye gaze (You, you, you exercise to reinforce eye gaze direction)
- Fleeting, prolonged, and erratic eye behaviour (use hand game to lengthen or shorten gaze)
- Restricted eye engagement (mark manuscript to identify change points)
- Dissynchronization between eye behavior and head position (use post-it notes on glasses)
- Dissynchronization between gaze direction and gestures (You, you, you or 5-word speech)

Distractions of Gestures and Movement
- Ineffective stance (practice landing a jump)
- Contrived posture (practice landing a jump; check secondary movements after landing)
- Awkward sitting positions (change placement of feet on floor, be aware of hand positions on table)
- Head movements (use exercise in eye engagement to alter these distractions)
- Distracting arm positions or movements (use airplane exercise and slowly drop hands)
- Movement and microphones (be aware of microphone position in relationship to your movement)

Vocal Distractions
- Ineffective volume (use children’s books to manipulate volume; mark manuscript during practices)
- Restricted mouth shape and jaw movement (use lollipops to coordinate tongue/lips)
- Ineffective breathing (mark breathing locations; lean against wall to alter breathing posture)
- Contorted posture (use landing a jump to alter posture and vocal qualities)
- Observable tongue movements (place finger/lollipop tip between teeth to limit movement outward)
- Rhythmic patterns (alter breathing pattern; mark manuscript to change rate; alter wording)
- Transitional sounds (use lollipop and pauses to eliminate; remember that some are natural)
- Accents and dialects (use lollipops to make sure that these do not distract; shorten elongation)

Distractions of Facial Actions
- Substituting mannerisms for emotion (work on stronger voicing and gesturing; see above)
- Blushing (wear clothing that blends with red to minimize outward observation if any)
- Acting/over-excited facial expressions (check performance posture)
- Restricted emotional expressions (use children’s books; repeat an argument 3x alter its emotion)
- Dissynchronization between emotional message and facial expressions
- Dissynchronization between emotion and gestures
  (All dissynchronizations are eliminated by coordinating actions; emphasize one action to the extreme to check how other actions are coordinated; typically speakers who have these distractions are not acting so any exaggeration will probably display a normal and genuine range of emotions.)

Note about Distractions: A powerful speaker can exhibit distractions, but they may not interfer with the outcome of the speech because the speaker’s other actions are engaging.

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FOUR GOALS FOR A PRESENTATION

(1) CONNECT WITH THE PARTICIPANTS
(2) DIRECT AND HOLD THEIR ATTENTION
(3) PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND MEMORY
(4) DRIVE PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR SOCIAL NETWORK TO ACTION

POWERPOINT AS ARGUMENT: It’s all about engagement

PowerPoint imagery is driven by the motivation to engage others in order to drive them to action. So, who are you trying to drive to action? Who’s the target audience? Is it the professor or the other students? It’s easy to respond, everyone. But, if everyone is the target audience, then no one is. Do you think the corporation Target markets to everyone? No, they target a specific audience. To make your communication more powerful, you should too. Targeting the wrong people can undermine your ability to influence others. Plus, this misfocus impairs the communication flow to the target audience’s social networks. Remember the goal is driving people to action through engagement.

POWERPOINT CREATES A STORY: Using perceptual images to drive people to action

Like a comic book, a frame (slide) should direct and hold the attention of your participants. Before, you begin to construct the frames of your story, you need to brainstorm and research the appropriate key concepts, and the perceptual images that give impact to these concepts. Powerful communicators concentrate on images they want others to value and remember. They use this imagery to create a compelling story that drives people to action. It’s all about the story. Remember that words are not a medium, but they are objects and susceptible to the same perceptual process. We don’t think in words. It’s the perceptual images that make words have impacts as arguments.

Unfortunately, most presenters use PowerPoint as note cards. Because participants are not being engaged, the opportunity to influence others depends on factors other than the presentation. A presenter that uses this approach replaces their original story with the following arguments: “I’m not prepared” or “I really don’t care to engage you.” Likewise, emphasizing newly discovered PowerPoint techniques can undermine desired outcomes.

ARGUMENT: Developing a compelling image

Stephen Kosslyn, Chair of Harvard’s Department of Psychology, argues that most PowerPoint presentations fail because they ignore the fundamental characteristics of how we perceive, remember, and comprehend information. Kosslyn’s book Clear and to the Point: 8 Psychological Principles for Compelling PowerPoint Presentations (2007) provides insights into designing powerful imagery. Kosslyn summarizes these principles into four rules:

1. THE GOLDILOCKS RULE: Present the right amount of information. Too much information overwhelms, while too little won’t get your point across.
2. THE RUDOLPH RULE: Focus the participant’s attention to the important arguments. Circle them in red or use a different color font to highlight them. Our brains are wired to notice differences.
3. THE RULE OF FOUR: Limit visual images to four items at one time. Our brains have limited capacity to process more than four visual items.
4. THE BIRDS OF A FEATHER RULE: Use shape, proximity, or color to link items together. Our brains are great pattern finders.
PowerPoint Submissions (If not attending a workshop)

Students not attending a workshop, may send a PowerPoint for review to the coblab@ecu.edu. Please send a PC file 48 hours in advance of your presentation. The 48 hours begin M-F (8am to 5pm). If you send you document at 5:01pm on Friday, the clock starts at 8am on Monday.

Workshops

Each workshop will last 60 minutes. The 31 F2F workshops are held in 3015 Bate while the DE workshops will use Saba meeting. A workshop consists of you practicing the presentation while being coached. Please have your PowerPoint available on a flash drive. No files will be downloaded for the F2F workshops due to time restrictions. If eight students download their files, the workshop can be reduced by 12-16 minutes. Acknowledgement of participation in the workshops will be sent to your professor with preparation being marked as “prepared” or “not prepared.”

Registration Steps

1. Select two choices from the dates/times listed below; rank them #1. And #2. The e-mail content should only contain this list to expedite setting up the workshops. No salutation or greeting is required for this email.

2. E-mail bcc@ecu.edu with the subject heading BUSI 1200

3. Send your PowerPoint 48 hours prior to the workshop to coblab@ecu.edu. The file must be sent as a PC PowerPoint file. Please label the e-mail BUSI 1200. Sending the file guarantees your participation in the workshop. If a file is not received within 48 hours of the requested workshop, your registration will be cancelled.

Dates and times

**DE (DAVIS) Jan 26, 27, and 28 and February 25 and 29 at 7pm via Saba Meeting**

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Confirmation

Your reviewed document is final confirmation of participation in the workshop. The Lab will review and return your document within 48 hours within a business week submission (M-F: 8:00am to 5Pm). If you do not receive a review, please contact bcc@ecu.edu.