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Managing Presentational Skills in the Workplace

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the importance of language in presenting your message.
- Recognize the effects of vocal delivery and bodily delivery.
- Identify and apply the four methods of delivery.
- Develop and use visual aids effectively in making presentations.

Make sure you have finished speaking before your audience has finished listening.

DOROTHY SARNOFF

Explaining the importance of **presentational skills** in speaking is a bit like explaining the importance of presenting food attractively on the plate. In each case, paying attention to matters of style and delivery will make the content entirely more palatable, even pleasing.

Many organizations today have made a strategic commitment to improving the quality of presentations. These organizations are not content with tired, worn-out speeches and all-too-familiar jokes. Rather, they expect their members to be experienced and dynamic speakers, capable of communicating in a range of situations. Your challenge, therefore, is to master the skills that will allow you to be one of those speakers.

ELEMENTS OF LANGUAGE STYLE

Language is the chief means by which ideas are communicated. Thus, learning about **language style**—that is, choices of words and structures—will enhance your ability to communicate ideas more effectively. One essential element of language style is vividness.

KEY TERMS

presentational skills (p. 229)
 language style (p. 229)
 vividness (p. 230)
 clarity (p. 231)
 relational language (p. 233)
 connotation (p. 233)
 denotation (p. 233)
 delivery (p. 234)
 vocal delivery (p. 234)
 bodily delivery (p. 235)
 manuscript delivery (p. 236)
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 keyword speaking outline (p. 238)
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Vividness

Your language needs to be alive, brilliant, and colorful. It needs to be compelling. It needs to move people and shake them up. You can create **vividness** by choosing words that give the feeling of movement and excitement.

BEING COLORFUL Through the use of colorful language, you can paint pictures for your audiences that evoke mental and emotional images. For example, in describing a car *going* down the street, saying that it is *careening* down the street or *creeping* down the street lends important detail and makes the message more dynamic as well. Moreover, using the word *careening* or *creeping* also adds *alliteration*—that is, repeating consonant sounds in successive words. Similarly, using colorful words creates more dynamic descriptions. Saying that people were *madly dashing through the pelting rain* sounds more alive and exciting than saying they were *walking through the rain*.

Of course, in business and professional communication, you need to strike a balance between facts and descriptions of those facts. In some situations, you have to use specific words to make an informative or technical point. Yet in other situations, providing vivid descriptions of data and procedures will help you encourage understanding and motivate change. Case 11.1

Case 11.1

Improving upon “Dry” Language

Read this excerpt from an actual technical report:

Inventory control analysis reveals excessive flow-through processing time. From purchase to point of sale, the inventory holding time is eight weeks. The warehousing costs along with this slow turnover rate cost an estimated \$200,000 per year in unnecessary delays and expenses. Change of the process is in order.

When this report came across the desk of the company’s chief executive officer (CEO), he was concerned. While it stated important facts about the company’s inventory control issues, it was overly technical for a speech he needed to make. Given the broad audience of community members and line employees to which the speech would be presented, this was not acceptable.

The CEO took out his pen and revised the report, still providing the factual information but adding this message:

I know we have great intentions. All the same, we are holding our products too long before we sell them in the stores. Without realizing it, we are hoarding precious produce, stealing opportunities from hungry customers who beg to see our latest designs. Unless we change, we inadvertently risk gobbling up slices of our future bonus pie.

Thus, the CEO livened up the original report by discussing the issue in terms of *we* and by using a metaphor that likened the company’s products to produce, or food. Both strategies helped make the report more accessible to its broad audience, especially the less technically oriented members. This motivated employees to make a rapid turnaround in procedures.

What likely would have resulted if the report had been distributed in its original form? Would most audience members have understood the facts of the situation? Would most have understood the need for change? Why or why not?

presents a situation in which some overly “dry” technical language was made more vivid and led to these very results.

USING METAPHORS As illustrated in Case 11.1, the use of a metaphor is another way to make language more vivid. Put simply, a *metaphor* describes one thing by comparing it to another. For example, you could describe a problem by using the metaphor of *troubled waters*, and you could describe continued difficulty as being in a *black hole*. Obviously, your intended meaning is not literal in either case; rather, you are suggesting an image or a likeness. Metaphors are therefore considered *figures of speech* or *figurative uses of language*.

Metaphors can be found throughout business and professional communication. Consider the numerous sports comparisons—such as *step up to the plate* and *hit a home run*—that are used to refer to taking responsibility and achieving successful outcomes. Water metaphors also are popular—the *dam has broken*, *the tide has turned*, and *we’re up a creek without a paddle*. You can heighten your skills in this area with practice by turning ordinary objects and events into colorful metaphors.

USING NARRATIVES Telling *narratives*, or stories, is also an outstanding approach to today’s speaking. While stories not only make a vivid point, stories convey much more. They tell cases, they illustrate, they connect feelings not just facts. Case 11.2 shows how one company president used a familiar story about a starfish to encourage her employees.

Clarity

Another element of language style is **clarity**, or making sure that your audience comprehends what you are saying. Sometimes, clarity is best achieved by being direct. Other times, it is best achieved by scaling down your language and using simple rather than complex words. Consider how to be direct, use simple words, and use concrete words.

BEING DIRECT Avoid using a lot of words when a few words will do. Look at these three ways of saying the same thing:

EXAMPLES

Indirect: “In clinical trials and in-depth laboratory research, organic compounds, such as the highly saturated hydrogen/carbon mixture based in the gelatinous context derived in the bottled samples here, aerobic substances are known to cause bacterial decay, especially when confronted with an oxygenated environment in post threshold heated conditions, lead to ultimate product demise.”

More direct: “Because of the oil content in mayonnaise, it should be refrigerated after opening the container.”

Even more direct: “Refrigerate after opening.”

USING SIMPLE WORDS An unwieldy application of opulent language sows adulterated seeds of confusion by not eschewing obfuscation. Ouch! Put more simply, using unfamiliar language is confusing. This doesn’t mean you should never use esoteric words. Just use them wisely. For example, the judicious use of words such as *loquacious* and *obtuse* may convey precision and stimulate your audience. But too much rich language can be confusing and even seem arrogant, depending on the situation. For the most part, clarity is achieved through simple, direct language.

Case 11.2

Creating Effective Narratives

The president of a midsized company planned to introduce a new volunteer program to her employees at the company's annual awards dinner. Here's the message she started with:

Here at and Company, we have a commitment to helping not only each other but others in our community. The company's record is one of corporate community reaching out to the large community. I know you will all become involved in the upcoming community events.

The president realized her message was dull and dry and that it would hardly inspire anyone to get involved. After thinking about several ways of making her message more vivid, she decided to add a narrative. Here's the revised message:

We at Clark and Company have always believed in reaching out to our community. We may find that frustrating, at times, when we work hard and don't see the results. But let us remember the old story of a lone man walking on a beach that's covered with tens of thousands of starfish. Washed ashore by the tide, the fish were stranded and dying by the minute. The man picked up one starfish and tossed it back into the sea, and then he tossed another and another as he made his way down the beach. A passerby expressed puzzlement and asked, "How can you possibly do any good by throwing only a few starfish back, when you can see the beach is covered with them for miles? How can it make a difference?" Tossing back yet another starfish, the man replied, "It makes a difference to this one."

The company president's speech was so compelling that her employees eagerly signed up for the new volunteer program. They also came away from the event with a renewed sense of satisfaction in their company and its president.

Can you think of a narrative that relates a similar message about getting involved or making a difference? You might want to be on the lookout for such stories in the newspaper, on television, and in religious and inspirational materials for use in some future presentation of your own.

USING CONCRETE WORDS A third way to achieve clarity is to use *concrete words* (which evoke a sense of touch, sound, smell, sight, or taste) instead of *abstract words* (which are more theoretical and conceptual). To illustrate concrete language, think of different ways to say the word "automobile":

EXAMPLES

Somewhat concrete: "car"

More concrete: "Ford"

Very concrete: "1967 red vintage Ford Mustang with a white interior and a 289 engine with a three-speed transmission on the floor"

Thus, the more concrete your language, the more vivid the mental image you create.

BALANCING THE USE OF TECHNICAL LANGUAGE As mentioned earlier, the use of technical language, such as jargon and terminology, is necessary in some instances. If you are knowledgeable in a technical area, you may be tempted to assume that your listeners are knowledgeable as well. Making that assumption may often be justified, but it's not necessarily safe. Many audiences, even from within the same organization, are clueless when it comes to the meaning of certain technical language.

This poses a dilemma for many professionals. On one hand, if they avoid using technical words, they might seem to be talking down to the audience and thus appear condescending and childish. On the other hand, if they give the audience too much credit for technical expertise, they might overestimate the audience's understanding and fail to communicate the message.

The way out of this dilemma is to know your audience and then match your content and language to their understanding and expectations (see Chapter 10 on audience analysis). In a mixed audience—say, one comprised of technical-type employees and their managers (who may not have the same degree of technical expertise)—you should err on the less technical side in making word choices. Keep in mind that by using language that only you and a handful of audience members understand, you will likely defeat the purpose of your presentation (see Case 11.3).

Relational Language

Compared to written communication, spoken communication uses more **relational language**: words that link the speaker with the audience, such as *we* and *us* as opposed to *you*, *I*, and *them*. In applying relational language, you create common ground with your audience and heighten their perception of your credibility.

Look again at Case 11.1, the story of the CEO who livened up an otherwise dull report and motivated his employees to change. In addition to fine-tuning the language, he also avoided blaming anyone for the situation and made a remarkable use of relational language: nine relational words in a speech that lasted only twenty-five seconds!

Words Have Feeling in Their Meaning

Words can have two kinds of meanings: **connotation** refers to the meanings that words suggest, and **denotation** refers to the meanings of words in the dictionary. To illustrate, what's the difference between the words *house* and *home*? Most of us think of a *house* as a physical structure (a denotation) and a *home* as a place where loved ones live together (a connotation).

Case 11.3

Talking in Code

In a budget meeting of the deans and vice presidents of a university, the chief financial officer (CFO) and the dean of the business school became engaged in a high-level conversation about budget forecasting and its long-term implications for the university. Unfortunately, the language they used was accounting code—full of jargon and abbreviations—and thus made no sense to the rest of the attendees. They needed to hear these concepts discussed in common terms in order to understand them.

Have you ever participated in a meeting like this or perhaps attended a class or lecture in which the language used was way over your head? What can you do in such a situation? How can you recognize that this is happening in making your own presentations?

Connotative words are wrapped in an emotion, which means their use can trigger certain responses. For example, words like *freak*, *pothead*, *motorcycle jockey*, and *nerd* all have emotionally charged meanings. Before you use words like these, consider what they will mean to your audience as well as to your topic. Will they create the impression you intend to create? You can avoid slipups in using connotative words by jotting down the preferred words on your speaking outline.

Words and phrases can also have connotations unique to an organization or company. Every organization has a vocabulary that conveys so-called shorthand concepts. Such a telegraphic system of communication certainly is efficient, if everyone understands it. Many managers are surprised, however, to learn how often this shorthand evokes emotional responses among young employees, those with limited experience in the organization, and those who have been marginalized to some extent by the organization. In these cases, certain words and phrases can enflame, not clarify. For example, one organization (not the real name) stated its mission in the slogan "XYZ in the world, making the XYZ difference." Unknown to the leadership, employees sarcastically interpreted the slogan as "The XYZ difference: No holidays, low pay, and downsize the organization at all cost."

ELEMENTS OF DELIVERY

After you have carefully crafted your language style, your next step is to craft your delivery. **Delivery** is "the use of vocal qualities and bodily qualities to create meaning in a message." Vocal qualities refer to things like pitch, rate, and volume. Bodily qualities refer to things like eye contact, facial expression, gesturing, and stance. Upon fitting these qualities to your message and the occasion, you will command attention and improve understanding.

Vocal Delivery

What makes **vocal delivery** effective? In general, success can be stated in a single principle: vary your use of vocal qualities throughout your presentation. More specifically, apply this principle to your use of pitch, rate, and volume:

1. **Pitch.** Vocal pitch refers to how high or low your voice is in terms of tone. It is the up-and-down modulation of the voice. To vary your pitch while speaking, think of gradually working back and forth between high points and low points. You can also vary pitch more dramatically to provide emphasis on certain words and phrases. The worst thing you can do is to maintain a monotone pitch throughout your speech. Doing so suggests that your topic is not very important, and it may put your audience to sleep.
2. **Rate.** You can also vary your rate, or how quickly or slowly you speak. Try not to speak slowly all the time or quickly all the time. Rather, vary the rate to fit what you are saying. If you are making a point that does not demand great thought, you might speed through it. But if you want to give a point greater clarity, emphasis, or accent, slow down.
3. **Strategic pauses.** A strategic short pause can emphasize a point for emphasis. A caution is in order here: beginning speakers often pause too long and too often (usually at the end of each sentence). After awhile, the presentation is too predictably rising and falling followed by a long pause. Like any pattern in speaking, variation is needed to prevent boredom and to maintain attention.
4. **Volume.** How loudly or softly you speak should also be controlled for effectiveness. Again, don't do one or the other all the time. This will be tedious for the audience, and they will

lose interest. Create strategic changes, such as louder on some points and softer on others. A common mistake among professionals new to public speaking is to speak too softly too much of the time.

Bodily Delivery

As noted earlier, **bodily delivery** includes behaviors such as eye contact, facial expressions, and posture or stance. In the context of making presentations, the concern is with how these behaviors affect your audience's understanding of your message.

Discussions about what makes effective bodily delivery often center on the word *natural*. Unfortunately, what comes as *natural* may result in a negative effect, perhaps because it's too stilted or slow or lacks the vocal delivery variation discussed earlier. Think of *natural* as meaning "genuine" and "engaging." Even if you discover some bad habits, there is always room for improvement.

HARMONIZE BODILY DELIVERY WITH THE MESSAGE Business and professional communicators have learned that effective speakers use a combination of body stance, gestures, facial expression, and eye contact. When these nonverbal features align with the points of the speech, the resulting synchronization enhances interest in the verbal message.

Of course, gestures that are out of place or ill timed seem ludicrous. We have all seen comedians portray characters whose gestures are uncoordinated with their messages. In the same way, making artificial attempts to throw in gestures (because you thought that speakers are supposed to make gestures) will not serve a good purpose.

The importance of engaging in nonverbal behaviors goes far beyond our discussion here. The points you should take away from this discussion are that effective bodily delivery creates clarity, boosts rapport, builds trust, and conveys interest. Undeniably, the audience can perceive the speaker's attitude from the stance he or she takes and read the speaker's feelings of friendliness or apprehension from his or her facial expressions.

MATCHING BODILY DELIVERY TO THE TOPIC AND OCCASION Judging appropriateness is probably one of the most difficult aspects of delivering a presentation. There are no universal principles addressing this concept. Instead, you must rely on your own common sense and artistic ability to recognize what is expected by the audience, the occasion, and the purpose and what you need to do to perform effectively given these expectations.

If you have real questions about what is appropriate in a certain situation, then do some audience research. What do they typically expect? What has worked in the past, or better yet, find out what didn't work very well. You don't need to feel encumbered by tradition or occasion. At the same time, show respect and exercise good taste.

To check your own delivery style, including vocal and bodily elements, review the list of common mistakes in Skills at Work 11.1 on the next page. Review the suggestions, with an eye toward improving your own vocal and bodily delivery.

METHODS OF DELIVERY

The literature on speech communication identifies four primary methods of delivery: manuscript delivery, memorized delivery, impromptu delivery, and extemporaneous delivery.

SKILLS AT WORK 11.1

Common Delivery Mistakes

Review this list of common delivery mistakes. Which aspects of delivery do you need to work on?

1. **Relying on one kind of gesture.** Use a variety of gestures throughout your presentation. Become aware of movements you make repeatedly, perhaps out of nervousness.
2. **Using the same vocal characteristics.** Again, practice variety in your rate, volume, pitch, and pauses. Force change, if needed.
3. **Appearing unnatural or uncomfortable.** If your voice is strained, your gestures are forced, or you otherwise step beyond the bounds of your personality, your audience will sense it and your credibility will be diminished.
4. **Making random body movements.** Moving around too much or in erratic ways will distract your audience. Make your movements deliberate by focusing on some point of your message.
5. **Making random hand movements.** Again, making random movements will be distracting to the audience. In addition, speakers who pick at their ears, brush back their hair, put their hands in their pockets, and so on will be seen as nervous. Even worse, sophisticated audiences will find these habits annoying and judge the speaker as being poorly prepared and lacking in credibility.
6. **Looking at only one side of the audience.** Many successful speakers divide their audience into six or eight segments and maintain eye contact for one or two seconds with the segment that seems to have the friendliest, most involved members at that moment.
7. **Looking above the heads of the audience.** Looking at the walls, the floor, or the ceiling are obviously not desirable either. Again, keep direct eye contact with your audience members.
8. **Overusing pauses and making vocalized utterances.** Whereas pausing deliberately is an effective strategy, pausing too much or for too long with no legitimate purpose is a mistake. Filling these pauses with vocalized utterances—for instance, *uhh; umm; uh, you know, like cool; OK; all right; whatever*—only makes matters worse.
9. **Appearing stiff and stilted.** Don't cling to the podium and stand so straight as to appear stiff. Relax and reveal your energy and enthusiasm for your topic, your audience, and your occasion.
10. **Overgesturing to the point of distraction.** Don't let your gesturing get out of control. Practice gesturing and other elements of bodily delivery to make sure every movement connects with some point of your speech.
11. **Overrelying on notes or manuscript.** If you practice enough, these aids will become less necessary. And with experience, you will learn to glance at your notes or manuscript but not read from them.

Manuscript Delivery

In the **manuscript delivery** method, the speech is written out in its entirety and read aloud to the audience. The chief advantage of this method is that it ensures precise language use, which will be important if you must use specific vocabulary or want to avoid using certain connotative words. However, this advantage is overcome by these disadvantages:

1. This method can lessen spontaneous insights, which can at times be more effective than what you prepared.

2. It is difficult to take in and respond to feedback when you are reading from a manuscript.
3. You may come across as being wooden and stiff in terms of your bodily delivery, and you may sound unnatural and mechanical in terms of your vocal delivery. Many audience members perceive a lack of confidence and enthusiasm when they hear someone read a speech. Of course, alternatively, you can read with dynamism.
4. Delivering a manuscript speech may inhibit your movements and gestures, lessening the effectiveness of the speech.

For the most part, the manuscript method limits the delivery. If you need a manuscript, then be sure to practice with significant delivery enhancements like eye contact, vocal variety, or enthusiasm. Obviously, at times you need this method in which a word-for-word, exactly worded message is demanded. Such a situation might include delivering a technical report or giving a legal opinion, in which a miscommunication could have severe consequences. In cases like this, you may want to have a reviewer for your speech in order to recommend the best possible wording.

Memorized Delivery

A **memorized delivery** is similar to a manuscript delivery in that the speech is written out, but the speaker commits the entire speech to memory. Again, being able to ensure exact language use is a clear advantage. More important, because the speech has been memorized, this method allows the opportunity for movement and thus full use of bodily delivery options. With memorization, the speaker can concentrate more on delivery and less on content.

The disadvantages to the memorized method are as follows:

1. Again, there can be a lack of flexibility and spontaneity in terms of content and delivery.
2. If you recognize audience feedback, you may not respond as effectively because essentially you are reciting.
3. If you lose your place in your speech, you will be embarrassed and probably find it difficult to get back on track without missing a cue or eliminating information.

Impromptu Delivery

The **impromptu delivery** method involves speaking without any specific preparation. In short, someone calls you to stand up to speak without preparation. Some occasions necessitate speaking in this way—for example, the boss calls on you in a meeting, or you have an opportunity to present an idea in an elevator speech. The primary advantage of this method is its spontaneity, and that is the primary disadvantage as well. Most impromptu speakers ramble, using too many words and providing too few details to make the presentation worthwhile.

The more speaking you do, the better you will likely become at impromptu delivery. With time and experience, it can become a useful art. However, for most presentations the benefits of preparation are with question.

Extemporaneous Delivery

Extemporaneous delivery refers to speaking from notes or an outline that contains key words, phrases, and ideas. Without a doubt, this type of speech is well prepared. A great deal of research occurs; the material is tailored to the audience; elements of language use and delivery have been considered. While the order in which you intend to make your points has been set, the exact wording has not. Much of the final wording will be practiced in advance but will be delivered spontaneously.



Using extemporaneous delivery allows the speaker to practice and use few notes. This approach allows greater eye contact, opportunity for improved gestures, and an audience response to your confidence and sincerity.

Extemporaneous speaking has several advantages. For instance, you can evaluate and respond to audience feedback as you go. In addition, you can look and sound more natural. You can be less inhibited in using nonverbal behaviors, and your language can be more creative and vivid at the moment of utterance.

Together, these advantages underscore speaker credibility. In contrast, lacking these qualities can undermine credibility. As Dr. Larry Winn (2006) has stated, “A speech is not an essay with legs.” For example, during the 2000 presidential campaign, candidate Al Gore was frequently criticized for his stiff, synthetic-sounding delivery, despite his clear grasp of content. While former president George W. Bush’s made many speaking mistakes, one occasion stands out as a classic speech moment, in which he demonstrated the advantages of an extemporaneous delivery. During his prepared comments addressing the emergency rescue workers two days after the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York, amidst a tangled web of debris, he rose on a makeshift platform to encourage rescue workers. His beginning was an awkward manuscript-type moment, but within a few minutes into the speech, members of the large audience yelled, “We can’t hear you.” Without hesitation, Bush grabbed a nearby bullhorn and with his hand on a shoulder of a rescue worker retorted, “Well, I can hear you.” He used this feedback opportunity to realign his presentation into a memorable extemporaneous delivery and an effective speech of hope.

Extemporaneous speaking is not without disadvantages. One is that you may not utter the exact word or phrase you had planned to in making a special point. In addition, your speech may lack verbal economy. With careful planning—such as making notes of keywords and plans for verbal vigor—you can overcome these disadvantages. In general, the advantages that come from being spontaneous and yet prepared win out.

Check your skills as an extemporaneous speaker by reviewing the guidelines in Skills at Work 11.2.

KEYWORD SPEAKING OUTLINE In planning your extemporaneous speech, create a **keyword speaking outline**, and then use it to guide your delivery. Figure 11.1 is an example of such an outline, which guided the speaker through a presentation on workplace safety. So that you can experience what the speaker said while speaking extemporaneously from this outline, here is the text of the introduction:

When Hoover Dam was built so many decades ago, some fifty men were killed. Unsafe cliff-scaling equipment, lack of safety procedures during cement mixing, and

SKILLS AT WORK 11.2

Guidelines for Extemporaneous Delivery

Experienced and novice speakers alike will find this list of guidelines useful. Use it to evaluate your skills in extemporaneous speaking.

1. Memorize the first two or three lines of your introduction so as not to forget what you were going to say and start out badly.
2. Write on your notes or outline key words and phrases that will lend vividness and clarity to specific points in your speech.
3. While you can be flexible in your choice of words and presentation of details, keep the main points of your speech in order so that you do not become lost or confused.
4. Write out your conclusion or at least some of the significant words and phrases you would like to use. Doing so will help you acknowledge when you arrive at this point of your presentation, preventing you from making a weak finish or just stopping.
5. Keep your notes to a minimum, using key words and phrases but not writing out a detailed text. Practice to the point that you can glance down at your outline or notes but not depend on them to know where you are.
6. Relax! Consider extemporaneous speaking is a kind of heightened conversation with your audience. Think of them as your friends. Think of them as happy and excited about your message. Be glad that you are there, and approach this occasion with confidence and enthusiasm.

an overzealous schedule led to death during those Depression years. Our sophisticated safety techniques today far outdistance the flirtations with disaster of the 1930s construction. Or are we so removed?

Just two weeks ago, the horrible news that Will Roper lost two fingers in the unit 2's press made those yesteryear stories come alive again. The report that followed showed how we have neglected the primary directive of safety for our employees.

Thus, we stand today, ready to turn around unsafe practices, outdated equipment, and policies that all too swiftly push us to act without hesitation for each person's protection. To better understand our company's safety problems, let's first review our industry's most common safety problems, and then our company's safety issues. Finally, let's turn to solutions and actions that will make us competitive yet the safest organization in the business.

In reading through Figure 11.1, the keyword outline on the next page, you'll see that the entire speech contains some jargon (that is, "AMA and CDC of 2004") that refers to reports by industry sources. You'll notice, too, that the key points in the body of the speech are connected by transitions, internal reviews, and previews, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Finally, in the conclusion, the speech calls for solutions, personal motivation, and action and comes to a strong close with a quote that links new ways with a better future.

PRESENTATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

A vital part of making public presentations, especially those that present informative and technical material, is to incorporate visually appealing support materials. Today, leaders in business and the professions expect quality **visual communication tools** as an expectation of presentations.

Introduction

Story about Hoover Dam

Link story with company's last safety problem

Transition and preview of key points

- I. Most common safety problems
- II. Problems unique to our company
- III. Remedies over the years

["Let's start . . ."]

Body

- I. Most common safety problems
 - A. Causes: stress, budget, ignorance of issues
 - 1. Examples: 98 William's CD Ency.-100
 - 2. Case study: Michigan's Pontiac Plant

[Transition]

- B. Symptoms are familiar
 - 1. Employee avoidance
 - 2. Managers ignore: Mang. Comm. Qrtly. 2002
 - 3. Budgets reduced: U.S. News, October, 2003
 - 4. Problems persist anyway

[Internal summary and preview]

- II. Problems unique to our company
 - A. Contagious
 - B. Problem: McNiece report of 2001
 - C. Instances: Omar Hendley, Virginia, 6 yrs.
 - D. Examples: Equipment

[Internal summary]

[Transition and preview]

- III. Remedies over the years
 - A. Olden times: Online journal Business
 - B. Current approaches best: AMA and CDC (2004)
 - 1. Analysis
 - 2. Action plan
 - 3. Implementation
 - 4. Follow-up

["In short . . ."]

Conclusion

Summary: Problems are many but solutions are available now

Motivation: How can we count on you? It is in your best interest [Explain]

Strong close: As Von Goethe once said, "Nothing is more damaging to a new truth than an old error." We urge you to act now with new truths.

FIGURE 11.1 Keyword Speaking Outline

Many technologies can help us achieve the goals of competent knowledge transfer, while we still preserve dynamic personal delivery.

Integrating Presentational Skills with Presentation Technology

To illustrate what this involves, consider the following scenario, which opens an incisive article by Diane Porter (2001), associate editor of *Presentations* (a journal devoted to improving speech and technology presentational efforts):

You are called into your boss's office late one Friday afternoon. He clears his throat, looks you straight in the eye and says, "I need you to present our quarterly sales figures to the board of directors on Monday morning." What do you do? Turn white? Pass out? Smile confidently and start thinking about what you want inscribed on your gravestone?

Chances are, how you react to this scenario will depend on your experience and training as a speaker. In fact, many students and even experienced professionals have never learned good public-speaking skills and have rarely stood before an audience. Furthermore, many of these individuals have not experienced the benefits that come from the intelligent use of presentation technology.

The lack of communication training is known among experts in education and business. Porter echoes this sentiment:

Companies hire people who can do the jobs they need done. Today, it is almost a necessity to have excellent public speaking skills and training to presentation technology. That's because the corporate world has learned that communication—with customers, clients, and business partners—is one of the most important things executives and employees should know how to do well. Most companies would prefer that their neophytes make their most fundamental mistakes in a classroom setting rather than in the field, where money and sales are on the line.

Porter also argues, however, that college graduates today are expected to have strong business skills in addition to strong communication skills.

In response, colleges and universities have refocused their efforts on offering communication courses that prepare students for careers in business and the professions. The communication skills deemed important also include the presentational technology tools available to us today. Basically, we want to be able to integrate technology tools such as social media, mobile learning, distance conferencing, PowerPoint, and instant texting or surveys with a mix of speaking skills using powerful language and delivery.

From a theory standpoint, we can identify two types of media (Timmerman, 2002):

- *Rich media* are able to transmit multiple messages, have a degree of personal focus, and use natural language; voice mail is a good example of this medium. Mobile learning that offers instant feedback and text dialogue opportunities illustrates, too.
- *Lean media* do not provide immediate feedback and do not explicitly indicate the recipient of the message; Web sources illustrate these media.

Basically, media selection correlates with the nature of the task: simple tasks can use lean media whereas complex tasks demand rich media.

The point is that we integrate lean and rich media, technology communication, and face-to-face speaking in ways to capture all advantages. Essentially, when we combine effective speech with good visualization techniques, we are in fact using a rich medium. The advantages, as Timmerman states, include a personal focus of hearing with the benefits of learning by seeing.

Communicating When Using Technology

One low-tech type of presentation—meeting and presenting interpersonally—is a very important one. In the absence of technology and visual materials, the speaker's delivery becomes the vehicle for transmitting ideas and supporting them with solid data and logic. However, this part of the book identifies how to use some of the tools. Sometimes, the simple ideas, like flipcharts, sticky posters on the wall, are very effective for trainers and professional consultants along with higher technology instruments. So, you might balance all these strategies and you read further (Munter, 1998; Charney & Conway, 1998; Porter, 2001).

USING FLIPCHARTS, POSTERS, AND NONELECTRONIC BOARDS Flipcharts, posters, chalkboards, and whiteboards can be effective low-tech visual aids in some situations because of their nonthreatening, nonintimidating appearance. They are especially useful for recording key terms and central ideas. Moreover, they are inexpensive, and they can be easily moved to other locations or used in later sessions, such as brainstorming activities. When brainstorming, ideas can be recorded on posters or whiteboards to facilitate reinforcement and recall of the ideas generated.



While the use of presentation technology has its advantages, the power of having good presentational skills cannot be underestimated.

These visual aids have several disadvantages. It is difficult to illustrate complex images using these media, particularly at a size large enough for many audiences to see. In addition, posters and the like can be messy and thus unintelligible. As such, they may seem unprofessional and too low tech in certain settings.

To use these media well, follow these basic guidelines:

1. Ensure that the sizes of letters and figures are large enough for the audience to see and recognize without straining.
2. Make the lettering and figures neat and plain.
3. Avoid putting too much on a single poster or chart; as stated earlier, key terms and central ideas are appropriate.

To understand the significance of following these guidelines, compare Figures 11.2 and 11.3, which show the same information presented in a disorganized and an organized fashion, respectively.

USING HANDOUTS, OBJECTS, SOUNDS, AND MODELS Providing a handout can be a useful means of presenting a large amount of data and can also serve as a good memory aid to follow up a detailed report. Objects, too, can serve an important visual function by providing tangible

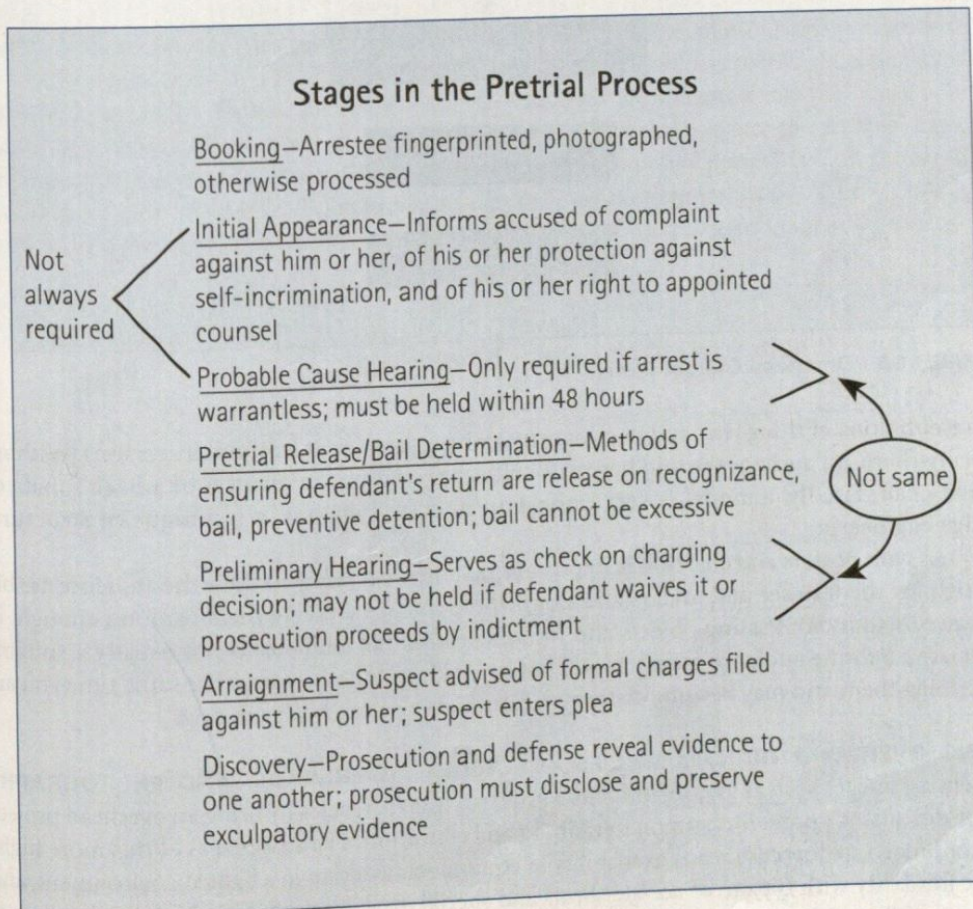


FIGURE 11.2 Disorganized Chart or Poster

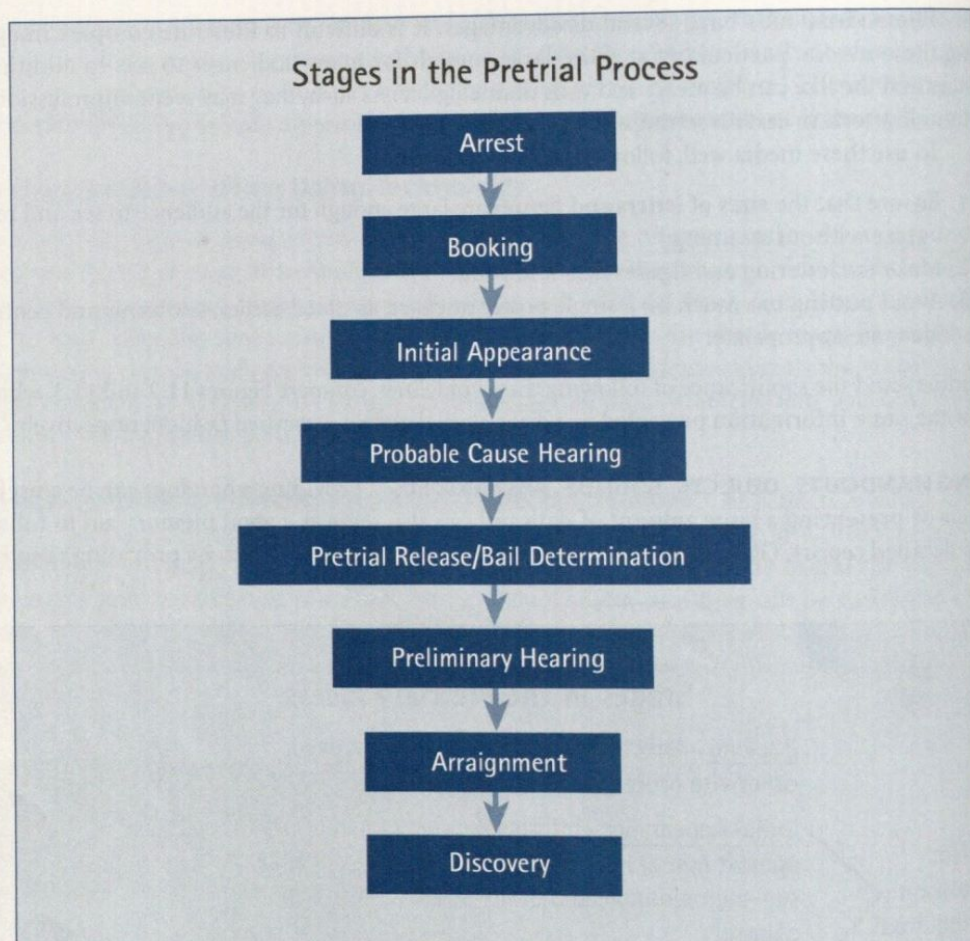


FIGURE 11.3 Organized Chart or Poster

representations of things the audience may never have seen (or at least not in person). Without hearing them, an audience would have difficulty appreciating the nuances of a Bach sonata or a bird's call. Finally, a model is very important in describing, say, a technique of structural bridge engineering.

As with posters and charts, it is important that the materials you show the audience are big enough for them to see and understand from where you are showing them (or loud enough, in the case of sounds). Passing objects and models around the audience is not usually a suitable alternative because audience members will not be looking at these items at the same time you are describing them and may become distracted. Handouts also can be distracting.

USING OVERHEAD TRANSPARENCIES, ELECTRONIC OVERHEADS, AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Presenting images such as graphs and photographs as transparencies by using an overhead projector or document imager is common in training and education. The advantages of this more high-tech approach are low cost, ready availability of equipment, working in a lighted environment, and some flexibility with the use of acetate sheets and special marking pens. The chief disadvantage is that depending on how well they are prepared, these visuals may appear unprofessional. This is an

increasing concern, given the prevalence and graphic capability of PowerPoint presentations, which we will turn to next.

However, to use overhead technology successfully, follow these suggestions:

1. Check all equipment ahead of time to ensure that it's working, that the lightbulbs are good, the screen is clean, power is available, and so on. Also give yourself some time to practice with the equipment just before your presentation.
2. In presenting text, use the 4 × 4 rule: No more than four lines per transparency and only four words per line. Furthermore, use a plain typeface in a size large enough for the audience to see, given the size and arrangement of the room.
3. In presenting graphics, ensure that the image is of suitable quality, whether it's been drawn or scanned. Once more, consider the room. As with text, don't put too much on a single transparency. One photo or graph per transparency is appropriate (see Figure 11.4).
4. During your presentation, avoid pointing to images and information using your finger; use a pointer or pencil.

USING POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS The visual tool used most frequently in training and increasingly in education is the **PowerPoint presentation**. Applied in classrooms, training centers, and within Web-based interactive programs and or educational programs (such as Blackboard or Moodle), this software is part of today's quality presentations and is expected.

The chief benefit of a PowerPoint presentation is that it provides excellent visual quality while allowing interaction. That is, the speaker and the audience can interact while the image is being shown. In addition, a PowerPoint presentation allows all the advantages of face-to-face speaking while facilitating the explanation of complex material. The audience will find it easy to follow the organization of the speech with a PowerPoint presentation, which will encourage memory. Finally, developing a PowerPoint presentation is creative and fun, especially with the use of good color and pictures.

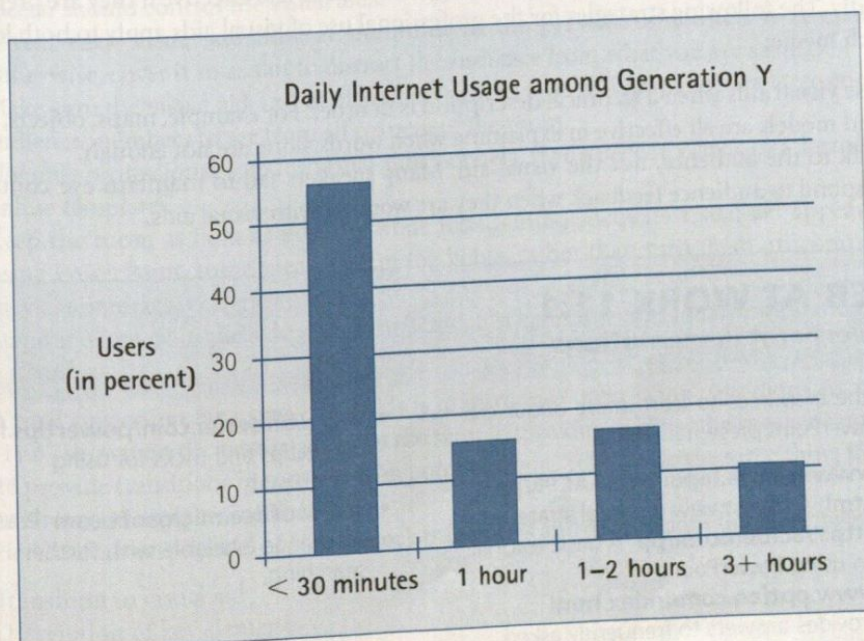


FIGURE 11.4 Slide Presenting a Graphic Source: Based on Pulley (2000).

The problems from the past, such as expensive equipment and projectors, have virtually been eliminated. Most trainers, for instance, pack their laptops and a lightweight projector on the airplane. About every classroom or training center has the necessary computers and tools. However, even with its popularity, it is surprising how many people make simple, correctable mistakes when using PowerPoint.

Practitioners suggest these basic rules for developing and presenting PowerPoint slides:

1. Use 40- to 44-point type for titles and 30- to 36-point type for headings. Avoid using type smaller than 32 point for anything.
2. Use less than eight lines of type per slide, unless there is a significant reason to include more. We still see extreme amounts of text in presentations—not only does that violate the idea behind using this tool, it leaves confusion for many audiences.
3. Choose background colors carefully. For instance, bright colors tend to wash out words and pictures.
4. Use appealing art and photos but avoid clutter or being too “busy” or “artsy” for business audiences.
5. Do not rely on your visual aids, no matter how wonderful they are. You are still the speaker.

For additional information about creating PowerPoint presentations, go online to the sources listed in Web at Work 11.1 as well as to Microsoft’s website or other providers for ideas on templates to make your preparation easier.

Figure 11.5 illustrates a PowerPoint graphic depicting a speech on adolescents, pointing out themes such as teens’ technology emphasis, values of optimism, appreciation of diversity, and personal uniqueness and savvy.

Communication Tips When Using Any Visual Aid

Despite the advantages of using visual technology, they can be less effective if they are prepared or used badly. The following strategies for the professional use of visual aids apply to both low- and high-tech media:

1. Use visual aids when a technical description is in order. For example, maps, objects, graphs, and models are all effective in explaining when words alone are not enough.
2. Talk to the audience, not the visual aid. Many speakers fail to maintain eye contact and respond to audience feedback when they are working with visual aids.

WEB AT WORK 11.1

PowerPoint Presentations

Go to these sources to learn more about creative PowerPoint presentations:

- www.science.iupui.edu/SAC98/ppt.html A robust view of visual strategy.
- <http://actden.com/pp> A basic tutorial on using PowerPoint.
- www.pptfaq.com/index.html Provides answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) about PowerPoint.
- www.bitbetter.com/powertips.htm Offers tips and tricks for using PowerPoint.
- www.office.microsoft.com Possible assistance available with further searching.

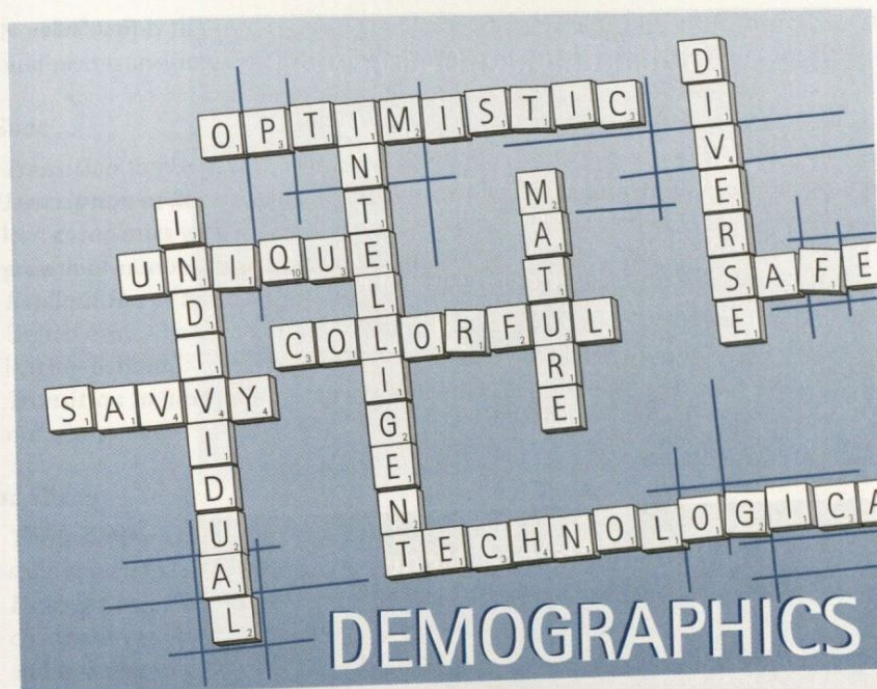


FIGURE 11.5 PowerPoint Graphic Source: Pulley (2000).

3. Stay in charge of the presentation. Do not let the visual aids control the speech; rather, the speech should control the visual aids.
4. Reveal each visual aid only at the point in the presentation when it is mentioned. Otherwise, cover it so as not to distract the audience from what you are saying.
5. Make sure the visual aid and its elements (such as type and graphics) are large enough for audience members to see from all corners of the room.
6. Use only professional-looking visual aids. Get help, if you need it. Check out the many great online templates.
7. Keep the room as light as possible while maintaining adequate visual aid appearance. In using PowerPoint, some speakers dim the lights, rather than turn them off completely, so they can interact with the audience.
8. Stand in front or to the side of the visual aid, not behind it. Similarly, don't stand in way of a visual.

A final suggestion for using visual aids is to introduce them using *transitions*. As you recall Figure 11.6 (shown on the next page) from the sample speaking outline, the speaker's notes show where to provide transitions in moving from point to point. You can do the same thing to indicate where to show and explain visual aids.

Here's a four-step model of how to work transitions and descriptions into your presentation:

1. Transition to visual aid
2. Description of key elements
3. Explanation of main point
4. Transition to next point

First Slide

Global Change: Overview



Drucker

- connected economies
- leaner companies
- more specialized
- more volunteerism; growth of nonprofits

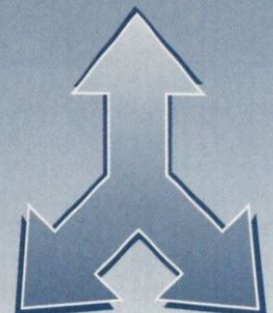
Christopher

- identity is the key
- U.S. afraid to cope with diversity: no global identity

Second Slide

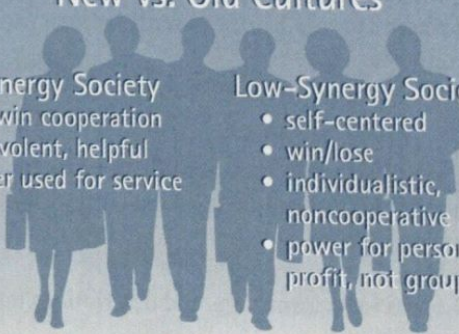
Typical Change Models

- Power Model
- Rationale Model
- Reeducative Model



Third Slide

Work Cultures: Synergy and New vs. Old Cultures



High-Synergy Society • win/win cooperation • benevolent, helpful • power used for service	Low-Synergy Society • self-centered • win/lose • individualistic, noncooperative • power for personal profit, not group good
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FIGURE 11.6 Examples of PowerPoint Slides

Now let's apply this model to an actual speech, identifying the transition, description, main point, and next transition used for each PowerPoint slide in a series of three:

First Slide

1. **Transition to visual aid:** "Drucker believed in global economies, as this slide reveals."
2. **Description of key elements:** "Drucker's vision would lead to more connected economies, lean companies with lowered expenses, more specialization tracks for workers, and a rapid growth of nonprofits with many volunteers."
3. **Explanation of main point:** "Noted corporate expert Christopher agrees, adding that the United States has been afraid to launch its identity as 'global'. Thus, the U.S. economy is lagging behind."
4. **Transition to next point:** "How can we change this outlook toward a more global view of our economy?"

Second Slide

1. **Transition to visual aid:** "Three models are typically applied to create change, as this next slide reveals."
2. **Description of key elements:** "Note that the power model calls for a top-down mandate of change. A rationale model expects evidence, and a reeducative model introduces seminars and training to gradually convince the company of the need for change."
3. **Explanation of main point:** "Specifically, ways to create change already exist."
4. **Transition to next point:** "What are the immediate benefits of change?"

Third Slide

1. **Transition to visual aid:** "This final slide shows how we can energize growth and cooperation among coworkers with a new outlook."
2. **Description of key elements:** "A high-synergy corporate culture offers a win-win situation, including less competition and more cooperative opportunities for everyone. These can be used for benevolent and service reasons, not just personal gain. In contrast, a low-synergy corporate culture offers self-centered, win/lose activities. Power, not sharing, becomes the name of the corporate game."
3. **Explanation of main point:** "Specifically, we can change the future of the work culture."
4. **Transition to next point:** "Where do we go from here to make these changes?"

ETHICS AND PRESENTATIONS

With our communication environment exploding freely with communication messages from books and movies to speeches and Internet sources, a presenter's temptation is to assume the prevalence means I can pull it up and use it at will. In fact, there are free use laws and communication ethics to observe for business and professional communicators. This section cannot cover every circumstance, but several key highlights illustrate the importance of applying ethical communication. It helps to put yourself in the shoes of an artist, a speaker, a writer, a Web developer, or a friend who has created a message, an event, or a production only to have someone take it and use it for their own purposes. You can imagine how this might feel if you were the creator of the product.

Fair use laws indicate that we can quote materials and paraphrase ideas within certain boundaries as long as we acknowledge the source. Those boundaries include short usage, educational

usage, and usage for critique or review. In other cases, we must seek permission. For instance, when you write a paper for a class, you can quote or paraphrase from a journal or book and then indicate the source material. However, to use an entire article as your presentation would demand permission. Even then, you must indicate it is not your source.

Similarly in a speech, we encourage quotations and the use of ideas. Central to the dialogue and debate of new ideas is deconstruction and construction. However, what we experience as professional teachers and trainers is that all too often, there is a major failure to cite the source of the idea. In other cases, such as in conducting training, the presenter has overused or borrowed a model without permission. In these cases of professional production or artistic development, one must not use a product wholesale without permission. It is usually acceptable to present an alternative model or artistic piece, again if there is an acknowledging of the original genesis of the idea or concept that led to your adaptation or modification.

Concerning the use of movie clips from YouTube or Google Video, the issue is to acknowledge the source. And in those cases, one should not present significant lengths of a commercial artistic production without purchasing or renting, such as in showing a movies to a class or in a training program. Most music and movies can be purchased or rented very inexpensively. This ethical use encourages the future of great productions and artistic designs, otherwise eroded by lack of compensation for one's hard work.

We don't like to admit this, but some speakers think that wholesale borrowing of a speech from a friend or from an Internet or other published source gives them the right to present that speech or message as their own. This is an ethical violation. Again, fair use and source acknowledgement is a norm, but not extensive or rampant application.

With so many Internet sources at your fingertips, it is permissible to look and use, but the principle is to acknowledge and apply fair use. If the material or production states copyright sanctions, you are only allowed to paraphrase and not use their quoted materials except as fair use laws. And, do not use copyrighted visuals, artistic productions, music, or models with copyright statements from a Web site without permission.

It seems that templates and designs from software providers with programs you or your company have purchased are presented as meant to be used, so those are obvious exceptions.

Finally, ethical communicators avoid making up facts or stories to make their point. The goal in communication is truth and clarity. Obviously, fabrication violates the noble goals of truth and credibility.

In Perspective

Organizations today expect their members to be experienced and dynamic speakers, capable of communicating in a range of situations. In developing presentational skills, there are two primary areas of focus: language style and delivery.

Since language is the chief means by which ideas are communicated, learning about language style—that is, choices of words and structures—will enhance your ability to communicate ideas more effectively. Language

style can be improved by creating vividness and clarity, by using relational language, and by understanding the applications of connotation and denotation.

Delivery is defined here as “the use of vocal qualities and bodily qualities to create meaning in a message.” Vocal qualities comprise pitch, rate, volume, and strategic pausing. Bodily qualities encompass eye contact, facial expression, gesturing, and stance. By fitting these elements of delivery to your message, you

will command the audience's attention and improve their understanding.

The literature on speech communication identifies four primary methods of delivery. In the manuscript delivery method, the speech is written out in its entirety and read aloud to the audience. The memorized delivery method is similar in that the speech is written out, word for word, but the speaker commits the entire speech to memory. The impromptu delivery method involves speaking without any specific preparation. Extemporaneous delivery refers to speaking from notes or an outline that contains key words, phrases, and ideas.

Making public presentations involves the integrating the advantages of various visual technologies with sound public speaking principles. Especially when presenting informative and technical material it is important to use the appropriate tool appropriately. The chapter identifies numerous rules for good visual presentations.

Finally, the chapter warns the reader to apply a quest for truth. That means applying communication ethics to your research and use of materials in a presentation.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were to make a case for communication training in an organization, why would you recommend the inclusion of presentational skills? What is the significance of being a good speaker in today's business and professional world?
2. Outline the main points of a training seminar that would focus on language style. What should be included? Why?
3. What qualities of vocal delivery are typically distracting to an audience? What types of bodily delivery are typically distracting to an audience? Why?
4. Compare and contrast the appropriate uses of the four methods of delivery: manuscript, memorized, impromptu, and extemporaneous. When is each most effective versus least effective?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using PowerPoint presentations? Does your own experience with PowerPoint fit these observations? Why or why not?

Exercises

1. Survey ten or more class members about what they feel are the most common bad habits in speechmaking. What behaviors do they find distracting or annoying? What behaviors lessen the speaker's credibility? Compile the results of the survey and present them to the class.
2. Videotape five or more television commercials that illustrate different vocal rates—that is, some fast and some slow. Play the recording before a focus group, your classmates, or some friends. Which rate do they like best and why? Which rate do they like least and why?
3. With some classmates, give impromptu speaking a try. Begin by writing some topics on slips of paper (one topic per slip), and then put them in a cup or box. Have each person draw a slip of paper and get up and speak on that topic; set a time of limit of, say, two or three minutes per speaker. After everyone has had a turn, discuss the experience. What are the challenges of impromptu speaking? What would it take to improve impromptu goals?
4. Experiment with two types of PowerPoint background and lettering combinations: (a) a dark background with dark lettering and (b) a light-dark combination (that is, a light background with dark lettering or a dark background with light lettering). Show the slides to an audience and ask which combination they prefer. What reasons do they give for liking one or the other? Which combination do you prefer and why?
5. Record your voice. Using a marker and a piece of paper, chart your *rate* using dots and dashes and your *pitch* using up-and-down lines. Review this chart to see if you tend to fall into the same patterns, sentence after sentence. If you do that, practice altering these qualities and modify your vocal delivery.
6. Observe some good speakers and try to model your vocal delivery after theirs. Don't think of this as copying others but as identifying what they do well and learning from it. In the end, your delivery should integrate your personality.

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Managing Informative Presentations in the Workplace

After reading this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Select a topic that meets the needs of your audience.
- Write a clear purpose statement and thesis statement.
- Develop the main points and provide support to make them credible and understandable.
- Plan an organizational design for the body of the speech.
- Write a purposeful introduction and conclusion.
- Deliver special types of informative presentations.

Underpromise; overdeliver.

TOM PETERS

The outcomes desired of an **informative presentation** are (1) to provide new information, (2) to reinforce previously known information, and/or (3) to clarify understanding and reduce uncertainty. Thus, the primary test of success in delivering an informative message is to ask if the audience has come away with one or more of these outcomes satisfied.

Many people underestimate the planning and design needed to achieve these outcomes. When they think about giving a briefing, a report, a proposal, or long speech, they think it is less about preparing and more about talking. Alternatively, we hope this chapter helps you understand the link between great research, preparation, and organizational design along with good speaking skills to success. To put it bluntly, those who fail to present information clearly and support it accurately run the ethical risk of causing misunderstanding or providing poor or misleading information to message recipients, such as your own or other departments in the organization.

KEY TERMS

informative presentation (p. 253)
 topic selection (p. 254)
 purpose statement (p. 256)
 thesis statement (p. 259)
 main points (p. 260)
 body (p. 260)
 support (p. 260)
 organizational design (p. 264)
 outline (p. 264)
 organizational patterns (p. 267)
 introduction (p. 269)
 conclusion (p. 274)
 connections and transitions (p. 277)
 oral reports (p. 278)
 news release or briefing (p. 278)
 elevator speech (p. 280)
 speech of introduction (p. 280)