

Organization Tips For Speakers

1. The Importance of Planning Your Presentation

Be prepared.

There is nothing worse than watching a speaker who isn't prepared. They fumble around for something to talk about, and they start using phrases like "um" and "ah" to try and stretch out the speech. It's uncomfortable to watch. Don't let this happen to you! You will have much less fear when you take the time to properly prepare.

When it comes to a presentation, there are so many ways that things can go other than you planned. In light of that fact, the importance of planning becomes a major focus for presenters. Why is it important to plan? Keep reading and find out. You may already have some ideas about the answers.

When You Fail to Plan...

This is the beginning of an old adage. It holds true for giving any type of presentation as well. No one starts out planning to fail. But, when you don't take the necessary time and precautions not to, that is often what you get in some sense. Anyway, the results of the presentation are less than what you expected for yourself.

Planning involves a systematic approach to a project that brings about the desired results. For instance, if you want a more visual presentation, you learn how to create slides that people can view, or create a slideshow of images they can relate to. Nothing happens automatically. There is some action involved. Without a plan, you find yourself quickly out of your depth.

2. Benefits of Planning

Here are some rewards of a presentation that is well organized and thought out.

A flow to your words – Rehearsing is a part of the planning process. You decide how you will present the information and then practice running through the entire thing as many times as necessary to get the feel that you want. Most presenters strive for a conversational feel instead of a scripted performance.

Staying on topic – Planning allows you to hone in on the topic, select a few pertinent bullet points and discuss them. Tangents are a thing of the past when you set guidelines for your talks.

Prepare for problems – Suppose that your laptop crashes or your slides don't load properly? What will you do now? Planning and organizing for this ahead of time means formulating a backup plan just in case of emergency. Devise a strategy for what you will do in the event of equipment failure, technology failure, power failure and the like.

Getting to know your audience – Planning gives you time to ask questions of the person or organization inviting you to speak. Find out what they expect as well as the likes and dislikes of the group. Now you can center your topic on their interests.

Anticipation – What types of questions would you ask if you were in the audience? How would you respond? Questions like this prepare you for just about anything that the audience throws your way without getting flustered. It also increases your knowledge of the subject matter.

Correcting mistakes – When you rehearse your presentation, ask a trusted friend or colleague to watch you. They can point out mistakes being made so they can be corrected in advance of the big day.

There are several advantages to planning, not the least of which is knowing what you will say to your audience.

3. Common Mistakes When Making a Presentation

You may think that making mistakes is a rookie move, but you'd be surprised how many seasoned presenters make them as well. Whether you are giving a lecture, conducting a business meeting or performing a sales presentation, avoiding these common mistakes is paramount and takes planning and organization.

What's Wrong?

Audiences are not very forgiving, especially when it comes to long presentations. People want to know that they are getting a good return on their investment of time and/or money. The idea of value for value is inherent in everything we do. As the person presenting the information to them, keep that little nugget in the forefront of your mind.

What do many seasoned presenters have? Overconfidence is often their undoing. You've presented a hundred times. What makes this one different? Each presentation is different because each audience is different. Forget that fact, and you could lose your audience before you've even gained them. There is always something that you can learn to make your presentations better. Right now, that education involves avoiding mistakes you may not have considered before or thought you had mastered.

Lack of focus – What is the point of your talk? Why is everyone in the audience today? If you promised them a discussion on making money using Pinterest, don't spend 30 minutes talking about Facebook. Give the people what they want and only that.

Leaving the audience in the cold – It's the same thing with gift giving. When you get someone what you would want, the receiver is often disappointed. Meet the needs of the audience or they will become disinterested. You might want to discuss some aspects of Facebook, but that is not what they want to hear. Get organized so that you can find out more about the audience in advance of your speech.

Reading to your audience – You'd be surprised how many seasoned presenters do this very thing. The audience can read (if they can't, you've got bigger problems), so don't waste your breath reading each slide to them. It's annoying.

Speaking "off the cuff" – This is often actually code for "I didn't prepare for my talk." Unscripted speaking can cause you to ramble and repeat yourself. You also fidget more. Don't let this be you – get organized and get working in that speech.

Equipment failure – Some things are beyond our control during a presentation. On the other hand, simple things like making sure that your computer is compatible with the system you will use is basic and essential to the entire talk. This can be avoided by checking the system days before the presentation. Organize all your equipment and get to the venue in time to double check that everything is working.

The Cardboard Cut-Out syndrome – This occurs when you seem to be glued to one spot at the podium as if your limbs don't move. Body language and intonation when speaking and moving about are all a part of exuding charisma when you speak. There is a fine line between too much and too little, but doing nothing just looks scary.

How do you know you are making a mistake? You get a negative response. So, try to avoid as many as possible from the beginning.

4. Do It Right

Sometimes you may find yourself in a position where you have no choice but to do a live presentation. The good news is, you can learn to be better at it. It's worth it too, as many people make good money doing speeches.

Know Your Material

When you know your material, you can answer questions about it. You become the authority and people react positively to this. It doesn't mean you need to know every little bit about a topic. You should also never pretend or make up answers. If you don't know, admit it and state that you will find out for the audience. You should have a good grasp on the subject material, however.

Get the Audience Involved

The more you engage with the audience, the more comfortable you will feel with them as well as they with you. This could be in the form of a question/answer session, or it could be an open forum, etc. If you can tie activities that the audience gets involved with, all the better.

Relax Before the Presentation

Try to set aside some time before the presentation to use relaxation techniques. If you know how to meditate, this would be a good time to use it. But, it can be as simple as going into a quiet room and taking deep breaths. Some people will even get a massage before their presentations. If this is available to you, give that a try.

Know Your Audience

It may not always be possible, but if you can find out who your audience is, you will get a feel for how to structure your presentation. It makes no sense to present beginner material to a group of experts, for example.

Try to Anticipate Questions and Concerns

If you can project what types of questions your audience may have or any criticism they may state, you can better prepare the answers. You won't be able to get them all but getting as many as you can goes a long way.

Start Out Small

If you are new to public speaking, don't take on an audience of thousands of people. Start out small with 20 to 30 people, or even less. You may even consider being a co-presenter with an experienced public speaker. You can observe this person, and he or she will be there if you should get stuck, or there is a lull in the presentation.

Focus on the Message

When you structure your presentation, focus on why the message you want to get across is important. This importance will give you confidence when presenting as people will pick up on your enthusiasm for the topic. It's difficult to become enthusiastic about a topic that is not important.



It's *your road* and *yours alone*.
Others may walk it with you, but
no one can walk it for you.

- Rumi

