

Effective Podium Presentation – Basic Principles

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Introduction: A Presence on stage gives honor and proud when person is worth of it otherwise it gives disrespect and shame. Delivery of thoughts by words in presence of others is a matter of art and lifelong learning process. Born speaker, gifted speaker, mesmerizing speaker are some of the eulogies thrown at a few blessed ones in a scientific gathering. These people are known for their ability to keep the audience spellbound by their speeches. In reality they all have evolved over a period of time to become good speakers. Speaking ability alone does not make a presentation good although this ability is one of the requirements. We all have skills; we just need to hone them.

Ten minute presentations can help build your platform, and they can establish your credibility and visibility in your profession. ¹ In the podium presentation, time constraint is one of the major hindering factors to the presenter. He has to present immeasurable number of hours of his research in just few minutes. Effectively he has only eight minutes to talk and the other two minutes reserved for questioning session. ² No doubt, it is a gargantuan task but can be accomplished.

The speaker may be in compulsion to speak (as conference presentation may increase his promotional prospects!) but nothing compels a listener to listen. Unless the speaker gets their attention riveted on him, mass exodus cannot be prevented. This means that he must present his talk in such a way that the listeners can understand and digest easily.

As in any journal article, the talk contains in order, the title, introduction, aims and objectives, methods, results, limitations, discussion, conclusions and recommendations if any. The aims and objectives, method and the result constitute the 'why', the 'how' and the 'what' of your work.

The title should be brief and yet comprehensive. Bombastic language and abbreviations are strictly not allowed.

What is the central message of your Introduction? This section should start with your general research objectives, then provide a few lines about the context of your work, and end with a clear statement of the hypotheses or predictions that you tested.

What is the central message of your Methods? This section demands great draftsmanship. Strive to keep your methods section brief. Don't be so brief that one can't figure out what you did, but do give some thought to what is really relevant to this particular talk. If some facet of your project is peripheral, then leave it out.

What is the central message of your Results? What did you find? Did your tests come out the way you expected? This section will probably involve little text and more graphics. Present only the data related to the hypothesis stated. Reserve the secondary or the ancillary observation to the manuscript.

What is the central message of your Discussion and Conclusions? This is a big one because it is really your take-home message. Again, in 25 words or less, what is the dramatic finding that you want your audience to remember? And why should they care? This is very important, because your colleagues will want to learn not only about what you did but also about why it is significant. Be prepared to address this issue, in greater depth when talking with your colleagues.

Simplify the projected material by restricting to a few slides, few lines per slide and few words per line.

Be consistent with the nomenclature. Do not use, for example, postmortem lividity in one slide, hypostasis in the second and livor mortis in yet another. This may impede comprehension while listening.

Auditory back up of the illustration or the image permits the key concepts to echo. Prepare the slides first and then write your talk so that the talk becomes an explanation of the slide rather than the slide illustrating your talk.

Always practice the talk in front of the mirror and your peers. Mercilessly delete the slides that do not serve the intended purpose. Your peers will help in this matter.

A good preparation makes the talk informative (as the museum specimen), persuasive (as the

commercial adds) and attractive (as the cinema wall posters).

Remember: "He who fails to plan is planning for failure" – Winston Churchill

References

1. Alice V. Osborn. How to Make an Effective 10-Minute Presentation. <http://ezinearticles.com/?How-to-Make-an-Effective-10-Minute-Presentation&id=3243750>. Accessed on 6-1-2014.
2. Kurt Kroenke, The Ten Minute Talk, The American Journal of Medicine, August 1987, Vol 83, p. 329 – 330.

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