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BEST PRACTICE GUIDE PUBLIC SPEAKING



Do's and **Don'ts**

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to give you a brief overview of the main things to think about when it comes to public speaking. It includes the definition borrowed from Wikipedia, a few useful tips, an illustration of the different type of presentations, and a 10 point list of how one can ruin a presentation. Despite being a seasoned public speaker myself I have to admit that some of the simple steps discussed hereinafter is something that I should adhere to more diligently myself and, more importantly should help make public speaking better experience – for both you and your audience



Definition

Public speaking is the process and act of speaking or giving a lecture to a group of people in a structured, deliberate manner intended to inform, influence, or entertain a listening audience. Public speaking is commonly understood as face-to-face speaking between individuals and an audience for the purpose of communication. It is closely allied to “presenting”, although the latter is more often associated with commercial activity. Most of the time, public speaking is to persuade the audience (source Wikipedia).

Presentation format

Before you start planning your presentation, find out from the organizers how much time you have and what format they envision for your talk.

Will you be part of a panel or will you be speaking alone?

Will you be in a regular session or are you the dinner speaker?

Do you have 15 minutes or an hour?

Do they prefer to leave time for questions? I

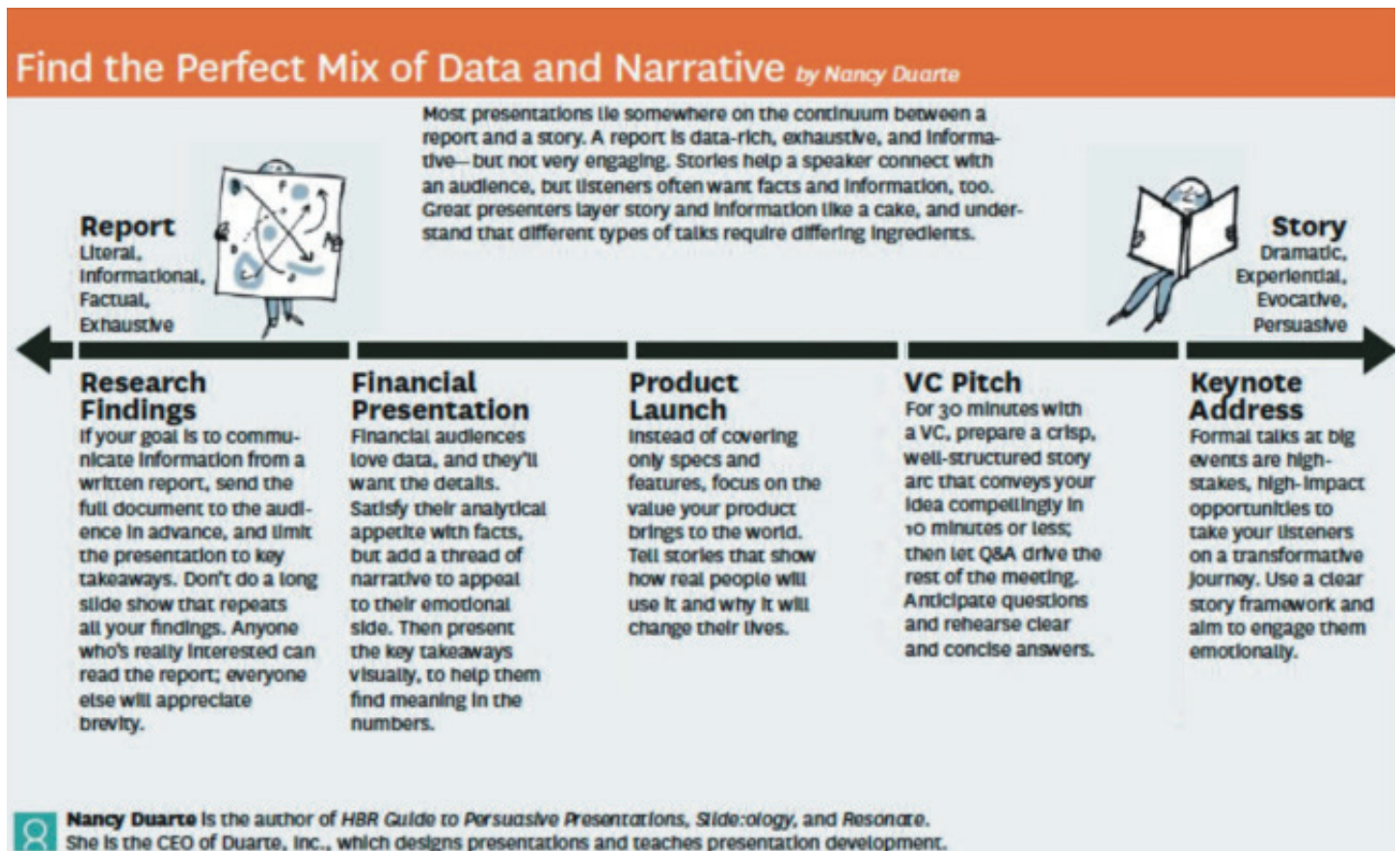
f yes, does that come out of the allocated time you have been quoted?

It is important to know what is expected of you so you can be well prepared and not have to scramble last minute to readjust your talk due to unanticipated logistics.

Know your audience

Get information about who will be attending your presentation. Are all participants experts at the topic or will there be novices present? Is there a mixed group of people representing different backgrounds or is everyone on the same page regarding technicalities? Depending on the audience, you will have to spend some time giving varying degrees of background on the material and explaining certain concepts.

A word of caution: don't overdo it either. Don't get caught up in details and technicalities.



Source: Harvard Business Review



Frame your story

There's no way you can give a good talk unless you have something worth talking about. Conceptualizing and framing what you want to say is the most vital part of preparation. We all know that stories are a powerful tool for communication and therefore, metaphors which abound the narrative structures work best to engage people.

Approach 1: Consider it as planning a journey where the biggest decisions are where to start and where to end. To find the right place to start, consider what people in the audience already know about your subject – and how much they care about it. If you assume they have more knowledge or interest than they in fact do, or if you start using jargon or get too technical, you'll lose them. The most engaging speakers do a superb job of very quickly introducing the topic, explaining why they care so deeply about it, and convincing the audience members that they should, too.

Approach 2: Have a narrative structure that loosely follows a detective story. The speaker starts out by presenting a problem and then describes the search for a solution. There's an "aha" moment, and the audience's perspective shifts in a meaningful way.

As a general rule, people are not very interested in talks about organizations or institutions. Ideas and stories fascinate us; organizations bore us – they're much harder to relate to.

The take-away message

If someone who missed your talk were to ask an audience member in the elevator to sum it up, what would you like that person to say? Focus on that message. Start out with this summary statement in mind and build your presentation around it.

Plan your delivery

There are three main ways to deliver a speech. You can read it directly off a script. You can develop a set of bullet points that map out what you're going to say in each section rather than scripting the whole thing word for word. Or you can memorize your speech, which entails rehearsing it to the point where you internalize every word. Don't do number one as reading a speech is the most boring thing for everyone! For me bullet points proved to be the most reasonable system as remembering the entire speech by heart might prove too stressful or time-consuming. Don't write out the material word-by-word and don't plan on reading text even if you do have it all written down. Having the text written out and parts of it memorized will constrain you. Memorize the structure of the talk and the outline, but not every word.

Timing

People rarely want to listen to someone for longer than the allotted time. Few people are such amazing speakers that an audience can't get enough of them. Do not assume you are one of those few. Wrap up your talk on time. To achieve this goal, ask someone to give you time cues by indicating when you have five minutes left, two minutes and when you have run out of time. Once you get the last notice, you should stop talking.



10 WAYS TO RUIN A PRESENTATION

Take a really long time to explain what your talk is about.

Speak slowly and dramatically.
Why talk when you can orate?

Make sure you subtly let everyone know how important you are.

Refer to your book repeatedly.
Even better, quote yourself from it.

Cram your slides with numerous text bullet points and multiple fonts.

Use lots of unexplained technical jargon to make yourself sound smart.

Speak at great length about the history of your organization and its glorious achievements.

Don't bother rehearsing to check how long your talk is running.

Sound as if you're reciting your talk from memory.

Never, ever make eye contact with anyone in the audience

Flexibility

Organize your talk and know it well enough to have the flexibility to skip certain parts or expand on others depending on the circumstances. For example, if you do add a last-minute introduction, be flexible to skip a part of the prepared content.

Practice makes perfect

Practice the presentation a few times: more if you have less experience, less if you are a more seasoned public speaker. It can be especially helpful to give the talk to someone who is not in your field and is not intimately familiar with the material. This is helpful in seeing whether you have made the talk too narrowly focused or overly technical. Such a practice session does not have to involve the entire talk, it can consist of telling someone about your presentation outline.

Conclusion

Finish your speech by one or several of the following (depending on the circumstances in which you are making your delivery): a) thank the organizers and everyone involved in the event, particularly the volunteers by acknowledging their contribution; b) repeat your main message one last time, especially if you are aiming to convince or influence an audience who are decision-makers or similar; c) provide some contact information, including an email address and Web site when applicable; d) mention that you welcome people's feedback and they should feel free to ask you questions either after the session or by sending you an email.



CLOSING WORDS

As hard as it may be to give a great presentation, speech or talk, it's really easy to blow it. In this short best practice guide you will find some common mistakes any speaker should avoid by all means and a lot of tip's on how to make your presentation professional.

Good luck!



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Peter Matjašič
President
European Youth Forum