How to Present with Clarity and Punch

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When you present, you are a performer. The specific thing you present can be your work, a lecture, or a new program – but the process of designing a presentation has common elements for all of these.

Preparation Process
1. Outline/make notes/make power point presentation
2. Organize/fact check
3. Rehearse
4. Time it
5. Have someone (or two) give feedback
6. Get sleep the night before
7. Have back up visuals
8. Eat a few hours in advance

Know Your Audience/Panelists
• How many people are expected?
• Who are these folks anyway?
  o Age
  o Gender
  o Race
  o Educational level
  o Local/National/International
• If you or members of the audience are not native-English speakers, put more words on your slides to optimize communication.

Setting the Stage
• Check with your host as you prepare
• Equipment: Will you need a slide projector, power point projector, whiteboard, blackboard, easel?
• Site: How big is the room? Does it have windows? Will you need a darkened room?

“Belt and Suspenders” Approach
• Have your talk ready in at least two forms: on a CD, memory stick, on your laptop (and bring a USB adapter if necessary).
• Bring your own laser pointer.
• If you have handouts – how many will you need?

Check Out the site
• Is your talk cued up and ready to go?
• Do you have a podium?
• Can you be seen from behind the podium?
• Do you have a microphone?
• Do you need a pointer? Does it work?
• Is the temperature OK?
• Do you know where the light switch is?
• Do you have water?
• Will there be distractions in the room?

What should I wear?
• Stay away from busy patterns
• Choose solid colors that compliment you.
• Shoes are very important, think comfort not style, you want to feel grounded
• Hair should be groomed and away from face.

What should I say and how should I say it?
• “Talk slow and don’t say too much.” - John Wayne
• Try to avoid jargon – your goal is to communicate as clearly as possible using good diction.
• Avoid fillers: “Umms, Ahs, Er’s, Like”

Use your voice
• Volume: **Loud** --- **Soft**
• Duration: **Slow** -- **Fast**
• Pitch: **High** -- **Low**

These choices convey, on a continuum:
• Confidence --- Insecurity
• Emphasis --- Confusion
• Credibility --- Non credible
• Interest --- Boredom
• Excitement --- Dullness
• Passion --- Flatness

Movement and gestures (hands, head) also communicate:
• Eye contact
• Facial expressions
• Pacing/shifting weight
• Jiggling in pockets/legs

Where do I focus my gaze?
It’s often best to make eye contact with different members of the audience. There are times when you will want to look at the slides projected on the screen, or to the back of the room.

Concentration/Focus of your presentation
Your focus should be on motivation and purpose of your presentation not on your self. A good definition of motivation is “an inner drive that causes one to act.”
Why you are giving this presentation or what is your objective?

Make your Motivation into an Active Verb. Such as (to):
• Teach
• Excite
• Prove
• Challenge
• Convince
• Inspire
• Make one understand
• Influence

Keep your presentation Alive!
• Express the energy and passion for your topic.
• Invest in your material.
• If you care, they will care.
• If you loose your place, refocus on your objective.
A very simple and successful approach to organizing your presentation is:
1. Tell them what you are going to tell them (your introduction)
2. Tell them (your talk)
3. Tell them what you just told them. (your summary)

Take the time to prepare:
- Do you find your talk interesting?
- Also test it out on a friend or colleague
- Clarify your motivation (purpose)
- Be aware of verbal and non-verbal communication
- Relax, and if you remember nothing else…BREATHE