A Guide to
Successful
Presentations

(or at least looking like you know what you are talking about)

What's inside?

BC PATIENT SAFETY
& QUALITY COUNCIL
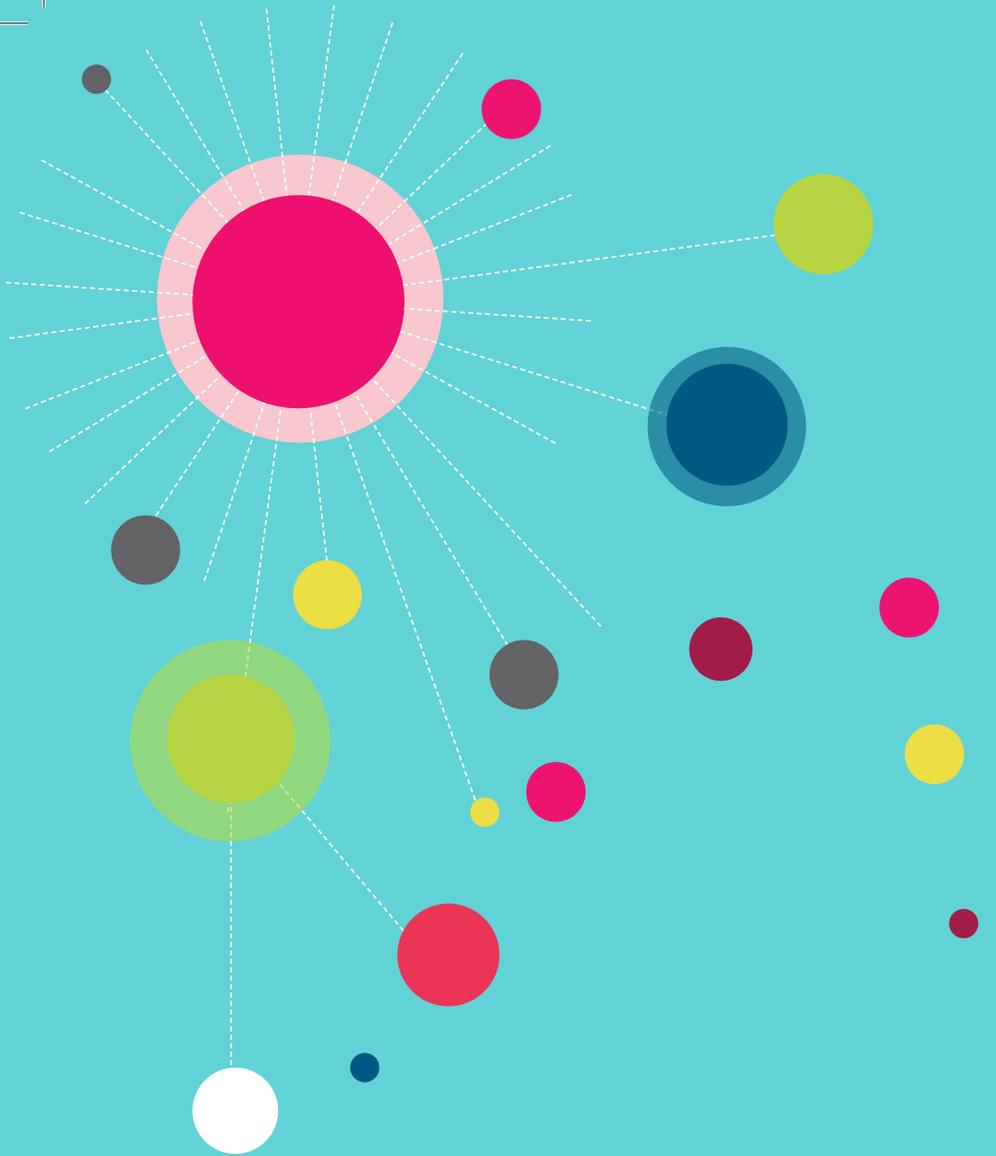
"Speech is power: speech
is to persuade, to convert,
to compel."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Planning Your Presentation

You've been asked to give a presentation. Before you jump in and start crafting an outline, do a little preparation in advance. By planning ahead, you can deliver a presentation that is both eloquent and informative. Here are a few things to consider before you get started.

Know Your Purpose

Congratulations! You've been asked to deliver a presentation. Why you? Are you a content expert? Did you work hands-on with this project, or were you just in the right place at the right time? Having a clear understanding of the purpose of the presentation will guide your subject matter and make it easier to prepare.

General Key Message	Specific Key Message
Update on the Coffee Situation ┈┈┈┈┈┈┈▸	**free coffee results in greater night shift productivity**

What is the key message of your presentation?
The key message you are delivering needs to be clear. Write your key message in simple terms and tape it over your work area as you are preparing your presentation. At any time, you can look up and see how the graph/narrative/illustration you are working on ties in to your key message. It should be specific (e.g.: free coffee results in greater night shift productivity, which is good for our site) and not general (e.g.: update on the coffee situation). Do not start creating your presentation until you know your key message.

What is your motivation?
Why are you doing this? Are you informing? Reporting? Calling to action? Part of your purpose is to create interest and movement around your topic. Do you want people to walk away saying, "Wow, that was interesting," or do you want them to leap up and join your cause? A presentation that is meant to report a recent research finding will differ greatly in both content and tone than a presentation that is meant to recruit people to be a part of your project.

Know Your Audience

Who will be attending your presentation? This knowledge will guide your planning. Knowing your audience members will allow you to tailor your content and delivery to ensure that they get the most out of your presentation.

> **"If you can't write your message in a sentence, you can't say it in an hour."**
>
> **Dianna Booher**

How many people will be attending your presentation?

Audience size will affect how interactive your presentation can be, what kind of equipment may/should be used (such as microphones), the location of the meeting and, quite possibly, your nerves. Try to find out approximately how many eyes will be looking back at you. Presenting to a larger group will often have a more formal tone – you won't know everyone and may need to provide more background on yourself and your topic. Small, roundtable presentations may not even require you to stand. If you need to stand up during your presentation, make sure you stand up when you rehearse (and likewise if you'll be sitting).

Have you met these people before?

Presenting to a familiar group of colleagues will feel different than presenting to a group of executives you have never met. You may not need to introduce yourself if your audience is made up exclusively of people you see every day, but don't assume that everyone knows who you are and what you do.

What level of understanding does your audience have?

Assessing existing knowledge can sometimes be difficult but it's important to try to know the audience's baseline understanding of your topic. This knowledge (along with other factors such as time and scope) will dictate the level of detail you will need to go into during your presentation. A presentation to a novice group will look significantly different than a follow-up presentation to an expert group. It is important to briefly summarize key topics or themes (even to an expert group) to ensure everyone is on the same page...but prevent boredom by diving into new and interesting topics as quickly as possible.

How will the content of this presentation affect your audience?

Understanding the impact of what you are about to present will allow you to anticipate questions, elaborate on key concerns, or brace for an uproar. Presenting a new protocol will garner a much different reaction from those whose daily work has to change than from others who are not directly affected. You may need to leave more time for questions, go into specifics in certain areas, or provide handouts.

The Importance of Time

Often when presenting you have either too much time or not enough time. Working diligently within your allotted timeframe will result in the 'Goldilocks' of presentations – everything will be just right.

How much time will I have?

Try your best to get an accurate answer to this. You are going to plan your slides, rehearse your spiel and leave just enough room for questions...suddenly having an extra 10 minutes will make you regret cutting that one awesome slide that just didn't fit. Worse yet is a beautifully crafted presentation given in fast forward because you are on the agenda for 15 minutes, not 30 as you had thought. Always confirm that the amount you were told initially is the amount that shows up on the agenda. If there is a discrepancy, clarify and edit your presentation as needed prior to your arrival.

How much time do I need?

The amount of time you are allotted and the time needed to present the requested materials are sometimes mismatched. You need to decide if you can accurately present the requested topic in the timeframe you were given. If not, you either need to negotiate more time or scale down your content. It is perfectly acceptable to only present a 'piece' of your project if you don't have enough time to present the entire topic.

How much time should I allocate for questions?

There is no right answer for this question, other than to say that you should leave SOME time for questions. There is nothing worse than hearing a thought-provoking presentation that leaves you wanting more, and not having time to interact with the presenter. Knowing your audience will help narrow down the timeframe for questions. A small group that is familiar with the topic may have lots of questions. A large, forum-style presentation may only allow for a few questions from the crowd. If your topic is new and may have a big impact on your audience, be prepared for a lively back-and -forth discussion at the end of your presentation.

PECHA KUCHA

Think you need lots of time and slides to get your point across? Think again! Pecha Kucha is a presentation style where there are 20 slides shown for 20 seconds each, making the entire presentation just 6 minutes and 40 seconds long! These presentations have proven to be very effective and popular – developing into a worldwide presentation community. Are you brave enough to give it a try? Check it out: www.pechakucha.org

> **"There are always three speeches, for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave."**
>
> **Dale Carnegie**

Respect the clock

Be respectful of how much time you are given and stay within it. It's not okay to go over your allotted time just because you are the last presenter before a coffee break. Messing with coffee breaks is ALWAYS a bad idea. You also don't want to force the person after you to alter his/her presentation because you went over time, particularly if you spent those 20 minutes telling a story about your cat. It is also good to know where you fall in the agenda – if you are right before lunch you may need to keep your topic lively to maintain audience attention.

Tying It All Together

Try your best to tie your topic back into the general theme of the agenda or conference. Aligning themes, values and content with the larger picture will make your topic integrate more seamlessly into the content for the day. You want to be remembered for how you inspired, not how out of place your presentation seemed. Additionally, try not to duplicate content from other presenters, especially when presenting within your own organization where multiple people work on the same projects. Avoid contradicting content presented by others. That is not to say you can't present your experience or results, just don't call anyone out for being wrong.

One final note about understanding why you are there...you want to present on what your audience wants to hear. Believe it or not, your audience may not be interested in how you saved 35 cents per surgical dressing by haggling with the distributer. Give the crowd something useful, and you can add in extras later.

Write it down for retention

Want your audience to really remember what you said? Get them writing! When people write, their brains become more actively engaged from the motor action, and retention increases.

"**It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.**"

Mark Twain
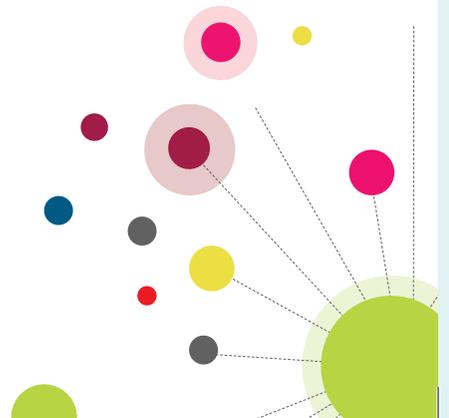
SUCCESSful Principles for making it stick*

S: Simple — find the core of any idea
U: Unexpected — grab people's attention by surprising them
C: Concrete — make sure an idea can be grasped and remembered later
C: Credible — give an idea believability
E: Emotional — help people see the importance of an idea
S: Stories — empower people to use an idea through narrative

*Reference: Made to Stick by Chip & Dan Health

What? ----> **Who?** ----> **How Long?**
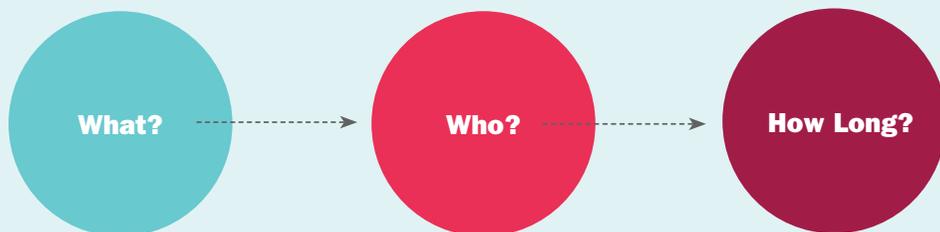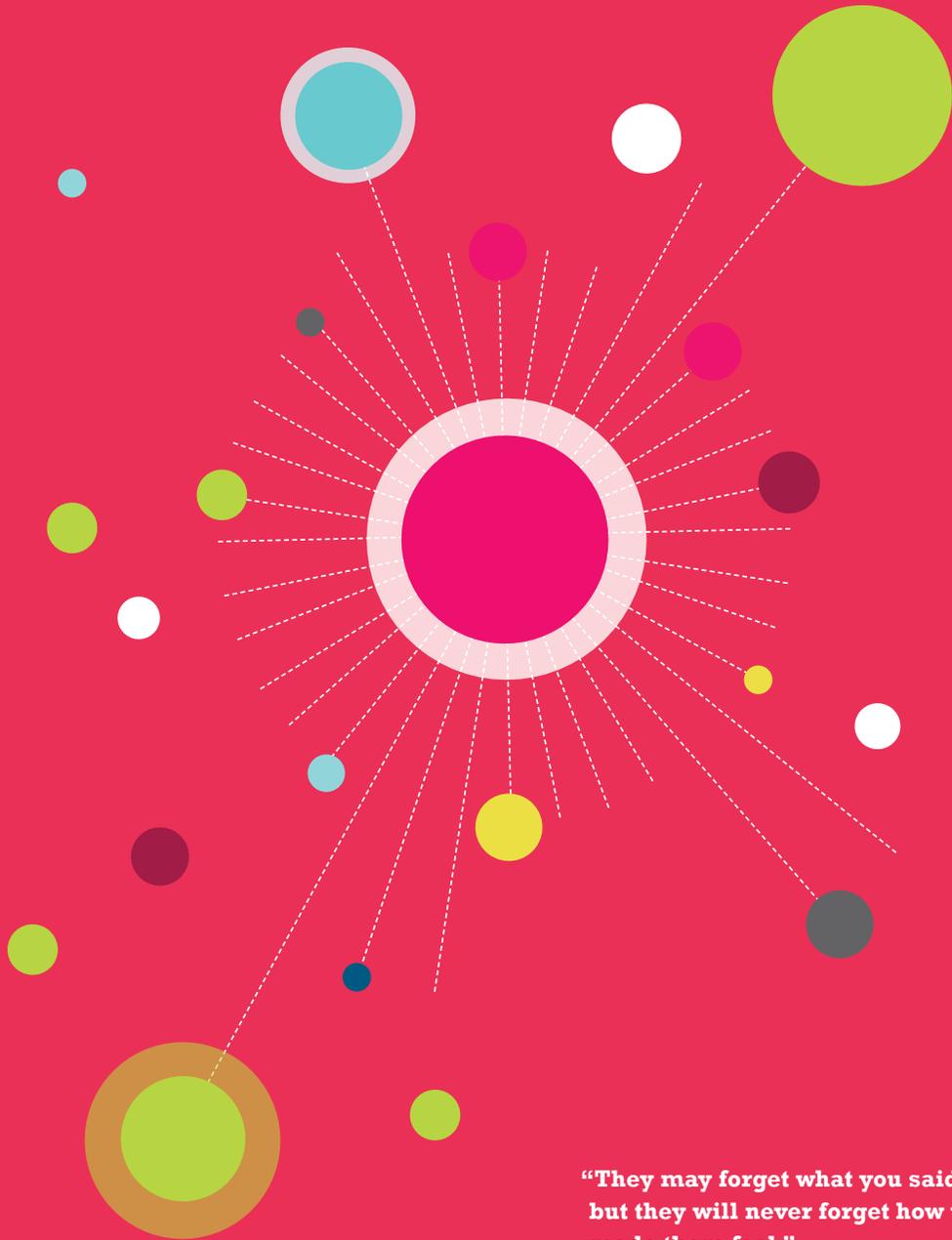
"They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

Carl W. Buechner

Assembling Your Presentation

After some careful preparation, you are now ready to start putting your presentation together. Choose your content carefully and use these suggestions to help create an effective and powerful visual display.

Choosing the Content

You were asked to deliver a presentation because you are (hopefully) an expert on a topic. Choosing what to include in your presentation, however, can be incredibly difficult. Understanding your key message should keep you focused, but what should actually go into the final presentation?

So What?

During the preparation phase you will have determined the purpose for your presentation. All your content should tie back to that purpose – and everything you include should add value to the presentation. Be purposeful when choosing content; ask yourself "does this belong?" and "is this the best way to tell the story?" While reviewing your content, ask "so what?" – your answer should be "it is related to my key message." If it isn't related, you can probably delete it from the presentation. This technique works especially well with graphs - if the 'so what' isn't obvious, then your graph isn't doing a very good job of displaying your data.

The Devil is in the Details

Don't get bogged down in details. Remember your audience when considering the level of detail you get into. If you are presenting to a group that wants to recreate your project, you will include more detail than you would for an audience that only needs a high-level overview. Give people enough information that they understand the context but not so much that it takes away from the key message. The less you say, the more they will remember. Keep in mind that the aspect of your project that excites you (and, therefore, might want to discuss in great detail) is often not what might excite your audience. Try to take advantage of that enthusiasm by using it throughout your presentation.

> **"No one ever complains about a speech being too short!"**
> **Ira Hayes**

Creating a Narrative

The purpose of any presentation is to inform, inspire and energize your audience. One of the best ways to connect with your audience intellectually and emotionally is to use a narrative approach; tell your audience a story. Your audience needs to know the following: where are we now, where do we want to go and how are we going to get there. These elements help create a flow to your presentation and also tap into your personal motivations for being involved in the project. If you are uninspired by the content you are presenting, you can bet your audience feels the same way. Think about engaging your audience and building a connection with them.

PowerPoint Tips

Many use PowerPoint as the basis of their presentations, and it can be a great tool when used appropriately. Slides should be a supplement to the content you are speaking about; they are not a stand-alone presentation. Here are 5 tips that will improve the look and flow of your presentation.

Stick to standard fonts – other computers may not be able to read unique fonts

1. **Keep it simple:** The less clutter you have on your slide, the more powerful your visual message will be. Don't fill white space with fancy backgrounds or logos - it can make the slide difficult to read. Exotic accents that look festive on your small computer can be a headache-inducing disaster on a large projection screen.

2. **Don't take a bullet for your presentation:** Limit the text and bullet points on your slides. Slides are not meant to be a teleprompter script for your presentation, and your audience will tune you out if you read directly from your bullets. Have no more than three bullet points or sentences on a slide. Better yet, keep it down to a few key words; only use full sentences when quoting.

3. **Leave neon in the 80s where it belongs:** Choose font and colour wisely: Your presentation should have a font and colour scheme; consider using a template and keep it the same throughout the entire presentation. Avoid script, italic and novelty fonts – stick with professional, easy to read sans-serif fonts. Many seasoned presenters suggest that 30 point is the smallest font to use. Avoid red or dark font on dark backgrounds. Lighter backgrounds (with dark text) work best in bright environments.

4. **No one will laugh at a blurry picture of a squirrel in a tuxedo:** Use high quality images. Graphics that are pixelated and hard to read will distract from your presentation.

Visuals should match your presentation and add value to your slides. Avoid clip art and stock images available with your presentation software – yawn. Everyone has seen them before.

5. **Keep your audience interested, but don't make them dizzy.** Move through a slide every 30s to 3 minutes to keep interest and allow time to process information. Split content onto multiple sides to keep a nice flow. Avoid frequent and distracting transitions, use these only for emphasis.

Presentation Tips

Jargon & Acronyms

One of the big mistakes that both novice and seasoned presenters make is using jargon and acronyms during their presentation. It's best to avoid using jargon and acronyms altogether, with the following exceptions:

1. **100% of the people in your audience use the same language** – if you are CERTAIN that you are all on the same page (ie: you have all been working on the same project for 6 months), it only makes sense to speak the language.

2. **The 'jargon' you are going to use is integral to your presentation and you are going to use it repeatedly** – in that case, define the term at the beginning of the presentation so that everyone understands how you are using the word.

3. **The main topic content of your presentation is often referred to as an acronym –** if you are presenting about a project called "Learning in Longterm Adult Care" you may wish to refer to it as the LILAC project. Spell it out the first time and let your audience know that it is commonly referred to by an acronym and then carry on.

   *only do this for acronyms you will use more than 5 times during your presentation If you are only going to say it twice, just use the full form

POWERPOINT SLIDES AND HANDOUTS

PowerPoint Slides generally do not make good handouts. Why? It's like giving away the punchline before you tell the joke—people just can't help themselves and will often flip ahead to see what's coming next.

So what can you do instead?

• Print your key information in a different format, like Microsoft Word.

• Systematically leave out certain pieces of information in your handout so that the audience is forced to pay attention to you.

• Distribute your handout at the end of your presentation.

"If you don't know what you want to achieve in your presentation your audience never will."

Harvey Diamond

Notes

Use presentation notes if you find them helpful. Now that you're not using bullets as a teleprompter, you may need to have your speaking points on paper in front of you so that you can refocus and orient yourself if you get flustered or off topic. Unfortunately, reading off your speaker notes is only a slight improvement over reading off the slides. Think of your notes as key points you don't want to miss and specific details that you want in front of you so you get them right. By rehearsing and preparing, you should only need to glance at your notes occasionally.

Have details in your notes that you anticipate referring to during the question period but didn't make the cut for the core presentation. You may need them, you may not...but many people take comfort in having the information in their hands just in case.

Contact Info & References

It is common practice to include your contact info on a slide near the end of the presentation. You may also include members of the project team, or key contacts at your organization with permission.

References are also often included throughout and at the end of a presentation to give credit for content that is not yours. Insert citations right on the slide or include a reference list at the end. The reference list may also include helpful websites, articles and resources that may be valuable to others who want to investigate your topic further. Realistically, very few people in your audience are going to start scribbling down all your references when you whiz by the slide at the end of your presentation, so consider sharing your slides or including a handout.

What Not to Wear – A Style Guide

Match your attire to the tone and style of the event. Consider what your audience is wearing and ensure you're comfortable.

Wearing a suit when speaking to an audience full of people wearing t-shirts and jeans may throw you off your game and make you lose credibility. Be aware that while your day to day job may require you to wear the most shapeless and pyjama-like uniform known to man (a.k.a. scrubs), kicking it up a notch for a conference may be a good idea.

Be comfortable! Think about the venue and your personal preferences. Conference rooms are notoriously either too hot or too cold and you want to be at ease. Layers are usually a good idea. Don't get so carried away with matching the style of the conference that you don't feel like yourself. Presenting is hard enough without struggling against a tie or heels that you would never wear under any other circumstance. Be aware of how you are displaying yourself visually but BE YOURSELF!

Rock Your Presentation

Each presenter will have his/her own method of preparing for their presentation. You may find a checklist useful, especially if the concepts in this section are new.

10 Ways to Ruin a Presentation	10 Ways to Rock a Presentation
Jump right into your content without introducing yourself or your topic	**Sketch out an outline for your presentation on paper before you start making slides**
Don't worry about what your audience is interested in, just talk about what you think is most important	**Pay attention to your audience and respond their signals**
Cram your slides with lots of bullets, text, data, and pictures	**Simplify, simplify, simplify**
Use a lot of jargon and constantly refer to theorists and colleagues in your field	**Use examples people can relate to when explaining complex ideas**
Don't bother practising to get more comfortable and make sure the timing is right	**Practice, practice, practice**
Talk all about yourself and your accomplishments	**Have fun with it - your enthusiasm will inspire others!**
Don't worry about having credible sources for your information	**Know your content inside and out**
Face the screen instead of the audience and read the slides word for word	**Be purposeful with body language and tone of voice**
Get totally sidetracked and start talking about something completely different	**Anticipate any questions you may be asked**
Assume you won't have any unexpected technical problems	**If you can, check out the venue ahead of time**

Data Display

The thought of creating, presenting and explaining data (especially displayed in graphs) strikes fear in the heart of many presenters. Here are some tips for displaying data.

Basic Principles of Data Display

First...a graph...do you really need one? Don't use a graph when you can plainly explain the data in a sentence. Consider using your data table instead if it is easier to interpret at a glance.

If you do include a graph, it should be a stand-alone representation of your work. A clear picture is worth a thousand words, so you shouldn't need many words to explain your graph. Keep it simple and get to the point. Highlighting key elements with clarity will draw the viewer's attention to your key message.

Choosing the Right Graph

Visual data display is an art in itself and a well-designed graph can be a masterpiece to behold. While you may not create the bar graph Mona Lisa, you can certainly display your data in a clear and concise way.

Bar graphs are the most common type of graph seen and can be displayed both vertically and horizontally. Columns of bar graphs represent amounts or value of a selected variable. Bar graphs allow for easy comparison of data, especially when differences are large. They allow for comparison of data over time, such as before/after or by year, but are not as effective when measuring frequent time intervals.

Line graphs are most commonly used to display data over time. This type of graph makes it easier to see smaller variations over time and to display change for multiple groups over the same time. There should be an equal space on the horizontal (x) axis between each point. For example, you cannot start plotting your graph in monthly intervals, than switch to days part way through the graph. It is misleading.

Run Charts are commonly used in quality improvement displays and look very similar to line graphs. In fact, it is a line graph with one notable addition – the median line.

Control Charts are a run chart with upper and lower limits to indicate if the system is stable or 'in control'. In quality improvement measurement, many people start with a run chart as it only contains a few data points. Once there are more than 12-15 points, you can create a control chart.

Scatterplots or X-Y graphs are used to show relationships between variables (also called correlations). These graphs are useful with large datasets with an anticipated relationship. A best fit line is used to determine the strength and direction of the relationships.

Pie charts are a popular method to display percentage data, but they can be more difficult to interpret than bar graphs (which can be used to display the same data). They require the reader to mentally calculate the relative areas of each 'slice' to determine the figures they represent. When the differences are not large, this estimating is difficult to do. In those cases, it is best to use a bar chart to display the same data.

White Space

After selecting and creating the appropriate graph for your data (and possibly eating a piece of pie) you may be looking at a chart that is squished, colourless, and full of squiggly lines. While the aim of this booklet isn't to educate you in all the nuances of your preferred spreadsheet program, here are some tips on improving the look of your graph.

Use the right amount of white space to make a graph easy to read. For bar charts, leave some space at the top, so that the highest bar is located about 75% of the way up your vertical axis. For line graphs, have your graphed data take up 50% of the space on the graph and include white space on either side. However, don't sacrifice the appropriate scale (see below) to create white space. And white space should be white; avoid fancy backgrounds and remove gridlines.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Be ruthless with your content! Simpify, simplify, simplify. Delete anything that doesn't absolutely have to be said or displayed.

Go through your presentation several times and look for extra or unnecessary information. If it doesn't support your key message, delete it.

Scale

The scale should match your data. If you are looking at the number of cat toys removed from the toy box each week by your feline friend, the minimum possible value is 0% and the maximum is 100%. Mr. Kitty cannot remove more than all of the toys (or fewer than none), no matter how awesome he is. Your scale may not need to span the entire possible range if your data centers around the median. Perhaps 33% to 66% would work.

Common scale is another principle of data display. If you are going to compare two graphs (say ice cream flavour consumption between two households) you want to make sure that the scales are the same – especially if you are going to put them side by side. Having different scales in misleading and can lead to incorrect interpretation by your readers.

Using All the Fancy Extras – the Perils of Exploding Pie Charts

Most data programs give you the option to spice up your graph by adding 3D graphics and fancy animations. While these options can be amusing and eye catching, they often result in a graph that is difficult to read and makes it more difficult to get your point across. Simplicity is better. Unless you are creating a hilarious office gag reel, no good comes of an exploding pie.

Hit "B" for blank – when PowerPoint is in slideshow mode, the B key will switch the screen to black. This is a quick, easy, way to pause your slides for discussion. (Or if you want a white screen – use the W key).
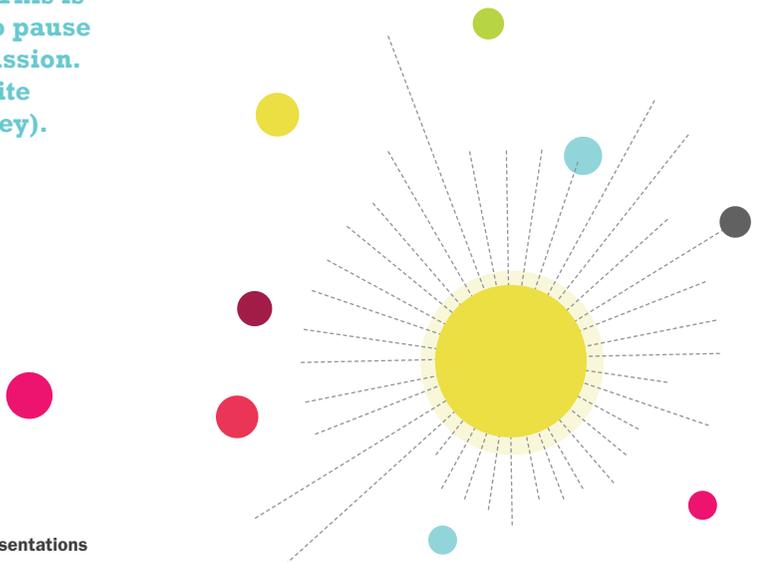
Handouts

Many novice presenters try to cram all their information onto slides so they can circulate them as a stand-alone document. If you really need to share all the great things you know but can't deliver all of it in your presentation, create a handout to include with the conference program or attach to meeting minutes. Include reference lists and your contact information.

Rehearsing

The last three steps in preparing for a presentation are practice, practice and practice. The importance of rehearsing your presentation cannot be stressed enough. Start by sitting in front of the computer to run through transitions and work out any kinks that may show up when you run through the presentation in 'view slideshow' mode. Do at least one rehearsal in front of a live audience. Your practice audience does not need to have a good understanding of the content, but they should be able to provide some feedback on your presentation style. Ask them to take note of how many times you say "uhhh" or "ummm", check your timing, and give some overall feedback on eye contact, your voice and posture. If bribing your friends with free cookies still doesn't give you a practice audience, video or audio record yourself. It can be a little painful to listen to yourself on tape (or the digital equivalent) but you can gain a lot of insight. You may think you sound peppy and energetic only to realize, upon listening the recording, that you sound like Eeyore. If this happens, be more confident and energetic than you actually feel.

A final technical rehearsal is ideal if you can arrange it. Arrive early at your venue to make sure your slides have been loaded onto the computer. Walk around the room and consider where you will be best viewed by the audience. If you are going to be using a podium, make sure that it is the right height. Practice using the remote to advance slides and use the laser pointer correctly. No matter how prepared you are, shining the laser pointer in the eye of the company CEO might not be a good idea. Check that embedded videos play and that the audio works; it can really throw a wrench in your presentation plan if you have to search for a new link. You don't have to run through the entire presentation, just get comfortable with the room and technical aspects.

"Best way to conquer stage fright is to know what you're talking about."

Michael H Mescon
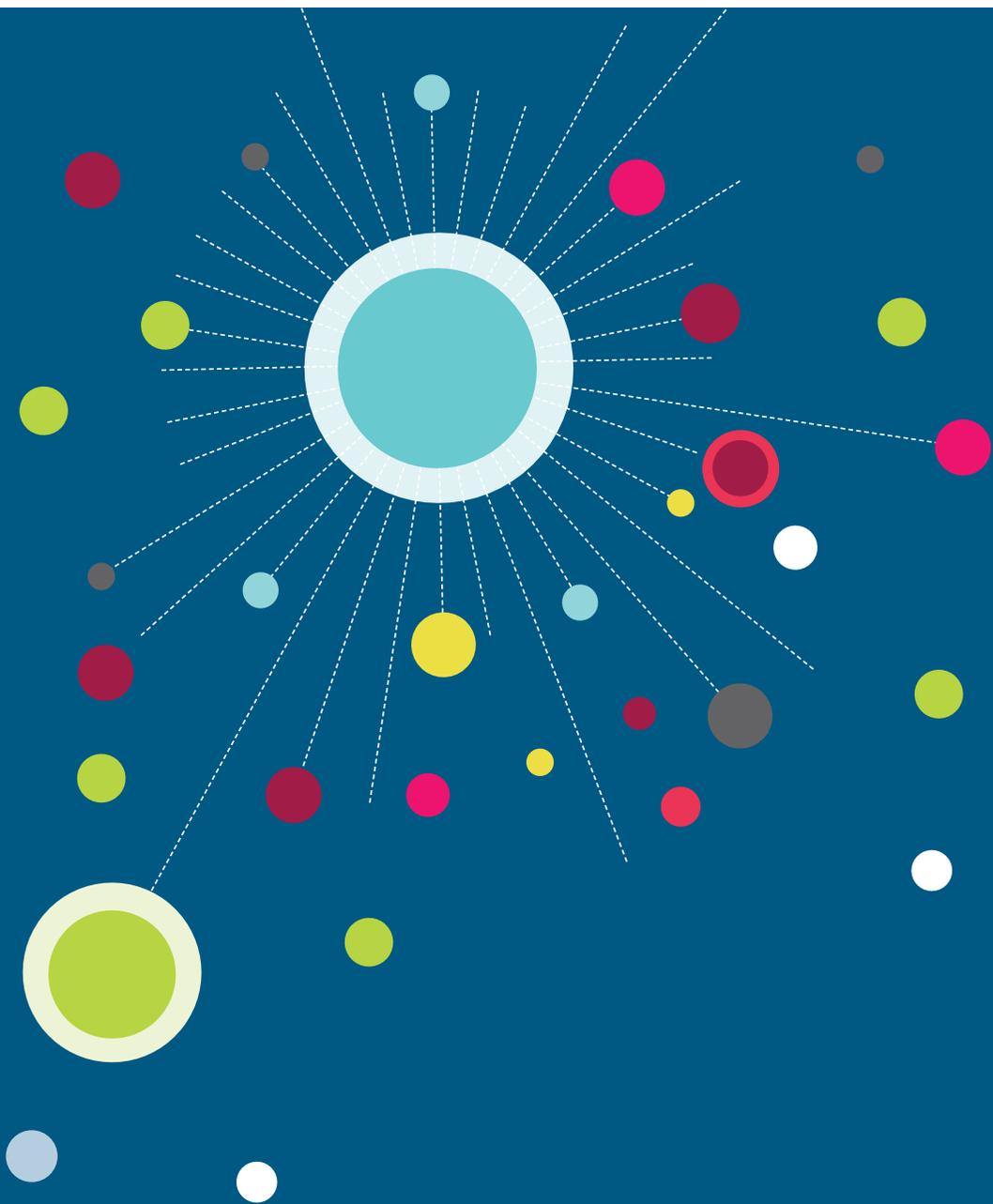
"There are only two types
of speakers in the world.
1. The nervous and 2. Liars."

Mark Twain

The Art of Actually Doing A Presentation

Last but not least, it is time to get up in front of your audience. Your preparation has brought you this far and there is a bit more information that can contribute to successfully completing your mission: presenting your presentation.

Can You Hear Me Now? Tips for Public Speaking

Standing up in front of any sized group can strike fear into the heart of many presenters. Take comfort in knowing you are not alone and your audience wants you to succeed!

1. **Be prepared:** This comes back to practice, practice and more practice. Being familiar with your content will help ease your nerves on presentation day. Know the order of your slides and what is coming next – you shouldn't need to use the screen as a prompt.

2. **Take a deep breath:** You may get a surge of adrenaline and feel your heart start racing in the minutes before your presentation. This is a good time to take a deep breath and remember that the audience is your friend. You were asked to come speak...people want to hear what you have to say. Take a moment to organize your thoughts, have a sip of water and then launch into your opening words.

3. **Stand Strong:** Take a position in a place you feel comfortable. If you are at a podium, stand tall and ensure the microphone is in front of your mouth (and not totally obscuring your face). If you are moving around the room, try to place yourself to the audience's left of the screen. Keep in mind that if you are moving around, try not to pace and don't block the screen.

4. **Hope for the best...but prepare for the worst:** Imagine a flock of crows flying off with your laptop bag...do you panic? No because you had your presentation on a thumb drive in your pocket. Emails get lost, old versions of presentations get uploaded, mistakes happen; you just need to be ready for when those times happen.

5. **Enjoy Yourself:** With all the time you have invested in making your presentation a success, it would be a shame not to enjoy yourself when you are up there. Once your presentation starts, it is time to let go of your worry and anxiety and have some fun. You may miss a talking point, you might sneeze right in the middle of a sentence or your may give the best presentation of your life – in any case, each presentation is an experience you can learn from so give yourself a smile and graciously accept the applause and adoration of your audience.

Start Strong and End with a Bang

You only have one chance to make a first impression, so start your presentation in a way that grabs the interest of the audience and reflects your personality. Introductions are usually followed by a brief statement as to why you are there. Use this opportunity to grab the attention of the audience: say something personal about yourself, tell a brief story that relates to the topic, start with an inspirational quote or funny joke. It doesn't really matter what route you decide to go, just take the time to get comfortable and get everyone looking at you!

The end of your presentation should return to your key messages. Educational objectives, summary slides and lessons learned are all easy ways to package your pearls of wisdom. It is entirely appropriate to explicitly state your take home message – if you want people to remember, make it simple and clear. Don't forget to thank your audience, those who asked you to present and anybody who helped you along the way.

Ummmms and ahhhhs – These fillers can make you seem uncertain. To avoid using them, try slowing your pace of speech and using short pauses instead. While a moment of silence can feel like an eternity, a brief pause can add emphasis to your message. Try recording yourself when you rehearse your presentation, then keep an ear out for how often you umm and ahh.
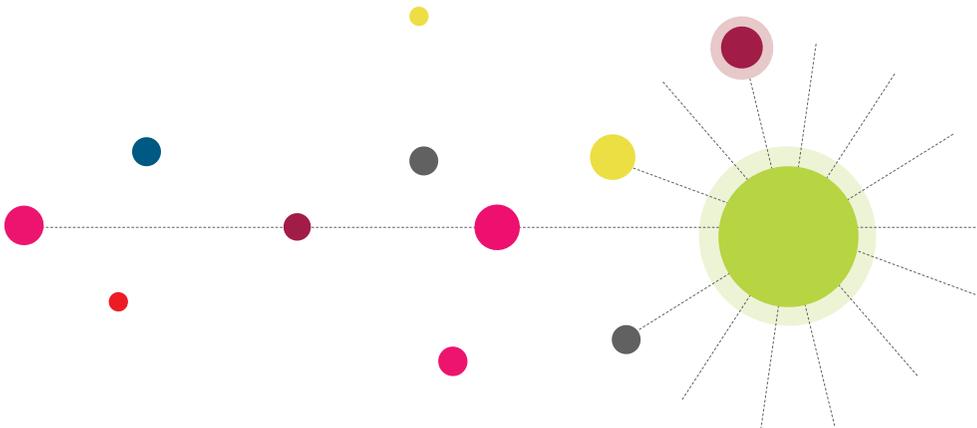
Audience Involvement

Include your audience in your presentation: ask questions or facilitate discussions. The audience is (hopefully) there because they have an interest in your topic – hang on to their attention by giving them opportunities to participate. Involving the audience allows you to see what they know or what insight they can add. It is also an opportunity for people to get to know a bit about their fellow audience members.

Open
Discussion

Table
Discussion

Talk to Your
Neighbor

Share One Word

Show of Hands

TIME

**Large Group
Less Time**

**Smaller Group
More Time**
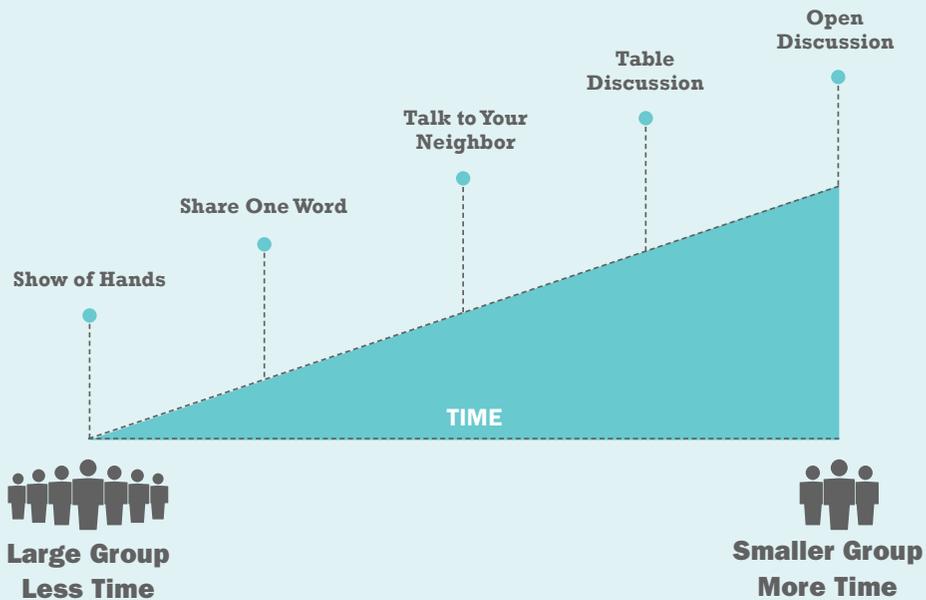
Everybody Dance Now! Participation Strategies

The extent to which you invite your audience to participate depends on several factors: audience size, presentation duration and venue. Short presentations to large groups do not allow much time for audience interaction but getting the audience involved is a great way to keep your listeners engaged.

Show of Hands

One way to engage a large group is to ask for a show of hands. This is a great way to quickly assess a bit of on the fly information about your audience. You can use this type to strategy as an ice breaker and use the information to connect to your topic.

e.g.: "How many in this group have fed bananas to chimps?"

e.g.: "Well it seems like only a few of you are familiar with feeding chimps, but after my presentation I hope you will all have a greater understanding of why gloves are a must!"

Ask the audience questions – this can be a great way to promote interaction, but be ready for the silence that may follow. People need time to think and formulate a response so it is important to wait approximately 10 seconds – this can feel like an eternity and may take some practice to learn to get comfortable with the silence.

Talk to Your Neighbour

When you have a bit more time, one strategy is to ask participants to chat with their neighbour. It gives the audience a few minutes to connect what you are saying in your presentation to how it might apply in their lives. A good time to use 'talk with your neighbour' is after presenting a novel finding, protocol or idea e.g.: "Take a couple minutes to chat with your neighbor about how wearing slippers in the office may be beneficial your staff". You will need to keep an eye on the time and have an efficient way of getting everyone's attention back on you.

Open Discussion

When you have a lot time and a smaller group, get the group have a large room discussion. These discussions require quite a bit of time and an interesting topic to be effective. Group work is especially useful for testing out ideas and getting 'real world' input for problem solving e.g.: "We have identified that not everyone is getting access to the staff donuts, so we are going to take the next 15 minutes to discuss in large groups how to more effectively distribute donuts on 'Donut Tuesdays." The second part of this participation strategy is to report out. After the allotted discussion time, it is important to leave some time for the

groups to tell the rest of the participants their ideas. You will need to watch your time for this section, especially on topics (like donuts) that people can be very passionate about. Time monitoring tricks include limits ("you have two minutes starting now") or top 1/2/3 ("give me the top two ideas your group came up with") and can help keep the conversations moving along.

"This one time, I saw these ducklings...": How to Deal with Interruptions and Tangents
Presentations can get sidetracked when presenters or audience members go off topic during discussions. It can be a hard issue to deal with as often the topics are interesting and valid, but they just don't quite align with the subject at hand. The most common times presentations are derailed are during audience participation and question periods. It is a delicate task to respectfully move the conversation back to the intended purpose, so here are some suggestions that may be helpful when faced with this challenge.

1. **Don't be afraid to move your presentation along:** Unplanned discussions (both on and off topic) can take away from your allotted presentation time and lead to you rushing through the last of your slides. "I am conscious of the time and I want to make sure we get finished in time for lunch, so I am going to continue on with my presentation."

2. **Circle back to why you are there:** When you are faced with an off topic situation, gently remind your audience why you have been asked to speak. "I can see that there is a lot to discuss about party balloons, but my expertise is in streamers"

3. **Evaluate if it is worthwhile to spend some time on the topic:** This option usually only works with a small group when you have a larger amount of time, but if there is a lively conversation going on, evaluate if you should just let it continue. This is especially important when you are in a working group situation. You may think that the most important thing to discuss is a new protocol, but other circumstances may need to be sorted out before you can proceed. "Would you like to take some time working on the lack of cheese on the hot dogs problem or do you want to continue discussing chili fries?"

What if no one responds even after a long pause? You can answer the question yourself, or pose it again and direct people to discuss it with the person beside them.

How to Present Virtually

Some of the basics apply here too, such as the need to keep it simple and benefits of practicing ahead of time. But there are a few unique things to think about when it comes to presenting in a virtual environment…

- Build in strategies for interaction periodically. Every 5-8 minutes, change it up – add a poll, video clips, Q&A, anecdote, etc.

- Use the buddy system – have a second person assist with technical support and moderating so you can focus on delivering your presentation

- Know your software – do some research and testing to find out what functions (polling, chat, emoticons, etc) it has and plan your presentation to take advantage of these features

- Use more slides – In virtual presentations, it is more challenging to keep the audience members' attention because they are faced with so many more distractions. In order to hold their interest, use visually appealing slides and keep the pace brisk by changing slides every 30-60 seconds.

- Voice – in a virtual environment, a lot more of your impact depends on your voice. You may need to amplify your vocal energy in order to engage the audience.

- Preparation – check all your equipment ahead of time to ensure it works, set up in a quiet space, post a notice that a webcast is in progress so others know not to disturb you during your presentation, and turn off all other programs on your computer so they don't interfere with your presentation.

Excuse Me, I have a Question

Once the bulk of the presentation is over, it is time for questions. In your preparation, you may have thought about some possible questions the audience could ask. Even with ample planning, the great minds of your audience can surprise you with unexpected inquiries. In most cases, your familiarity with the subject matter will kick in and you will have an answer for your audience. If a question requires a long and detailed answer and time is short, give a high level answer and offer to meet for a longer discussion after the presentation is finished. In cases where you don't have an answer – don't be afraid to say so. Trying to 'fake' your way through a response will be obvious to the audience and can put the integrity of your presentation at risk. You don't have to know how an internal combustion engine works in order to be a good driver; similarly your audience will not expect you to to know everything about your presentation topic. Be honest and offer to respond to the question at a later time, after you have looked into the details

Check 1, 2 – Technical Tips for Using a Microphone

Microphones are a valuable presentation tool when used properly, but can be a technical disaster when mismanaged. Most people benefit from audio amplification in anything more than a small, intimate setting. Even if you think you have a loud, projecting voice, it is difficult to maintain the correct audio volume for any kind of lengthy presentation. As most of us don't moonlight as rockstars on the weekend, unfamiliarity with how to use a microphone is understandable. If an audio tech offers to set you up with the system (brief sound check, placing of mics etc), always say yes; this is their field of expertise. If you are left to your own devices, here are a few technical tidbits.

Lapel/Lavalier Mics
These little gems are convenient and small, but the most finicky to use. Lapel microphones usually consist of the actual clip on microphone and a battery belt pack. The microphone works best when clipped to the upper chest, below your chin and pointed up at your face. Keep the microphone away from jewellery that could hit it and cause jingling or other extraneous noises. Avoid bumping it with your arms and place the battery pack in your pocket or clipped to your belt area. Don't forget you are wearing a microphone, you don't want to take it with you to the bathroom by accident.

Get Close to the Microphone

For handheld microphones, you should only be able to fit your clenched fist between your mouth and the microphone – nothing more. Speak directly into it, do not try to talk into the sides or hold it at an angle. The tendency is to 'drop' the microphone away from your face as time goes on, practice holding a water bottle in front of your face when you rehearse to become familiar with how it feels.

Speak Up

A common mistake with microphones is speaking too quietly. You want to maintain your normal voice tone; the microphone needs to be able to pick something up in order to amplify it. Be sure to maintain the same volume throughout and check with the audience to see that everyone can hear you.

Avoid Feedback

That high pitch squeal will have your audience cringing but you can do your best to avoid it. Never cover the microphone with your hand or drop it away from your face into your clothes. Get closer to the microphone; feedback is often caused be a weak signal (it is trying too hard to pick up your voice). Finally, know where the speakers are. Walking in front of the speaker while holding a microphone is sure way to cause a squeal. Be especially aware of this if you like to move about the room when you present, take a look before-hand to see where your 'safe zones' are.

Is this thing on?

Does your microphone have an on/off switch or a mute button? Ask that question when it is handed to you. You may want to keep the microphone off or muted before you start presenting, but be sure turn it on before you start. Keep in mind that wireless microphones will need a few seconds to connect if they have been off; turn it on and count to five before you start speaking into it.

> **"The most precious things in speech are the pauses."**
>
> **Sir Ralph Richardson**

Sayings to Avoid in a Presentation

If a presenter says this….	It means that he or she needs to…
"So I'm not really sure what I am supposed to talk to you all about today"	**Review the purpose of the presentation and anticipate what the audience would benefit from**
"I have a ton of slides here so I am just going breeze through some of them"	**Reduce the number of slides and simplify the content to support your key message**
"You probably can't read what is on this slide but…."	**Ensure slides are easy to understand with clear visuals and large fonts**
"I know this graph is really complicated but…"	**Decide what data is important for the audience to know and use a graphic that clearly displays this information**
"Ummm…er…umm…"	**Practice, practice, practice to get more comfortable and confident**
"…and I guess that's it!"	**Finish strong with a summary of key messages from the presentation**

DON'T SWITCH OFF THOSE DEVICES!

It's a whole new world out there! Technology is evolving at a rapid pace and offers many opportunities to enhance presentations. People may use devices to take notes, look up information on the spot, or connect with others using social media. Don't worry if some people's eyes are on their devices instead of you – chances are, they are not playing games or checking their email, but using these tools to help them learn more! If you question the group's attentiveness, ask them a question.

Debrief – the Presentation Post-Mortem

Congratulations on completing your presentation! Once the applause ends and the dust has settled, it is time to think about what went well, and what could have gone better. Each presentation has the potential to be a great learning opportunity and spending a bit of time discussing the details can really improve your future speaking opportunities.

Your Personal Reflections

Soon after the presentation, take some time to write down how you thought the day went. Where did you feel the most confident and where did your nerves kick in the most? Had you adequately rehearsed? Did anything throw you off your game and could that be avoided next time? Take some time to think about how things could be done better in the future. It is also important to think about what went well; your timing was spot on, your audience was engaged and attentive, words actually came out of your mouth despite your paralyzing fear. All those feats are worth celebrating! Being aware of your own presentation strengths and weaknesses will allow you to prepare more completely next time.

Ask the Audience

If you know someone in the audience, ask them for some specific feedback. Remember, the audience wants you to succeed and most people are kind and professional, so questions like "how did I do?" might not get you the information you want. Asking questions such as "how could I improve my slides?" or "how did the pace of the presentation feel to you?" will result in more constructive information that you can use for improvement. Participant evaluations are another way to get a sense of how your presentation was received.

If you have the option to 'plant' a colleague in the audience, you can give him/her a few specific things to look for. Avoid a laundry list of all the things you have worked on, instead choose 2-3 main elements that you want feedback on. This short list still allows you observer to enjoy your presentation, but will also bring him/her attention to specifics that may not be consciously noted by other audience members. Keep in mind that if you ask for feedback, you should be prepared to receive it.

> **"The success of your presentation will be judged not by the knowledge you send but by what the listener receives."**
>
> **Lilly Walters**

Thank You All for Coming

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with some basic information on presenting. There are so many great resources available for speakers wanting to improve their skills that can't all be included here. You are encouraged to explore in more detail your areas of interest as you mature as a presenter: courses are available on creating a narrative and storytelling, there are some amazing books on slide preparation and someone, somewhere has made a video on how to make a line graph. Keep challenging yourself as a presenter by trying new things and most of all, have some fun up there!

Accept your applause – before you rush off stage or shrink down behind the computer to fumble with your slides, take a moment to stand calmly and acknowledge the applause from the audience. You have worked hard to prepare and deliver your presentation and deserve a little appreciation!

"Your best teacher is your last mistake."

Ralph Nader

Presentation Checklist

Each presenter will have his/her own method of preparing for their presentation. You may find a checklist useful, especially if the concepts in this section are new.

Do I have one key message for this presentation? ● Yes   ● No

What is the key message: ---

Do I have a few ideas to support my key message? ● Yes   ● No

What are the ideas: ---

Do I have the right amount of time to present my key ideas? ● Yes   ● No

How long have I been given: ---

How long is my rehearsed presentation: ---

How long did I leave for questions: --

Do I know my audience members? ● Yes   ● No

Who are they: --

What do they know already: --

What will they find interesting: ---

Do I have the content I need to support my key message? ● Yes   ● No

What details are essential: ---

Can I create a story with my content? ● Yes   ● No

What is the essence of my story: --

Does my PowerPoint supplement my content? ● Yes   ● No

Are the slides: ● Simple ● Uncluttered ● Easy to read ● Visually appealing ● Well-paced

Have I used jargon or acronyms? ● Yes   ● No

What terms may need an explanation: --

Do I need speaking notes? ● Yes   ● No

What details need to be included in the notes: --

Will the audience know where to get more information? ● Yes   ● No

Have I included my contact information: --

Are there others involved that people may contact: --

What references could provide more information: --

Do I have the right attire for this presentation? ● Yes   ● No

What is the tone of the event: --

What do I feel comfortable wearing: --

Do I have data to display in my presentation? ● Yes   ● No

Do I need to use a graph: --

Which type of graph should I use: ---

Is the graph easy to understand: --

Do I need to include handouts? ● Yes   ● No

What additional information should go in the handout: --

How should I distribute the handouts in the presentation: --

Have I rehearsed delivering my presentation? ● Yes   ● No

Practice, Practice, Practice: --

Is there someone I can practice with who will give me feedback: ---

Endnotes

Books & Articles

1. Atkinson, Cliff. "Beyond bullet points: Using Microsoft PowerPoint to create presentations that inform, motivate, and inspire." Microsoft Press: 2011.

2. Mueller, Pam, and Daniel Oppenheimer. "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking." Psychological science (2014): 0956797614524581.

3. Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. Made to stick: Why some ideas survive and others die. Random House LLC: 2007.

Websites

1. Crafting Effective Virtual Presentations: c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.aclea.org/resource/collection/CD12774D-C9F1-49AB-B237-0064CA8C7D25/22_-_Crafting_Effective_Virtual_Presentations.pdf

2. Data Visualization: blogs.hbr.org/2014/04/the-quick-and-dirty-on-data-visualization

3. Delivering Kickbutt Virtual Presentations: presentationadvisors.com/ten-tips-for-delivering-a-kickbutt-virtual-presentation

4. Excellent Virtual Presentations: trainingindustry.com/media/3217793/mandel%20%20best%20practices%20for%20excellent%20virtual%20presentations.pdf

5. How to Give a Killer Presentation: www.greenpowerconferences.com/home/downloads/Harvard-Business-Review_How-To-Give-a-Killer-Presentation.pdf

6. How to Present: slideshare.net/darkwind2k/how-to-present-a-presentation-presentation

7. Presentation Skills: presentationsoft.about.com/od/presentationtips/tp/110115-presentation-skills-presentation-goals

8. Presentation Zen: www.presentationzen.com

9. Ten Commandments of Presentations: slideshare.net/NadineHanafi/the-ten-commandments-of-presentations
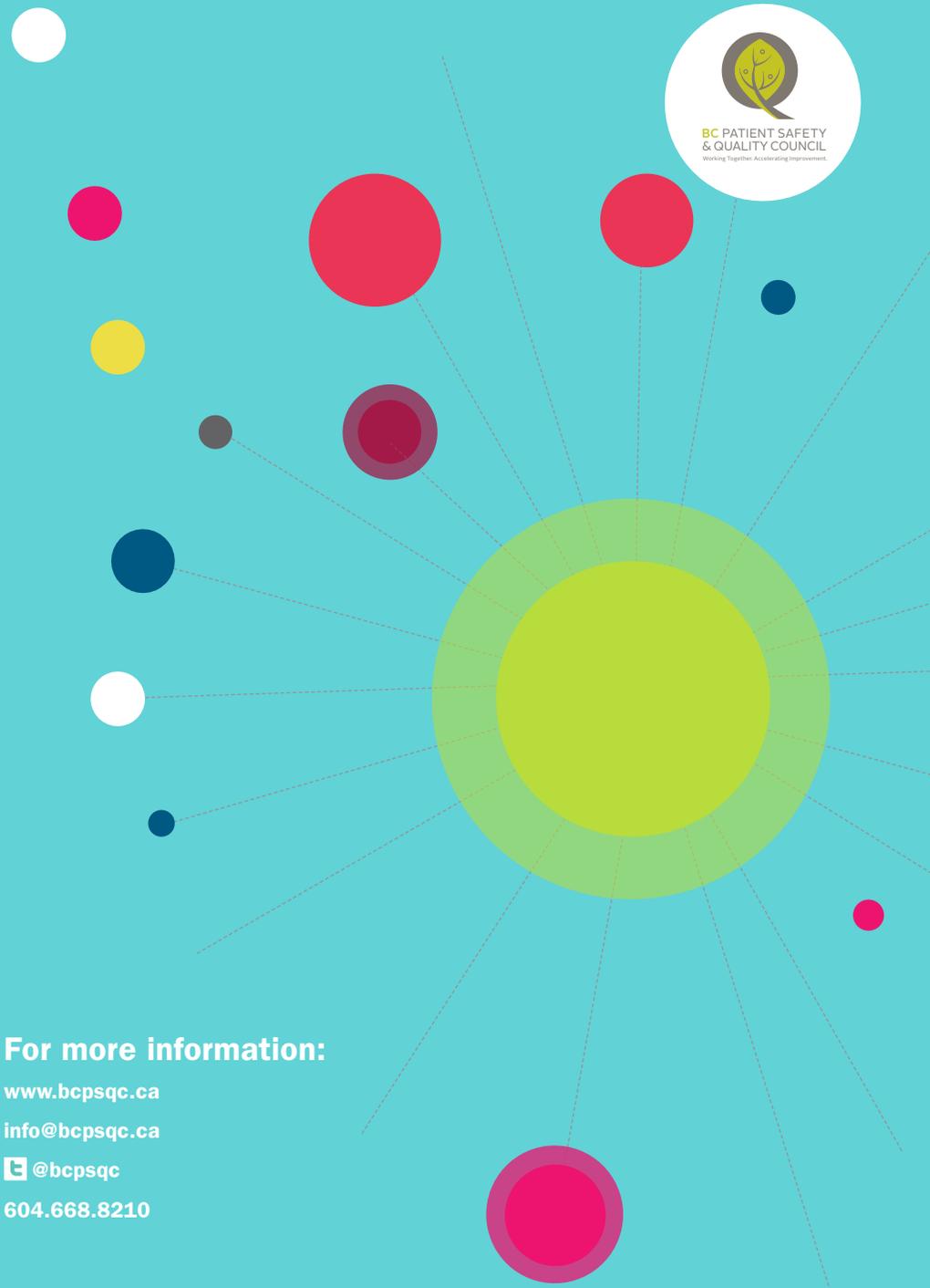
For more information:

www.bcpsqc.ca

info@bcpsqc.ca

@bcpsqc

604.668.8210