

How to

...make great presentations

With the help of computers and software such as PowerPoint and Keynote, it's fairly easy to make a presentation. However, if you want to make a presentation that grips your audience and get over the points you need to make really effectively, a bit of thought and planning are essential to get the three key components right:

- **Content** - which points do you really need to make, and to whom?
- **Design** - how can you make the presentation look good and text easy to read on-screen?
- **Delivery** - how will you project yourself as well as the slides to connect with your audience?

What points do you need to make?

As with any form of communication, you need to consider the needs of your audience by answering these questions:

- 1 What do they know already?
- 2 What do they need to know?
- 3 What do I want them to do (or think) differently at the end?

The difference between 1 and 2 will help you decide which are the key points you need to make. Question 3 may help you decide how to make the points.

Actually, there is a fourth question: *What can I realistically hope to achieve in this presentation?* If you have more than two or three main points to make, you may end up bewildering your audience.

It's better to make two points really well so that the audience remembers them than ramble on through 10 points which are all forgotten.

Don't even open the presentation software until you have answered all the questions in this section.

Organising your presentation

Still don't open the software - you really do need to plan and organise the presentation first.

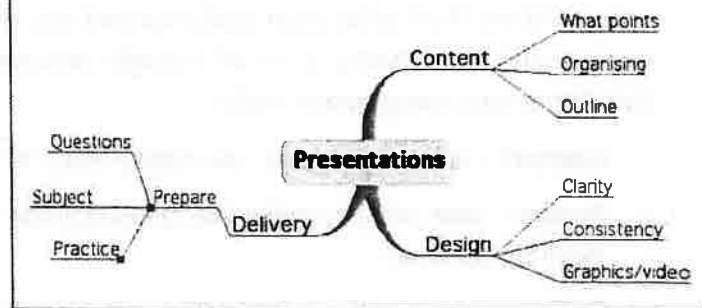
Failing to plan is planning to fail.

Outline

The first step in planning the presentation is to outline the main points and the sequence in which you want to make them.

You may find mind mapping to be a useful technique to help organise your thoughts. Start a mind map at the centre with the main topic then add branches for each main point you want to make. Sub-branches help fill in the detail of the smaller

Mind map of this 'How to' sheet



points, but the tree shape keeps you focused back to the main topic and the key points. (There is a worksheet on 'How to...use mind maps'.)

You could create an outline in (say) Word using heading and sub-heading styles which can be imported directly into PowerPoint to create slides.

Whichever way you plan the presentation, make sure that the content is all relevant to the audience and that it flows logically from one point to another.

Keep it simple and clear - many presentations are just too complicated and disjointed. The fact that you've told or shown people during the course of your presentation doesn't mean that it has been heard, seen and taken in.

Structure

You should also plan the timing and structure of the presentation. Try reading the slides out loud and allow yourself time to say whatever needs to be said. To give the presentation structure, plan to have:

- a **beginning** — where you introduce the topic
- a **middle** — where you develop the main points, and
- an **end** — where you recap the main points.

Tell them what you're going to tell them.

Tell them.

Tell them what you've told them.