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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Personal Reflection	3
Successful presentation skills.....	5
Analysis of how to improve personal presentation skills..	8
Conclusion	11
References.....	12

Introduction

Academic skills are essential in increasing the chances for one to be successful in academics and also extend to one's career life (McMillan and Weyers, 2012). Academic skills range from time management skills, report writing skills, communication skills, planning skills, research skills and even presentation skills. These skills are acquired at school while attending lecture lessons and modules that help develop these skills. The skills further extend to remain applicable even after school, in employment opportunities presented. This report is based on understanding the need and importance of presentation skills and how confidence

can be achieved and further contribute to delivering successful presentations.

Personal Reflection

As a student, I have gained various skills successfully. However, in other skill sets, I am yet to fully grasp the best way to deliver results with the use of these skills. With the help of the SWOT analysis tool I have been able to identify the skills that I am good at and also point out my weaknesses as presented in the table below:

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
I am very good at communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal. I can audibly and	However, my tutor pointed out that I need to improve my presentation skills.	There is an opportunity for me to improve my presentation skills by help from acquiring	I have a busy schedule both at school and work hence it

confidently address an audience and ensure that they understand the intended information. I also have strong research skills. I can comfortably look into a topic and provide relevant information	Although I am quite audible while delivering my research, there is a need to improve my confidence, hence I need to better my presentation skills.	tips from the book on successful presentation skills by Bradbury Andrews.	might take longer to acquire the skills I need despite looking for extra hours to squeeze into my timetable .
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with correct citations relating to the topic.			
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Successful presentation skills

Bradbury (2006) strongly agrees that presentation skills involve the technique that an individual requires in order to deliver, compelling, engaging, enlightening and transformative information. Presentations majorly are about communication and understanding the audience. Bradbury (2006) further points out that presentations are all about apt preparation and taking a good amount of time into putting the right information in the slides.

Bradbury (2006) shares some essential skills in presentations that can help a person become successful in presentations. Bradbury points out the importance of confidence in presentations and shares some of the ways in

which confidence can be built on a personal level and also through the audience.

Bradbury (2006) puts emphasis on understanding your audience through their body language and signals. While delivering presentations it is important to capture the audience's attention. This can be enhanced through the use of visuals and also by ensuring the presentation brings more understanding especially if it is theory-based. This will help draw more attention and interest from the audience which also helps create a calm and confident composure while delivering the presentation.

Bradbury (2006) also points out that drawing attention to a participant from the audience who finds the presentation interesting can help build confidence for a presenter. However, focusing on one particular person during the entire presentation is not advisable. Therefore, Bradbury suggests that implementing the aura effect be much more effective. The aura effect points out that a presenter may

look into the direction of a side of the audience and a number of people will feel the presenter's attention is particularly on them yet that's not the case. Hence a number of audience attention will be drawn to the presenter. This lets the presenter know that the presentation being delivered to the audience is understandable hence it helps build confidence further into the presentation until completion.

Additionally, one should also create a sense of perspective that directly benefits the presenter. This encompasses identifying presenter strengths and giving extra attention to these strengths so as to further boost confidence. This applies to what helps boost confidence while delivering a presentation. Whether it is using flipcharts, scripts or writing short notes to help deliver the presentation, it is important to maximise these strengths (Bradbury, 2006).

Bradbury (2006) further points out that being ready also helps boost confidence. Readiness involves taking

adequate time in preparing for the presentation. This entails ensuring that the presentation accommodates all the requirements including the right images for the presentation. Adequate preparation helps a presenter gain more control of the presentation which in turn builds the presenter's confidence.

Bradbury (2006) further suggests various ideas to help boost confidence. This includes relaxation exercises such as breathing exercises that include taking deep breaths and counting to ten. One can also take 10-20 minutes of quiet time before engaging with the presentation. Additionally, if attention is disrupted, counting to 10 with breathing exercises is recommended.

Analysis of how to improve personal presentation skills

Improving personal presentation skills involves gaining enough confidence that will help deliver presentations that meet the desired objective. There is a need to maintain eye

contact with the audience. Applying the aura effect as outlined by Bradbury (2006) shows effectiveness as I will also be able to draw the attention and interest of the audience with this approach. This will help gain control of the presentation and also boost confidence.

Moreover, putting more attention and effort to prepare for the presentations will help improve my skills. This extends to making consultations with my identified colleagues who are good at presentations and borrowing some ideas to help improve my presentation skills. Prior preparations help gain more confidence, especially when addressing the audience since the ideas have been cross-checked to better suit the information conveyed through the presentation.

An evaluation of lessons learnt

I have learnt that confidence is a key aspect in helping accomplish successful presentation skills. Therefore, boosting confidence should be a key focus to help improve my presentation skills. I have also learnt that confidence is

much more improved when one has control of their presentation. To achieve this control, there is a need to understand ways that help draw interest and attention from the audience.

It is also important to note that in presentations, communication skills are dependable. Thus, it is important for a presenter to create a rapport with the audience. Thus, it is important to create room for feedback or queries and concerns that the audience might have with regard to the presentation delivered. Moreover, to help boost confidence, it is important to maintain eye contact with my audience with the application of the aura effect (Bradbury, 2006). This also helps draw the audience's attention and interest as they think the focus is much on them.

I have also learnt that audience body language and signs can also help understand the thinking style of the audience. This is important as a presenter as it helps fathom how the audience views the presentation. It also helps ascertain that

the audience's concentration on the presentation has been achieved.

I have also learnt methods which can help me improve my relaxation as I prepare to make a presentation. Taking a moment to myself and doing breathing exercises helps build calmness and also contributes to building confidence. Additionally, taking on the exercise of the circle of excellence (Bradbury 2006) can also help build confidence before taking on a presentation. The circle of excellence helps promote thoughts of confidence before addressing an audience.

Conclusion

In conclusion, successful presentation skills are crucial to improving and initiating academic success. To achieve overall successful presentation skills, it is important to have confidence. Bradbury defines various ways in which a presenter can achieve confidence. It includes gaining control of the presentation by making prior preparations to

help ensure the presentation has the right information and visuals for the audience to understand. Additionally, understanding the audience's body signs and language is important. Eye contact with the audience also helps create the aura effect which helps to further draw interest and attention and further gain control of the presentation. Confidence requires one to also be relaxed. This can be enhanced through breathing techniques such as quiet time and counting to 10. Another technique that can be used is the circle of excellence technique.

References

- Bradbury, A. (2006). *Successful Presentation Skills* London: Kogan Page
- McMillan, K, and Weyers, J.D.B. (2012). *The Study Skills Book*, 3rd Ed. Harlow: Pearson.