



Cognitrix Ltd.

Ideas, Implementation & Improvisation

How to Give a Truly "Bad" Presentation

The most popular workshop I give is the one on Presentation Skills. In the interest of maintaining standards and uniformity among all the "bad" presenters, I have compiled this list of tips which will guarantee your next presentation "bombs" spectacularly! And who knows, with luck, you may never be invited to speak again!

1. Make sure you have no useful reason to be making the presentation. That ensures you don't have any motivation. And if you can think of your presentation as some sort of torture, all the better.
2. Never consider the audience, and especially never consider what they might want or need.
3. Make sure you have no point to your presentation. If abstinence is too difficult for you, then make sure you have lots of points. Either way the audience will be completely baffled about what you were on about.
4. Never have a plan or structure to your talk. Present everything in a random and unconnected order.
5. Overload them with information - the more the better. Bury them with facts, especially trivial or irrelevant facts and details.
6. Use lots of specialist jargon and never explain any terms.
7. Have lots of slides, preferably several for every minute you intend to talk. In fact, bring along extra so that you can go over your time limit with ammunition to spare.
8. Never use pictures. Use lots of text, preferably in a small font with full long-winded sentences. Large blocks of text ensure they won't make the effort to read your slides, so you can put anything on your slides.
9. Use a small font (less than 18 point). This ensures that anyone further than the front row won't be able to read it and they will become bored and frustrated more quickly.
10. On the rare occasions where you can't avoid using a figure of some kind, choose colours which will render parts of it "invisible" when projected on the screen. Then you can tell the audience with a straight face that it looked fine on your PC at home.
11. Aim for very low contrast on your slides. Attempt to make everything "middle grey" in terms of its lightness/saturation.
12. Have lots of animation effects, preferably one of each type. The same applies for sound effects. Some people have even managed to combine more than one effect. One person had managed to combine the bounce with the spiral to create a truly spectacular animation effect. I can't recall what she talked about but I still have visions of the bouncing spinning picture as it came into the slide. Re-install PowerPoint if necessary to make sure all the animation and sound effects are available.

13. Never introduce yourself. That makes it harder for them to hunt you down later, after your presentation has finished.
14. Never start on time. 15-30 minutes is fashionably late. Then make sure to run over your allotted time by at least 30 minutes so that they feel like they had full measure.
15. Leave any enthusiasm, excitement, interest or other signs of life, safely locked away at home. You wouldn't want to waste these precious commodities on strangers.
16. Speak very softly or very loudly. Also speak very slowly with frequent long pauses or very quickly and non-stop. Speak in a perfectly rhythmical monotone. Clench your jaw so that your mouth can't open properly – after all, if it was good enough for Clint Eastwood, then it's good enough for them.
17. Either stand completely still without any movement or bounce around the platform as if you've just swallowed a bottle of amphetamines.
18. Never look any of the audience in the eye. Look at the screen, the ceiling, the floor or either side wall. If you feel forced to look at the audience to check if they are asleep or have left, then use the "radar sweep" where you sweep your eyes over their heads and then look at the screen again.
19. Continuously keep count of every mistake you've made or fact you forgot to mention. Criticise yourself ruthlessly and remorselessly – preferably with a high-pitched tone that reminds you of a dental drill. If possible, hyperventilate by taking shallow gasping breaths in your upper chest. Notice any sweaty palms or shaking and criticise yourself for these as well. Hold the laser pointer at one spot so everyone can see the trembling.
20. Finish abruptly, without warning, and especially without a conclusion or summary of any kind. Leave them wondering. It will be easier to leave the room while they are still waking up or confused.
21. During question period, take every question personally and respond to all questions with aggression and hostility. If you can make rude allegations about their incompetence, all the better. Make sure to completely twist their question by re-phrasing it in the least helpful manner you can. If you are unable to manage aggression and rudeness, then choose from panic, freezing, going blank, fainting, crying, running away or any combination which will cause the most disruption.