



Cognitrix Ltd.

Ideas, Implementation & Improvisation

Presentations are Murder!

My wife is a big fan of murder mysteries and it occurred to me that we can also plan our presentations using the same principles that we would use if we were planning a murder. There are several factors which any good "murderer" needs to consider:

1. Victims?

(Who are the intended targets?)

2. Motive?

(What do we want to accomplish or gain by the "murder"?)

3. Opportunity?

(What are the conditions - when & where will the "murder" take place?)

4. Means?

(What is the best method to accomplish our goals?)

"Intended Victims"

Now, in the context of planning a presentation, your intended target is the audience. (I am of course assuming that your presentation won't be so awful that "victim" is actually a more accurate description of how they will feel!) So, consider the audience and ask yourself the following questions:

What do they know?

What is their experience?

What do they believe?

What do they think is important?

What do they want or expect from your presentation? Why should they show up & listen?

What are their feelings or frame of mind?

What might they resist or object to?

"Motives"

Next you need to consider your "motives" in giving the presentation. Ask yourself the following questions:

How can you "profit" from your audience?

What do you want from them?

Respect?

Agreement with your ideas or conclusions?

Ideas or comments from them?

Suggestions for future work?

Collaboration?

Funding or money?

Employment?

"Opportunity"

After you consider your intended target and what you expect to gain from "murdering" them with your presentation, you need to consider the opportunity. Ask yourself the following questions:

- When is your presentation and how might that affect things?
- Is it the first day of the conference or the last?
- Is it the first presentation of the day when they are more alert?
- Is it the last presentation of the day when they are tired?
- Is it after lunch when they are sleepy from food & drink?
- What is the room like?
- Is it large or small?
- What is the temperature? Too hot, too cold or just right?
- How is the ventilation? Is it fresh or stuffy?
- What resources are available?
- What is the size of the screen & where is it positioned?
- What sort of pointer do they have available?
- Is a computer provided or do you need to bring your own laptop?
- Do they have a remote or radio-controlled mouse or does it have a cord? drink?
- Do you require a video playback facility? Or a sound system?
- Is there a microphone? Is it attached to the lectern or can you clip it to your lapel? Does the microphone have a cord or is it a radio-microphone?

"Means"

Finally, you need to consider the means available to you to accomplish your objectives. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What would motivate them to agree or act as you want?
- What is the essential message?
- What argument could you provide?
- What evidence do you have?
- How would you need to deliver your message?
- Would you use OHPs, slides, PowerPoint, activities, demonstrations, ...
- What questions would you expect? How would you handle them?

So, the next time you have a presentation, why not "murder" it?