

17 Presentation Principles

STRATEGY

Preparation Time

Quality takes time. It usually takes 2X to 3X as long to create a high quality presentation as to complete a first version. Use the extra time to pare the talk down to the essentials, get feedback from colleagues, and make the slides more visually pleasing.



Adapt

Every audience is different. Research the audience prior to the presentation and adapt the content to address their interests and concerns. For small groups, you may even try treating every slide as a backup slide.



Motivate First

Create the desire to hear what you have to say before you say it. Do this by performing an amazing demo, proposing an interesting question, or describing a conflict. Your key points should satisfy the curiosity generated in the early stages of the presentation.



Judo Persuasion

In Judo you use your opponent's force against him. If your audience already opposes your views before hearing your argument, take a more even-handed approach: Represent both sides of the issue as an unbiased authority. Supporting your opponent's argument builds credibility with a hostile audience, making them more likely to hear your key points. You will likely win some of them over!



ORGANIZATION

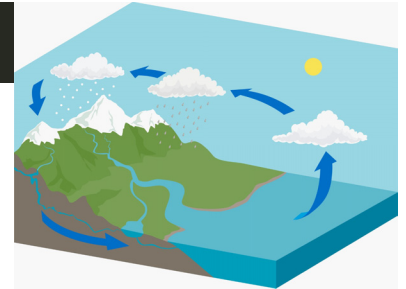
Timeline

Present your material in chronological order. Try crafting a narrative during the presentation by establishing a setting, conflict, and resolution. Humans naturally think in terms of stories happening across time.



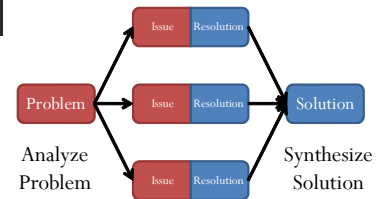
System

Show how your ideas relate overall as a system. This should be used when the relationship between concepts is most important and when they form a clear hierarchy.



Problem-Solution

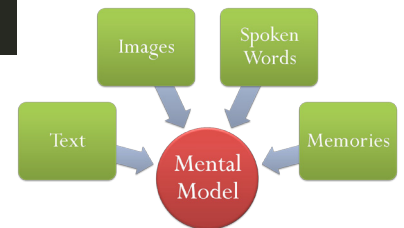
Begin by analyzing a major problem to break it down into parts. Then show how each issue can be addressed, leading to a solution.



TACTICS

Mental Model

Humans learn by building mental models. Working memory can only hold about 7 pieces of data. Use visuals to point out what few elements should be used to build the model. Do not convey more than one mental model or concept per slide. Remove any excess visuals that are not critical to building the current model.[1]

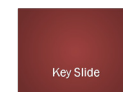


Agenda

Create an agenda slide by showing 3 key visuals from your presentation along with a simple explanation of each. Do not list the introduction or conclusion, as these are assumed to be part of every presentation.[2]



Topic #1



Topic #2

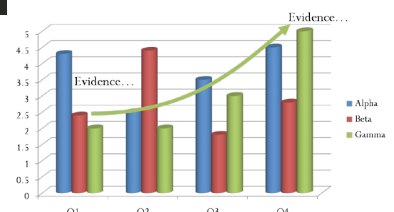


Topic #3

Assertion - Evidence

This pattern is useful for technical and scientific presentations. Make your assertion at the top of the slide as a complete sentence. Use most of the slide for a chart or graph that supports the argument. Annotate the chart with interpretations of the data that support the assertion.[2]

Assertion



Topic Change

Use a simple slide to show your audience that you are making a major change in topic. This “cleanses the palette” of the minds of the audience and informs them that they don’t have to hold the previous information in mind.

TOPIC CHANGE

Contrast

To focus on the contrast between two different ideas, place them opposite each other in contrasting colors. This is a strong mnemonic device to reinforce the differences between the two concepts.[3]

Light

Dark

Color

Use color to enhance meaning, and clarify distinctions but not as the sole means of communicating information. Your slides may be viewed by those with color blindness, or printed in black and white.

Game Schedule

| Date | Location |
|--------------|------------|
| January 3rd | Boston |
| February 5th | @ Toronto |
| March 21st | @ New York |
| April 12th | San Diego |
| April 23rd | @ Buffalo |

Blank Slide

This is the “no slide” slide. Either create a plain black or white slide within the presentation slides, or press ‘b’ during a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. This places all of the focus on the speaker for particular emphasis.

Proof Point

Enhance your credibility by using proof points. Proof points provide 3rd party or objective support for a claim. These can be product reviews, independent lab tests, industry reports, prototypes, customer testimonials, or other evidence. For small meetings or presentations, print it out or place it physically in front of the audience! Physical evidence is more compelling than a projected image or spoken words.



Demo

Demos are powerful proof points that show that what you are talking about is real. In addition, when done at the start of a presentation, they motivate the audience to learn more about how the demo worked or the details behind the product. They can also be used as part of an adaptive presentation where audience questions about the demo set the agenda for the rest of the talk.



Whiteboard

Write key ideas on a whiteboard so they remain in view during the entire talk. Refer back to these points during the presentation. Use a whiteboard for interactive segments like building a value proposition with input from the audience. Also try using the whiteboard to list key pain points from the audience and then returning to the pain points as you address them throughout the talk.



References

- [1] Mayer, Richard E. Multimedia Learning. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- [2] Alley, Michael. The Craft of Scientific Presentations. New York: Springer, 2003.
- [3] Atkinson, Cliff. Beyond Bullet Points. Redmond: Microsoft Press, 2005.

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Kevin Gee Consulting, LLC is a business consulting firm based in Silicon Valley. We provide high tech product marketing and product management expertise as well as market strategy to startups and private equity firms.

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