



# An instant guide to presentation skills

by Chris Croft



- 1 Start your planning by thinking "What's my one central message?" Your whole presentation should be designed around this, and should keep referring back to it.
- 2 Prepare your first minute really carefully - once you're off to a good start you'll be fine.
- 3 Look smart, professional, and boring! Resist anything wacky or sexy since you don't want the audience being distracted from your message.
- 4 Imagine the presentation going really well. Say to yourself that you enjoy doing talks because you're good at them and they always go really well.
- 5 Stand up to do your presentation, even if it's only to two people. Use a flipchart as an excuse to stand.
- 6 Ensure equal eye contact for all, especially those at the ends and corners.
- 7 Show an agenda at the start, and frequently refer back to it so they always know where they are in the 'tunnel'.
- 8 Your introduction should include an answer to the question that all of the audience will be asking themselves: "What's in it for me?"
- 9 Be interactive - ask the audience questions as you go along. This keeps them attentive, and also allows you to adapt the speed and content to their needs. It's also nice to know that they are still with you.
- 10 Use examples to make abstract ideas come to life.
- 11 Always use a visual aid: flip chart, OHP, PowerPoint, whiteboard, or just notes placed in front of them. Select the right visual aid depending on audience size and the level of formality of the talk.
- 12 To remind you of your next point use bullet points written in large writing on a sheet of A4 and placed on a table in front of you. Don't use cards, and never read from a script. Using your visual aid to prompt you is the best way of all.
- 13 Plan how you'll finish - probably a summing up with a call to action. Rather than fizzling out, your talk should have a "stand up and applaud" finish.
- 14 Finish on time - this means planning your talk, probably only having one slide per 5 minutes, having a run-through, and perhaps having a section near the end that you can miss out if you need to.

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