EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION SKILLS

Introduction

Have you ever seen a keynote presentation done by Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple Inc? If you have, you know what it means to have 'effective presentation skills.' Steve Jobs is not the only one who has this ability, there are plenty more.

Problems are meant to exist in organizations. That's why there should be a strong process and supporting tools for identifying the causes of the problems before the problems damage the organization.

If you are to communicate an idea, concept or a product, you need to have good presentation skills in order to grab the attention of the audience and become the center of attention.

This way, it is easy for you to get the audience's support. The audience can range from your college classmates to an executive board of a multinational company.

There are many software packages you can use for presentation purposes. Of course, it is not mandatory to use software for your presentation, but the effect is much greater when you use such tools for your purpose. Many of these software tools are equipped with features and facilities to make your presentation experience easy and pleasant.

Having just an idea or a product to communicate and a software package to create your presentations do not make you an effective presenter. For this, you should prepare yourself in advance and also should develop some skills. Let's take a look at some of the pointers that will help you to become a top-class presenter.

Guidelines for Designing the Presentation

The design and the layout of the presentation have an impact on how the audience receives it. Therefore, you need to focus more on the clarity of your presentation and the content.

Following are some points you should consider when designing your presentation.

- Derive the top three goals that you want to accomplish through your presentation. The entire presentation should focus on achieving these three goals. If you are not clear about what you want to achieve, your audience can easily miss the point of your presentation.

- Understand what your audience is. Think why they are there to see your presentation and their expectations. Study the background of the audience in advance if possible. When you do the presentation, make sure that you communicate to them that they are 'selected' for this presentation.

- Have a list of points that you want to communicate to your audience, prioritize them accordingly. See whether there is any point that is difficult to understand by the audience. If there are such points, chunk them further.

- Decide on the tone you want to use in the presentation. It could be motivational, informational, celebration, etc.

- Prepare an opening speech for the presentation. Do not spend much time on it though.

- Point out all contents in brief and explain them as you've planned.

- Have a Q&A *questionsandanswers* session at the end of the presentation.

Choosing the Presentation Materials

When your presentation is supported by additional material, you can make more impact on the audience. Reports, articles and flyers are just a few examples.

If your presentation is informative and a lot of data is presented, handing out a soft or hard copy of

your presentation is a good idea.

Following are some guidelines on presentation materials:

- Make sure that you check the computer, projector and network connectivity in advance to the presentation. I'm sure you do not want to spend the first half of your presentation fixing those in front of your audience.

- Use a simple, but consistent layout. Do not overload the presentation with images and animations.

- When it comes to time allocation, spend 3-5 minutes for each slide. Each slide should ideally have about 5-8 bullet lines. This way, the audience can stay focused and grab your points.

- Do not distribute the supplementary material before the presentation. They may read the material during the presentation and miss what you say. Therefore, distribute the material after the presentation.

Presentation Delivery

Delivering the presentation is the most important step of the process. This is where you make the primary contact with your audience. Consider the following points in order to deliver an effective presentation.

- Be prepared for your presentation. Complete the designing phase of the presentation and practice it a few times before you actually do it. This is the most important part of your presentation. Know the content of your presentation in and out. When you know your presentation, you can recover if something goes wrong.

- Use true examples to explain your points. If these examples are common to you and the audience, it will have a great impact. Use your personal experiences to show them the practical point of view.

- Relax! Stay relaxed and calm during the presentation. Your body language is quite important for the audience. If they see you tensed, they may not receive what you say. They may even judge you!

- Use humour in the presentation. Use it naturally to make your point. Do not try to crack jokes when you are not supposed to do it.

- Pay attention to details. Remember the old saying; devil is in details. Choose the place, people and materials wisely.

Conclusion

Presenting your idea to convince an audience is always a challenge.

Every presentation is a new experience for all of us. Therefore, you should plan your presentations way in advance.

Pay close attention to the points we discussed above and adhere to them in your next presentation.

Good luck!

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