

Making an Impactful Presentation

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It is a challenging task to create, design and make an impactful presentation. Further, it is even more challenging to create a positive influence on the audience if the presentation has a tight timeline. Presentations are made for multiple purposes such as project proposals, business plans, scientific discoveries, budget plans, product releases and lectures. Regardless of the type of the presentation, it is a Herculean task to grab the attention of audience to convey your points across. In this article, we have illustrated few P's that are required in making an impactful presentation:

P1- Purpose: It is highly important to understand the purpose of the presentation? To understand the importance, ask yourselves the following questions: What is the purpose of this presentation? Is it to inform? Is it to stand for an evaluation? Is to train the audience? Is it to propose a business? Is it for an approval? Because, understanding the purpose of the presentation enhances the clarity in the thought process. This further will enrich the things to be mentioned and points to be articulated during the presentation.

P2- People: Secondly, it is important to know the targeted audience of the presentation. To understand your audience, ask yourselves the following question: The presentation is addressed to whom? This will help us to prepare the presentation as per the expectation of those people. Further, this analysis will also bring clarity on points to emphasize, questions that may arise, etc. This understanding on the audience of the presentation such as number of audiences, their interest, background, their level of knowledge on the topic and their preferences will facilitate the articulation of thoughts. It is equally important to observe the interest and focus of the audience during the presentation. This may help of dynamic personalization of the presentation.

P3-Plan: Planning the presentation can bring visualizations about the presentation to your mind which will answer the following questions: What is to be communicated at which slide? What are the points that need to be highlighted? How much data that need to be provided on each slide? This analysis will identify the points that meets the purpose and that do not. The substantial points that meets the purpose contributes for the better score of the presentation. This planning helps us to identify the points to narrate with and connect with. One important outcome of planning is the identification of appropriate number of slides and the content for the presentation.

P4- Prepare: Planning of the presentation is followed by its preparing. This P is very essential and has no shortcuts. Preparation is essential for any proper presentation. It should be noted that expertise in the domain can only bring down the time required for presentation. However, preparation cannot be skipped. The complexity and the significance of the presentation matter also decide the time required to prepare the presentation. The importance of the preparation can be understood from the following phrase: "If you fail to prepare, then prepare to fail"

P5-Picturize: Picturization yourself, your thought process together with the content of your presentation in the people's mind is an essential logical process required for presentation. One may picturize on how people would read, understand and infer on the content presented. This is because, the presentation is not about you but about them, the audience. It is important that they should be able to understand what you intend to convey. The core ideas of the presentation should resonate with your audience. Picturization of the presentation will certainly help in this aspect.

P6-Preference: Your preference on the presentation need to be identified. What are the points that you wish to highlight? What is your focus and stress upon? What is the main point that you wish to convey? To satisfy the purpose of the presentation with the plan you have made, what are your preferences? This will facilitates for identification and understanding the points that need to be highlighted in your presentation.

P7-Prioritize: Contents of the presentation need to be prioritized considering the purpose, people and preferences. People should follow the flow of ideas in your presentation with ease. Similar to contents, time also need to be prioritized. Deciding on what is to be presented, what points need to be stressed, what need to be skipped, what need to be kept in appendix, what need to be jumped, etc., is the process of prioritizing. Creation of appendix is another important aspect of prioritization. Supporting items such as data, facts, etc. can be kept in appendix. The different between the preference and priorities need to be understood. Preference allows understanding the contents of the presentation from your perspective while priority allows understanding the contents of the presentation from audience's perspective.

P8- Plot: Identify a plot for your presentation. It is a relevant storyline that establishes the context of your presentation. A good plot would help you to connect to the people quickly in the first few minutes of the presentation. This will help the audience to relate themselves to your presentation. However while choosing a plot you should be careful in selecting a plot that is relevant to the context of the presentation and also the audience.

P9-Practice: From P1-P7 discusses about the preparation of content while this P discuss on organizing yourself towards the presentation. It should be noted that slides do not speak but the individual does. One should make a rigorous practice for the effective delivery of the material prepared. Practice can be rehearsing the presentation to oneself multiple times. This can help the individual to know about the voice, enunciation, body language, etc. However, experienced persons would have already understood this aspect that contributes of best presentation.

P10-Pre-Presentation: Once everything is ready, it is important to make Pre-presentation. Presenting your contents to your peers or new audience will gives us feedback. This feedback will help to be prepared for any random questions. This kind of interaction would keep the individual mentally ready for handling unexpected questions or situations.

P11-Persuade: While making a presentation, do not just read the contents of the slides. Provide your logical reasoning or argument to the contents in the slides. Further, your logical reasoning should convince the audience that you are in full belief of what you are presenting and your confidence. They may either agree or disagree with your arguments. But your presentation effort should involve them in your presentation and make them to think.

P12: Performance: The performance is the biggest moment. With the identified purpose and audience, after a thorough planning, preparation and practice, one can make an impactful presentation with confidence. Set the context and start the narration. Some thumb rules on the performance day such as arriving to the venue in well in advance, understanding the surroundings and interacting with people. During the performance, stand confidently, present firmly & invite the people to participate in the discussion. Encourage your audience to ask the questions. During your performance again focus on few P's. They are Pitch of your voice, Pace of your presentation and Posture of your body. All these are important.

P13: Peroration: Conclusion aspect of the presentation is another important aspect which should not be neglected. Conclude your presentation with an inspiring note that kindles interest and enthusiasm among the audience to explore more on the topic of your presentation. By igniting their curiosity, it is a good opportunity even to you to connect and collaborate with your audience later.

These are the P's you can consider while designing, creating and making a presentation. These Ps help in not just delivering the presentation but in connecting with people. Finally, it is important to remember that slides are not the presentation. They are the aids for your presentation. One should remember your presentation than the slides that are displayed.

Thank you for reading it. If you find it useful, please share it across.

About the author



Dr. Ch. Aswani Kumar is currently a Professor at School of Information Technology and Engineering, Vellore Institute of Technology, Vellore, India. He holds a PhD degree in Computer Science from VIT, India. He also possesses Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Computer Science from Nagarjuna University, India. Aswani Kumar's research interests are Information Security and Machine Learning. He has published over 100 refereed research papers so far in various reputed journals and conferences. He has received Young Scientist Fellowship from Tamilnadu State Council for Science and Technology for his research at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Mumbai.

Dr. Aswani Kumar was the principal investigator to a major research project sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology, Govt. of India, during 2006 - 2008. He was also the principal investigator to a major research project funded by National Board of Higher Mathematics, Dept of Atomic Energy, Govt. of India during 2011-13. Currently, he is the principal investigator to a major research project funded by Dept of Science and technology, Govt of India under Cognitive Science Research Initiative Program.

Dr. Aswani Kumar is a senior member of ACM and is also associated with ISC, CSI, ISTE. He is an editorial board member for several international journals.

“If you have an important point to make, don't try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time - a tremendous whack.”

Winston S. Churchill

“If you're not comfortable with public speaking - and nobody starts out comfortable; you have to learn how to be comfortable - practice. I cannot overstate the importance of practicing. Get some close friends or family members to help evaluate you, or somebody at work that you trust.”

Hillary Clinton