

Presentation Technique for Researchers

Bringing Research to the Front: Convincing and Meaningful Presentations

The following seven steps are important whether a presentation is memorized or not. The expert communicates within the logical structure of the presentation and conveys the message clearly. The Speaker is committed to the verbal performance and delivers meaningfully. Combine both for a successful presentation!

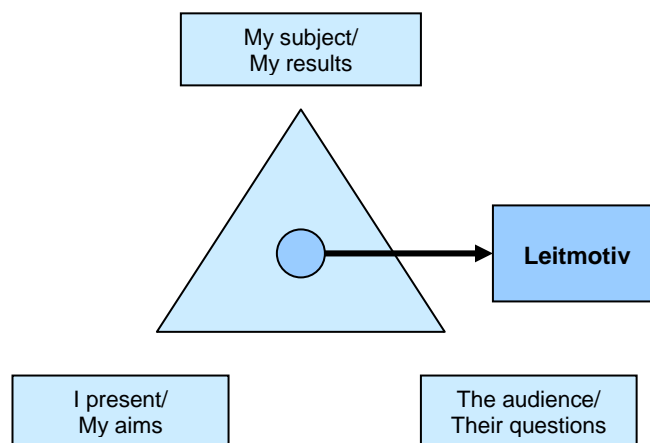
A. Structure

1. Leitmotiv

The topic of the presentation must be designed for the specific audience. From your research focus, your results, your aims and the presumed questions of the audience, define a LEITMOTIV. This leitmotiv acts as a filter of the data, images and information you have (see Fig. 1). The leitmotiv answers the Main Question (see Part 3).

Figure 1

The Leitmotiv defines the focus of the talk.



2. Major Slide

Do not plan your presentation in the same order as you deliver it. Start by choosing one MAJOR SLIDE (1). This would be the slide on which you would show your leitmotiv, if you could show only one slide. Normally, it is a visualized data slide. It receives most of the emphasis of the talk and it is a shown instead of a written conclusion slide at the end of your main part. Then ask yourself: What information does the audience need to be able to understand the information of the Major Slide? This gives additional information slides. The number of these SUPPORTING SLIDES (2) is determined by the allotted time of your presentation. Follow the rule: 1 slide = 2 minutes is best. These slides build up the main part of your talk.

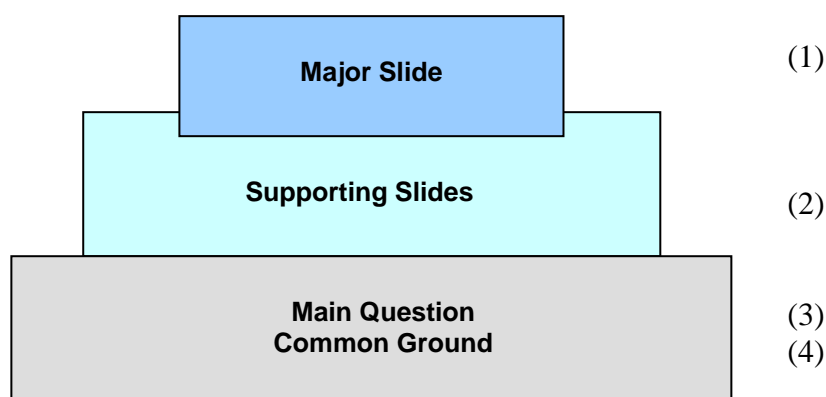
3. Introduction: Main Question and Common Ground

During planning, you proceed to the Introduction by coupling the slide information to a question of overriding importance, in which they are embedded. This is the MAIN QUESTION (3) to which the leitmotiv and the Major Slide refer. (Fig. 2)

You must “collect” the audience at the beginning and attract their attention. Do this by setting a COMMON GROUND (4) between your research and their life or experience. Good ways to do this are: a. Telling a personal experience/story, b. Connecting with public discussions or c. Linking to well known features. Good presenters invite everyone at the beginning to follow him/her with this shallow general level of expertise.

Figure 2

Planning steps from Major Slide in the Main Part to Common Ground in the Introduction



4. Focussing

From the Common Ground, you proceed smoothly step by step to the focus of your talk. Mention the aims of your working group, the aims of your research, and actual problems or dilemmas. Then talk about the specific focus of this talk and clarify the methods applied and terms the audience may not know.

With the Main Question, you enter into the “hard core”, the main part of your presentation. You explain and interpret the data and with the Major Slide you set the focus. At the end, you summarize and end the talk by completing the element from the introduction (story, picture, fact). The story is complete.

B. Performance / Delivery

5. Metaphorical Language: “A good presentation is like having a fine dinner with friends”

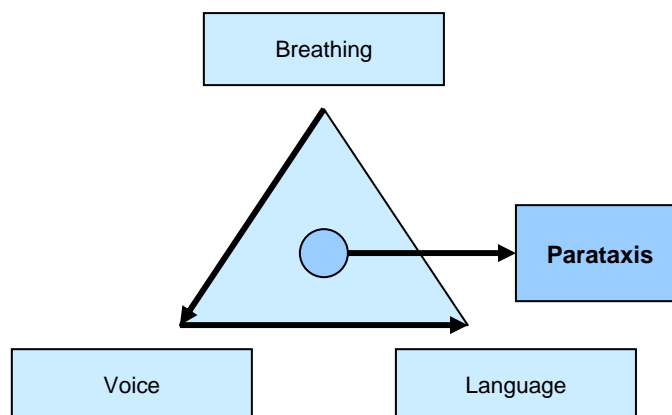
To make your presentation more memorable, arouse the imagination of the audience by using metaphorical language. Try to find analogues, symbols, pictures from other fields of life (sports, botanics, politics, films...). Experiences from other spheres bring associative pictures and feelings and people can link more easily to their own experience. Especially at the beginning you should use a metaphorical comparison to attract their full attention. We all remember an olefin structure compared to a pearl in a shell.

6. Parataxis (short main sentence)

Parataxis is a short main sentence full stop. It makes sentences more powerful and pertinent to the audience. Short, sharp sentences are more memorable to the audience. You have time to breathe (and the audience to understand) and you can think of the next sentence. You maintain eye-contact with the audience whilst speaking and lower your voice at the end of the sentence. This allows pauses and the possibility to use the middle range of your voice.

Figure 3

Parataxis: Calm breathing, middle-toned voice and direct, addressed and linear language.



7. Say what you mean

Your posture, movements and gestures communicate without words. You are authentic if you connect what you say to what you mean. Never say something you don't mean. You don't have to force movements or posture because if they are natural, the entire communication will be honest. Your authenticity and respect for the audience will make the atmosphere friendly and stimulating.

We are experts – to find authenticity in presenting may take longer and is due to practice. Therefore use every possibility to perform a presentation.

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