



PRESENT LIKE A PRO



JAMES SWEETMAN



HOW TO PRESENT LIKE A PRO

Effective presentations are engaging, well-structured, interesting, concise and most importantly persuasive. Effective presenters are poised, professional and have presence. That's the theory, the daily reality is that the thought of doing a presentation makes many people sick with nerves.

In this short eBook, I share some of the key distinctions I explore with participants during my Effective Presentation Skills workshop.

These **35 tips** cover all the major themes of presentations including preparation, the use of visuals and how to foster engagement. I also include some triage strategies for managing those presentation nerves. The best presenters are the best of themselves. You want to tap into your strengths and lead a conversation with your audience in a way that is consistent with your sense of your best self.

At the same time, we never want to lose sight of the fact that presentations are only ever a means to an end. That end goal might be securing a new contract, making a sale, obtaining 'buy-in,' boosting staff morale or leading others through change.

So it's not really about you at all, it's about what you are trying to achieve and relating well to the audience from the top of the room.

TIP 1: KNOW YOUR RESULT



“What do you want to achieve by the end of the presentation? What will be your evidence of success?”

Unless you know your destination how will you know if you are on the right track? What does a successful presentation look like to you?

If you cannot imagine how you would like to deliver from the top of the room, and the core points you intend to make, delivering an impactful presentation will be challenging.”

TIP 2: SUMMARISE THE KEY THEME IN ONE SENTENCE

“People have short attention spans – think Twitter, can you summarise the purpose of your presentation in 140 characters.

This will help you focus on what’s most important, perhaps even give you the title of your presentation and it also provides handrails for editing your content.”

TIP 3: RAPPORT



“The best presenters don’t act the role of presenter. They are authentic, genuine and natural.”

If you are not in rapport with yourself, the audience will not be in rapport with you.

Your goal is to be comfortable with yourself, so you can be comfortable projecting yourself to an audience. To put it simply, the best presenters amplify the best of themselves.”

TIP 4: PERSONALISE YOUR PRESENTATION

“Presentations are bland when the presenter doesn't inject themselves into the presentation.

You personalise your presentation by sharing your opinions, your experiences and allowing your personality to shine through.

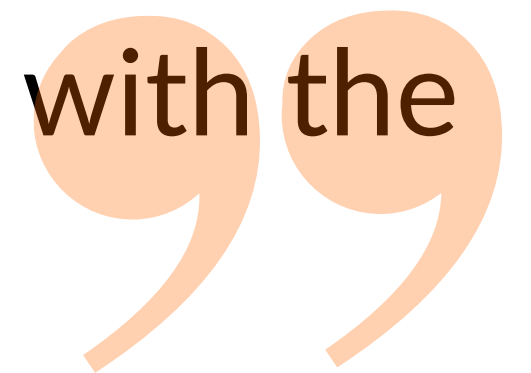
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TIP 5: PUT YOURSELF IN THE AUDIENCE'S SHOES



What do you want the audience's experience of your presentation to be? How can you deliver that? How do you want the audience to feel and think after you speak?

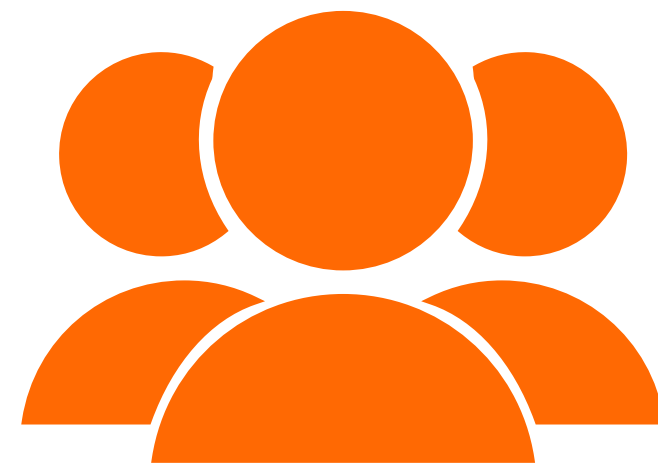
Remember, it is really about them and what you want them to do with the information you share.



TIP 6: WHAT DOES THE AUDIENCE WANT?

“What do you want the audience’s experience of your presentation to be? How can you deliver that? How do you want the audience to feel and think after you speak?”

Remember, it is really about them and what you want them to do with the information you share.”



TIP 7: USE PRECISION QUESTIONING TO FOCUS YOUR MIND

“Ask yourself effective and audience focussed questions as part of your preparation. For example, ‘how can I enable the audience to relate to me?’

‘How can I ensure everyone meets their objectives?’ ‘How can I get my point across with maximum impact?’ What issue would I hate them to bring up? What question would I hate to be asked?”



TIP 8: STORYBOARD

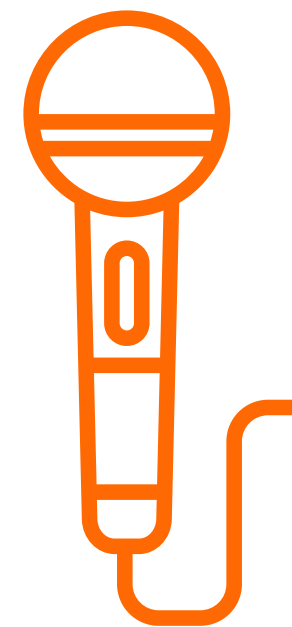
“Just as a director creates a storyboard for a movie, map out your presentation on paper before you go near powerpoint.

It will keep your presentation punchier. You don't build a house without architect's plans!”

TIP 9: KNOW THE ROOM

“Arrive in plenty of time, become familiar with the room, see it as your territory and ensure the technology is working (slides, microphone etc.)

It's always useful to have water to hand. You might also want to have some notes or flashcards close by too, just as a comfort blanket.”



TIP 10: ANSWER THE AUDIENCE (UNCONSCIOUS) QUESTIONS

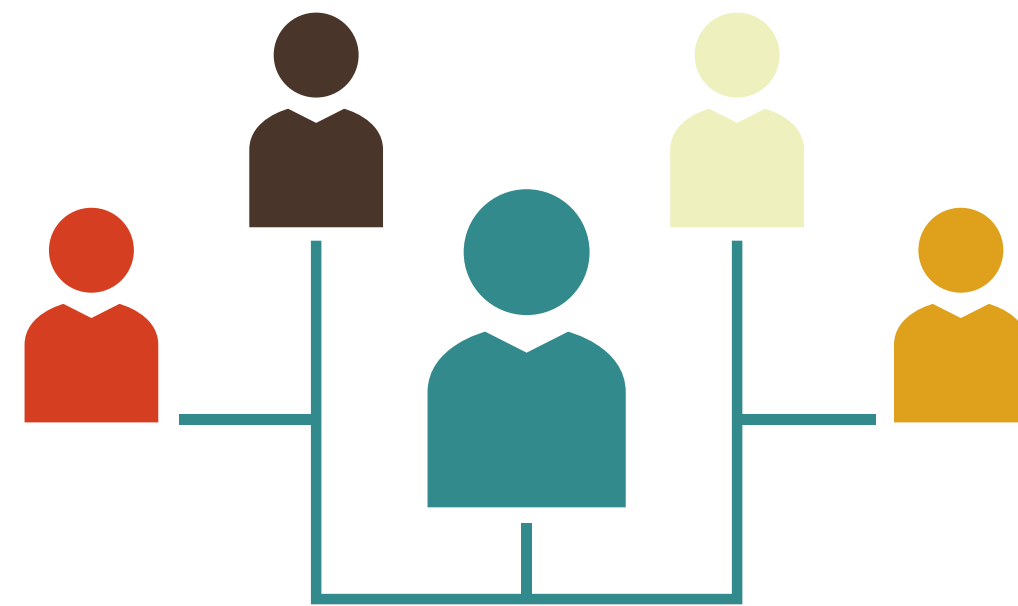
Who are you? What do you have? Why should I care?

An audience wants to know something about who you are, so they can decide whether to engage with you or not. They will engage when they feel they can trust you and when they sense you know where they are coming from.

TIP 11: CONNECT WITH THE AUDIENCE AS SOON AS YOU CAN

“Who are you? What do you have? Why should I care?”

An audience wants to know something about who you are, so they can decide whether to engage with you or not. They will engage when they feel they can trust you and when they sense you know where they are coming from.



TIP 12: KEEP IT SIMPLE

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication; keep your slides simple, minimal words, beautiful images. One slide for every three minutes you are speaking is a good timing guide and no more than 5 or 6 bullet points per slide.

If possible bring each bullet point up separately, so the audience is not reading ahead, but focused on what you are saying. Use colour and graphics to keep things interesting.”

TIP 13: FACE THE AUDIENCE

“Don't read from your slides as this will mean you will have your back to the audience. Plus I would suspect that your audience can read for themselves! You want to stay connected with the audience and that means looking at them.”

TIP 14: WHAT IS YOUR CORE MESSAGE?

“ Know the 3 or 4 key things you want to communicate during your presentation. Make sure you hit these core messages several times.

An audience is unlikely to remember more than 3 or 4 key points. Ensure the audience knows what is expected of them, particularly if you are seeking decisions from them.”



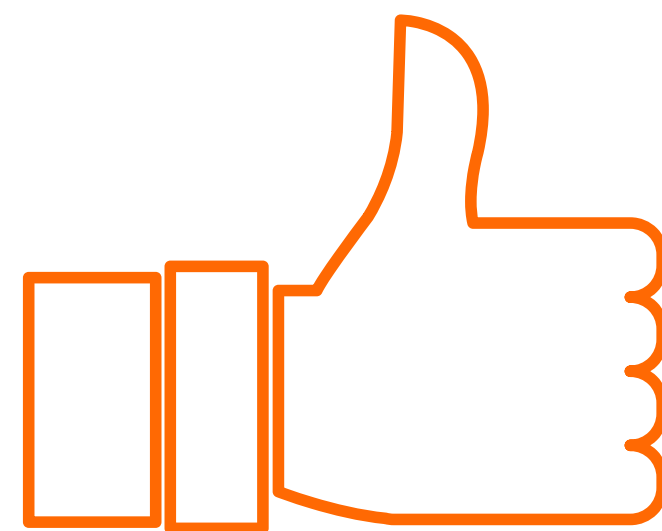
TIP 15: SHAPE THE MEANING

“As a presenter you are a shaper of meaning, this is particularly true when it comes to numbers and complex data, interpret the data for the audience.”

TIP 16: KNOW THAT THE AUDIENCE WANTS YOU TO SUCCEED

“All audiences want presenters to be interesting, informative and ‘entertaining.’

They want you to be comfortable at the top of the room. An audience will forgive you for being nervous (it shows you care) but they won't forgive you for being boring.”



TIP 17: STAY AUDIENCE FOCUSED

“Know you can only receive signals from audiences if your ‘antennae’ is set to receive them.

Ask yourself frequently – are they still with me? Is the audience engaged?
What’s their body language communicating?”



TIP 18: SEE YOUR PRESENTATION AS A CONVERSATION

“Try to talk with, not at your audience. (Never see yourself as superior to your audience, as the audience will interpret this arrogance.) Buzz words, clichés, jargon and emotionless business speak will make the audience switch off.

Use simple language, share your own experiences, speak from the heart as well as the head.”



TIP 19: TAKE THE AUDIENCE ON A JOURNEY

Great presentations take the audience on a journey; you tell them a story with a beginning, middle and end. You speak about how challenges were overcome, lessons learned and how everyone can 'live happily ever after.'

TIP 20: MORE AUDIENCE CONNECTION

Depending on the size of the group, use participants names whenever possible, it lets them know that you know who they are and makes your presentation more personal.

TIP 21: KNOW YOUR PRESENTATION

“Make sure you are familiar with the content of your presentation. Know your sequence of slides. Know what you are going to say when each slide is presented. This is a threshold competency, but if an audience feels you have not done basic preparation, they will not view you as credible.

At the same time, it is not about learning a script. Effective presentations are really about leading a conversation from the top of the room.”

TIP 22: KNOW YOUR OPENING & CLOSE

“ Know the first two or three sentences that will come out of your mouth. In other words, plan your opening, whether it is an introduction or highlighting what you plan to cover. This helps you to bridge into your first slide.

Know your close. How will you wrap up? And aim for something better than just a vague ‘any questions?’ Even turning this into a full sentence helps. For example, ‘I’d welcome any questions or comments you might have.’”

TIP 23: PRACTICE RELAXING

“You can reduce stress and anxiety prior to your presentation by inhaling slowly and holding your breath for 4 to 5 seconds, then slowly exhaling.

The more you feel in control of your breath, the more in control you are. Remember that emotions such as nervousness, worry and stress are all symptoms, the root cause is a feeling of not being in control.”

TIP 24: VISUALISE YOURSELF SPEAKING

Imagine delivering your presentation in a confident and relaxed way. Visualise the audience actively engaged with you. Hear yourself speaking articulately.

When you visualise your ideal presentation you are creating a roadmap for successful delivery. Most of us visualise, but we tend to do it negatively. Negative visualisation is labelled worry, positive visualisation is excitement.



TIP 25: FOCUS ON WHAT YOU ARE SAYING NOT HOW YOU ARE SAYING IT

“Stress and nerves will reduce if you focus on what you are delivering and on your audience rather than on yourself.

Your job as a presenter is to communicate information to the audience, so your focus needs to be on them, not on your own sense of being uncomfortable.”

TIP 26: THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

Questions turn a monologue into a dialogue, a lecture into a discussion. If the forum doesn't lend itself to interaction, use rhetorical questions.



TIP 27: OPEN ON COMMON GROUND

Look for what you have in common with the audience and lead with it. Starting with the common denominator between you and your audience creates rapport, understanding and respect.

$$1 + 1 = 2$$

TIP 28: HAVE A ROAD MAP

“Think of your presentation like a newspaper article - summarise what you are going to tell the audience up front (just like the lead paragraph in a newspaper article.) You then go into more detail.

At the end you remind the audience of what you have gone through with them, re-emphasising your main points.”

TIP 29: STORIES

“Examples, references and stories bring a presentation to life. Stories and examples pull the audience in. People relate to stories about people and their experiences.

Stories create meaning. Data is necessary, but audiences crave the meaning attached to them, to make sense of them. Stories show audiences how to organise facts.



TIP 30: HUMOUR

“If it is appropriate and part of your personality incorporate humour. Humour puts an audience at ease and makes the presentation more enjoyable.

When people are laughing they are relaxing and moving from the head to the heart and that is where ‘buy in’ and positive influencing happens. Appropriate self-deprecating humour makes you accessible and approachable.”

TIP 31: LEAD BY EXAMPLE

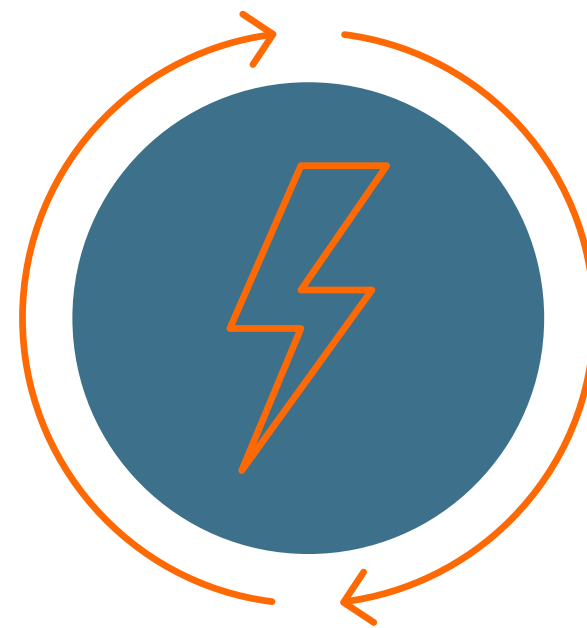
“You can never expect an audience to display qualities you don’t bring into the room.

If you want the audience to be enthusiastic, interested and energised, you have to be.”

TIP 32: HARNESS YOUR NERVES INTO POSITIVE ENERGY

“Even the most effective presenters get nervous before delivering important presentations. Nerves are a sign that you care about what you are doing.

View your nerves as a signal to get excited and as a reminder of the ‘buzz’ you will feel when you complete your presentation successfully.”



TIP 33: AUDIENCES REMEMBER HOW YOU MAKE THEM FEEL

“Don't stress out about forgetting what you are going to say, because studies show that people forget about 90% of what was said during a presentation.

What audiences take away is how you made them feel and the actions they will take.”

TIP 34: USE PAUSES AND SILENCES

“Skilled presenters use silence and pauses to add to the effectiveness and polish of a presentation. Short pauses are for the simple purpose of separating your thoughts.

All you have to remember is to slow down. Give the audience a chance to absorb what you are saying. Longer pauses can be very powerful. They command the audience to think about what you just said. It is also a way of regaining the audiences' attention.”



TIP 35: LEARN AS YOU GO

“The more you speak in public and deliver presentations the more confident you will become in your own abilities.

Embed your learning by asking yourself ‘what did I do well during the presentation?’ ‘what did I learn from it?’ ‘next time what would I do differently?’ Like with any soft skill development, it’s important to map your progress.”



IN CONCLUSION

“Ineffective presentations are all the same - too long, poorly prepared and paced, are overly reliant on slides crammed with text and are delivered in a tone that saps the energy from even the most enthusiastic audience member.

It could be said that preparation starts by being clear as to what you wish to avoid! Of course no one purposely sets out to deliver a poor presentation, but delivering effective presentations is a skill and in the words of the late Maya Angelou ‘when you know better you do better.’

I hope these tips will help you to broaden and deepen your definition of ‘doing your best.’”

CONTACT ME

“For more tips, insights and distinctions on a range of business and personal development topics be sure to visit www.jamessweetman.com

Further resources are available on my YouTube Channel and for weekly tips and insights subscribe to my podcast ‘Your Time with James Sweetman.’

If you are interested in arranging a Presentation Skills workshop in your organisation, or wish to enquire about Personal Coaching email me at james@jamessweetman.com”

TESTIMONIALS

“James is much more than a coach and talented speaker. He’s your personal guide to unleash the power of self-awareness while driving you through the most unexplored place of your life: yourself. James is like a “killer application” - a “must have app” for your life and your business.”

D. Recalcati Area IT Manager, Microsoft, Italy

“Our company has used the services of James Sweetman for several years now, from one-to-one coaching to group sessions; everything from personal development to confidence and presentation skills. He has won over all sorts of individuals within our company with his unique style and effective methods and we regularly get requests from staff to have even more sessions with James.

Emma O’Doherty, Mindshare Ireland



TESTIMONIALS

“Positive, insightful and motivational, with a natural presentation style - James’s workshops are one of the highlights of our professional programme.”

Peter Johnson, Director of Jobnet

“I recently attended a seminar that James ran. It was the simply the best seminar I had been to in a number of years. I came away with a real sense of having new skills and outlook on my effectiveness particularly as a communicator. James has a unique talent in that his presentation skills are truly engaging. If you get an opportunity to work with James or attend one of his conferences, sign up fast!”

Tim Ryan, Head of Marketing, Glanbia



TESTIMONIALS

“The course was nothing short of fantastic. I am confident that as a result of this course I will now actually enjoy giving my regular presentations. James was fantastic. He was approachable, accommodating, informed and informative. I’ll be recommending this course to colleagues. Very beneficial.”

U. Treacy. Commercial Manager. Cuisine de France (Belfast)

