

Presenting Virtually

In the past year, I am sure it seems that you have spent a lot of your working life at virtual meetings. I have found that attending so many meetings, has highlighted the varying capabilities of those presenting and their expertise at handling the situation.

Presenting is a skill that has to be learnt and it is not something that comes naturally to anyone. Not everyone gets it right, and when you get it wrong it can be a disaster for both you and your audience. If you present well you will create a positive impact for yourself and others, present badly and the impression you create can be long lasting and damaging.

Presenting virtually creates new issues and barriers that can prevent success. Preparation is even more important, ensuring that you are clear about your objectives and whether they are achievable in a presentation that is being conducted virtually. Being clear about your aim and what you would like to achieve, and then how that can be delivered. Defining a clear and workable structure, so that your presentation is easy to conduct and follow.

Attention

Our attention spans are limited to around 15 minutes, so it is vital that during a virtual presentation that you bare this in mind. Talk for too long and you will soon loose attention. The difficulty being in virtual meetings, is that it is much harder or impossible to read the responses or reactions. If attendees have their cameras off, you have no idea whether they are even in physical attendance, let alone mentally.

Preparation and PowerPoint

Having a clear structure will ensure you know how your visuals work and fit within the content. This enables you to signpost to your audience whilst you are presenting. It means you will be able fit the information and what you need to provide.

When presenting virtually there is a greater reliance on using PowerPoint. PowerPoint when being used becomes the visual dominating message, the presenter becomes less present, just a small window on the screen. It is vital that the slides that you use are perfect and fit for the job. Remember the guiding principle of a maximum of 1 slide every 3 minutes. Be prepared to pause the presentation after every 15 minutes, turn off the sharing and engage with your audience before moving on to the next section.

The visuals are NOT your script, they enhance and aid your presentation. I have seen so many presentations recently, where there are far too many words. Do not overload your slides with content. The bullets, should be bullet points, not long sentences. Identify the key words that are going to back up your message. Use images and pictures to get your message across. Make them have impact and enhance your message. **They should not be**
- Your notes!

Remember - Visual Aids are not the most important aspect of your presentation! **YOU ARE!**

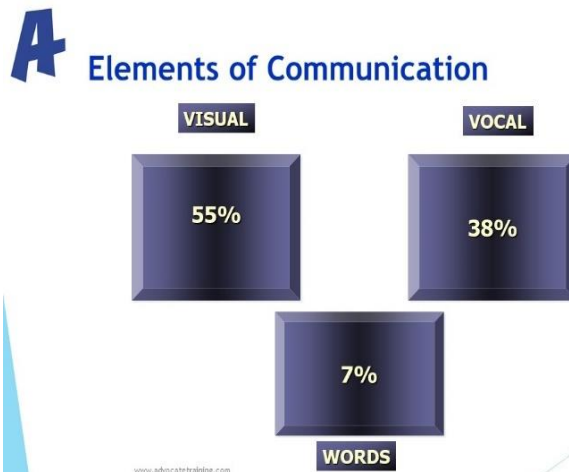
It is crucial to remember that in a virtual presentation, the visual is not going to take up the whole screen of the audience, it is not like when you view it on your computer or when its projected. You therefore have to ensure that your font size is larger than it would be usually. The minimum font size should be 20 for any bullets, larger for the headings. I would suggest that you use animation when presenting virtually, to bring each bullet point in in turn, so that you focus attention.

Presenting

The follow principle is crucial to presenting virtually:

“It ain’t what you say it’s the way that you say it”

Normally when we present, we focus on the visual, in other words the body language and expression of the presenter. If we look at how communicate we can see that at least 55% of our message comes from the visual. When we present virtually it changes as the camera limits the view of us. At best it is just part of upper body, at worst it is just our face.



We are therefore relying on our facial expressions and our vocal capabilities to get our message across. You need to ensure you check your camera angle and seating position. Too many presenters get too close to the camera and do not think about their facial expressions. There is nothing worse than someone looming into their camera.

Vocal emphasis and precision are vital when presenting virtually, you need to ensure that your message has meaning and the correct intonation. Focus on your grammatical precision, any vocal habits, clichéd or catch phrases will be much more noticeable. Have a good pace, which is slightly slower than you would speak in a conversation. Use more pauses, which create emphasis.

Whilst presenting, ensure that you are watching the chat and hands-up, in case a member of the audience wants to ask a question. It is really important that you allow questions as you go along in a virtual presentation, as that builds interaction and rapport with your audience. Rapport with the audience is lost in a virtual meeting, so any opportunity to connect should be welcomed by the presenter.

Presenting is something that does take practice, it is further complicated by the virtual environment. If you get it right then you will achieve personal success and success for your audience.