



PRESENTATIONS 101

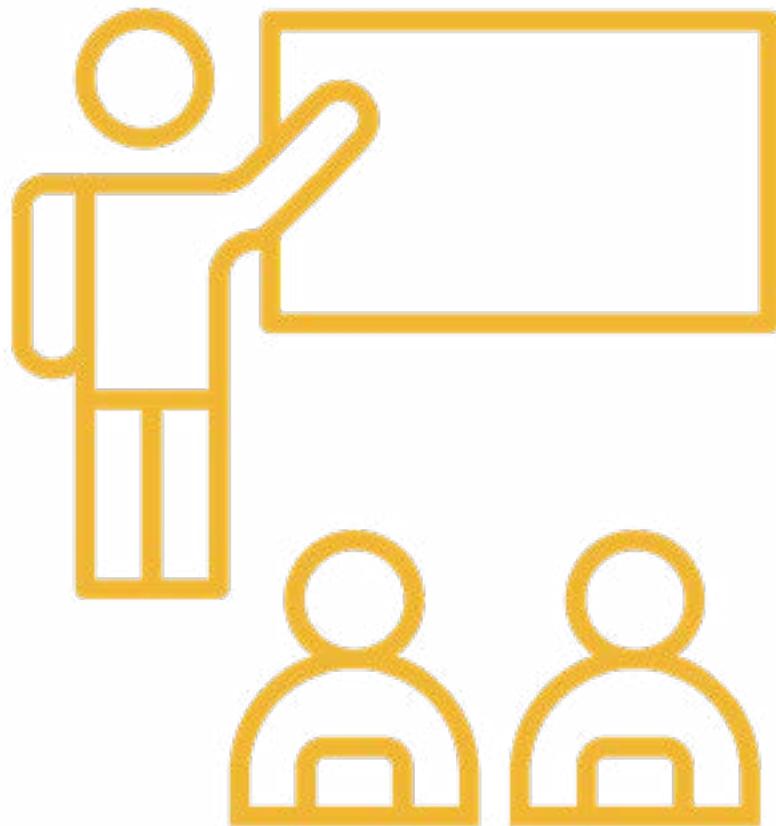
TIPS FROM GREAT PRESENTERS

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Making a presentation can feel like a daunting task. However, presentations do not require PowerPoint, Keynote, or any specific app. They don't require a projector, a laser pointer, or a long stick. And they definitely don't require bullet points, animations and soundtracks.

What do they require? Presentations require using the 7P method! The 7P method comes from an adage from the United States Marine Corps and British Army: Proper Planning and Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. We've decided to use an alternative 7thP, but you can always look up on the official 7th P on Google.



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How should you properly plan and prepare?

Dale Carnegie, author of **The Art of Public Speaking** explains that being prepared helps to boost your confidence. In Carnegie's own words:

To acquire self-confidence you must have something in which to be confident. If you go before an audience without any preparation, or previous knowledge of your subject, you ought to be self-conscious—you ought to be ashamed to steal the time of your audience. Prepare yourself. Know what you are going to talk about, and, in general, how you are going to say it. Have the first few sentences worked out completely so that you may not be troubled in the beginning to find words. Know your subject better than your hearers know it, and you have nothing to fear.

When taking those words into consideration, it's important to ask yourself: "Can I speak without my notes?" One way to measure how prepared you are is whether you need notes or a screen behind you with an outline to follow. A true master of presentations can tap into the spirit of the room and adapt a message to the specific needs of the audience. If you are shuffling through note cards or worried about a screen, you are very unlikely to engage with your audience on a high level.

In the insurance industry, we often have the same conversation many times. This could tempt you to believe you can improvise and have no need to write a full speech. Don't give into that temptation! You will always perform better if you have your words prepared in advance.

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Practice Makes Perfect!

Your work isn't over just yet! The next step is practicing your presentation. Read your speech over and over, and practice projecting your voice in different ways. Depending on what type of room you have booked, you may need to practice speaking into a microphone, or at a higher volume without a microphone, and without losing your breath.

Next, practice in front of a one-person audience. Asking for feedback in the following categories is key:

- Did you hold their interest?
- Can they summarize what you spoke on?
- How fast were you speaking?
- What does your body language say?

A good speaker can make any topic interesting. Ensuring your speech is more of a conversation and flows well is one of the highly recommends tips from great presenters. People enjoy feeling connected and great presenters often keep the talk clear, light, and flowing.

If you are new to giving presentations, you may find yourself in trouble with speaking too fast or mumbling. You may also feel insecure about making eye contact with your audience. Great presenters, however, are confident in their conversation, they speak slow and project their voice, never swaying back and forth and making direct eye contact with individuals in the audience, despite their nerves.

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The only way to become comfortable with your material and your ability to become a great presenter, is to practice. Ultimately, you have to jump right in and give your presentation! More practice only increases your self-esteem and confidence in your ability to have a successful event.

Dale Carnegie also writes, "Practice...in speaking before an audience will tend to remove all fear of audiences, just as practice in swimming will lead to confidence and facility in the water. You must learn to speak by speaking."

Dress to Impress

You are on the road to a successful presentation, however, your preparation isn't over! As you continue to prepare your presentation verbally, it's important to also consider your visual presentation. When it comes to public speaking the old proverb, "never judge a book by its cover" does not apply. Your audience will remember what you wore and how you looked.

It's recommend to err on the side of caution and dress smart business rather than casual. Choose an outfit that gives you a natural boost of confidence, ensure you're well-groomed, and always wear a smile.

Smiling gives your audience a sense of comfort. You seem approachable, friendly, and more pleasant than a serious/stern, "let's get down to business" type. Additionally, smiles work to reduce your stress levels, improves your mood, and helps with anxiety. According to many great presenters, you don't only appear to be more likable when you smile, but you actually appear to be more competent.

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Keep it Simple!

Insurance is complex and when you begin discussing details of plans or situations, it can seem like an endless conversation. Keeping your presentation simple and within the time you have allocated for the meeting is important. Not only does this keep your audience from becoming bored or leaving early, it also shows respect.

Don't use complicated language in your pitch, leave out the industry lingo, and resort to simplifying your message.

If this is your first presentation, keep in mind: it's not your last. Each presentation is an opportunity to learn from your mistakes or errors.

