



PROJECT MANAGEMENT CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

Speaker Guidance Project Management Symposium

Presenting at the UMD PM Symposium

You have been selected to give a presentation to show case your ideas. For a 30-minute breakout session you should plan your presentation to model a TED Talk* at 18 minutes plus time for discussion.

Why 18 minutes?

“Because it works. An audience is good at focusing on one subject at a time in relatively short chunks. Remember, shorter talks are not lesser talks.” We strongly suggest you watch several TED Talks to embrace this concept. Consider what Mark Twain said: “I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one.”

Develop an Idea

Think about what you want the audience to take away from your presentation. You should not have more than 3 big ideas but one is easily enough. A good idea takes evidence or observations and should lead to a conclusion.

Share What You Know

You do not need to be the world’s foremost expert, but you do need to be an expert on your topic. The audience relies on you to give accurate information – please check and verify your facts! If you are presenting research, make sure your idea is backed by the facts. Give relevant examples, concisely presented. Identify opinion or developing ideas as such.

Prepare, Outline and Script

There is no single theory that offers the best structure for your talk. But, follow the guidance for TED Talks, see https://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks.

This is the structure that they have found to work particularly well:

- 1) “Start by making your audience care, using a relatable example or an intriguing idea.
- 2) Explain your idea clearly and with conviction.
- 3) Make the persuasive case about how, and why your idea should be implemented.
- 4) End by addressing how your idea could affect your audience if they accept it.”

The primary goal of your talk is to communicate an idea effectively. Follow this structure:

Introduction

A strong introduction is crucial. Draw in your audience members with something they care about, make them curious and answer WIFM (what’s in it for me). Get your idea out as quickly as possible. Don’t focus on yourself. Don’t open with a long string of statistics.



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Body

Make a list of all of the evidence you want to use. Think about items that your audience already knows. Define what you want to convince them of: the new knowledge, research, or practice you believe will be valuable to them. Prepare your list based on a logical sequence. Then see if you can cut out items and still make the point. Ask yourself again, “what are the key takeaways I want the audience to know.” Don’t use jargon, or explain any new terminology. Don’t let citations interrupt the flow of your talk. Place them in the fine print on your slides. Note anything that is best conveyed visually and use slides or videos for this. Only use slides for key points and visualizations.

Conclusion

Find a landing point in your conclusion that will leave the audience feeling positively toward you and your ideas. Don’t use the conclusion to simply summarize what you have already said – tell your audience how this information might impact their lives, if implemented.

Script

When you have developed your outline to the point you are satisfied with the logic sequence start writing a script. Be concise. Use present tense, strong and interesting verbs. Your script is likely to be revised many times until you are comfortable with it.

Create Slides

Power Point slides can be very helpful but they are by no means necessary. If you decide to use slides, please use the template provided and remember:

Use as little text as possible – if your audience is reading, they are not listening.

Font size should be 32 points or larger. Use font in speaker’s template.

A picture is worth 1000 words – this old adage is true!

No single slide should support more than one point.

Only use images or graphics that you have created OR have permission to use. Always cite the source.

Have someone review your slides to see if they make sense and check for glitches.

Rehearse

Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! It doesn’t matter how many times you have gone over your talk in your head, stand up, look in the mirror, and rehearse. Check your timing, pay attention to your posture, repeat, repeat, and repeat until you are totally comfortable.