



Unit 17

Preparing for a Presentation

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ☐ Write a winning proposal
- ☐ Feel more comfortable and professional in face-to-face presentations

Unit 17

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Preparation Tips

When you are getting ready for your presentation, remember that practice makes perfect. To start, get it clear in your own mind just what you want to say. Practice enough so you are prepared, but don't feel that you have to memorize. Ask a colleague or a family member to role play with you at least the first few times you make a presentation to help you get comfortable with the process.

Taking a tip from the way that athletes prepare, visualize yourself presenting successfully. This helps your mind prepare you to deliver an excellent presentation, and to experience how good a strong presentation feels.

Whenever you speak to other individuals, take the time to express yourself in an organized manner. Start at the beginning of your presentation, and move through it logically. Clarify that your message is understood by asking for feedback. Don't assume that you have been clear and that the message you thought you sent is the message that has been received.

When presenting to a group, get their attention, empathize, and be understanding. Be confident in your delivery and get used to reading a group. People will give you non-verbal messages that will help you to know when to stop talking.

Other Tips

Persuasive Language

People will purchase from you because you can solve some kind of problem or provide some kind of benefit. They are not buying from you because you work for a great company. This means that your presentation needs to persuade them to buy. Persuasion is a way to appeal to your customer on an

emotional and logical level and it is the main reason that we focus on benefits to the customer rather than the features of our products.

Persuasive language avoids ambiguous words and phrases. It takes advantage of structure, concise language, and even psychology to lead customers to take action.

Use positive inspiring language on what they “can” achieve and “will be able to do.” Use power words like “revealed,” “proven,” “scientific,” and “breakthrough” to increase your impact. Make sure that your language reflects your customer’s language by reading their industry magazines, newspapers, and trade publications.

Persuasive Words and Phrases I Can Include in Future Presentations:

There is one caveat here, and that is if you are selling to experts within your own industry, or people who are technically minded, they want to know the features of your product or service. They will need data, facts and to know the bottom line in order to earn your trust. This is where knowing your audience is extremely important.

Elements of a Successful Presentation

You Count Too!

There are five things to keep in mind when we are making a presentation.

Your Body Language

The first thing to keep in mind is your body language. Sometimes people hear nothing of what you say because your body language is speaking so clearly for you.

Our bodies speak volumes. We are always sending signals to others, whether we like it or not. Body language combined with vocal tone can override or even cancel the meaning of the words we say. Make sure your mouth and your body are sending the same signal.

Here are some things to keep in mind about body language:

- Eyes, eyebrows, and mouth send out the signals that can make a world of difference.
- People who smile are happier than those who don't. Smiling releases a chemical in your brain that makes you feel good. It's a great way to establish a rapport with listeners.
- Eye contact helps you carry your message to each person in the audience. It builds trust.
- Learn to speak with your hands. Draw lines in the air, make a point, count on your fingers, and emphasize length and width.
- Work on appearing sincere and comfortable.
- Let your hands do what they want to do, as long as they don't get in your pockets, fiddle with an object, or make obscene gestures to your audience.
- Your body posture affects your emotions and how you feel determines your posture. If you are confident, happy, and ready, your body will show it.

Your Equipment

Know your equipment. These days a fascinating array of technology is available that lets us make a presentation that offers a lot of impact. Whether you are using a laptop and PowerPoint, a tablet, a smart phone or a multi-media presentation on a screen, practice ahead of time so you know things will work. As well, make sure that you know how to operate your tools.

Potential clients will expect sophisticated delivery if you are selling anything technological, so make sure that you practice a lot so that everything flows perfectly. Also make sure that the presentation platform that you do select is appropriate for your audience, and that it makes sense for them. Don't use media just for the sake of having it; make sure it is a valuable part of what you have to say.

Keep in mind that your presentation is about your customer, NOT YOUR COMPANY. Your presentation needs to focus on what benefits are there for your customer, not just the features of what you have to offer. This means that a stock presentation is not going to be ideal for every presentation, and this is an important point. If your presentation is a multi-media effort, it is going to take some money and time to produce.

Consider whether your presentation would have more of an impact if your material is friendly enough to adapt to your customer in terms of examples, testimonials, and the benefits to them rather than a generic customer.

The advantages of using visual presentations or demonstrations include:

- Communicating ideas faster than the spoken word
- Stimulating and holding the interest of the audience
- Explaining complicated ideas more effectively
- Increases the probability that your message will be understood

- Can be fun and add variety to a dry or serious presentation
- Takes some pressure off the speaker
- Can cut across language barriers (provided it is well done)
- Can be used over and over again

Other Visual Aids

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Notes
Computer/ Multi-media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant updates • Sophisticated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System crashes • Technical issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always have alternate plan
Flip Charts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-writing makes them easy to use • Available everywhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too small for more than 20 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use top 2/3 of page only • 5X5 rule • Practice writing
Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inexpensive • Flexible • Easy to prepare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to prepare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must look professional • Proofread
Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective if notes attached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May get lost if passed around • Difficult to find appropriate ones • Expensive to buy or create 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be visible to the entire audience
Video (DVD or Blu-Ray)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulating • Portable • Easy to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audiences drift • Copyright issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview • May have questions to be answered
White Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible • Magnetic • Can use colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not too impressive • Cost more • Hard to erase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write neatly • Have eraser

Your Message

Make sure that you adjust your words to your group. Each audience has its own unique language, expressions, and sense of humor. Use words that are familiar to your audience, and whenever you can, use words that paint a picture.

Talk about benefits of your product or service rather than features. Features include all the various elements of your product, but benefits are all those ways life will change for the better if they buy your product or service. Understanding the benefits can help your language to be persuasive (although you do not want to come across as pushy).

Yes, that new cell phone does have a built in camera. That is a feature. However, a benefit of having that built in camera is that you can instantly share your photos of your perfect vacation with your family back home.

People want to feel they have made a good decision when they buy your product or service. Do everything you can to reinforce that belief they have made a good decision.

Your Effect on the Environment

Often, the environment is out of your control when you are presenting to a client. However, knowing the environment ahead of time can give you an extra edge. If this is a noisy environment, perhaps you can arrange to do your presentation elsewhere. If parking is scarce, make sure you arrive early to allow time for scouting out a parking space.

Room size, layout, temperature, seating arrangements, lighting, etc., are all part of the environment. Make the physical space as comfortable as possible. The most important thing that you can do, however, has nothing to do with the physical layout of the room, but with your ability to make people feel comfortable.

You, as the sales professional, can put everybody at ease if you feel confident and relaxed yourself. When you can think on your feet, you will be able to take speaking in public in stride.

Your Initial Impression

You can control that critical first impression by observing the following guidelines. Whether we are comfortable admitting it or not, we do judge people that we meet, and there are some critical factors that sales people are consistently measured with when we first meet people.

These suggestions have evolved from what is referred to as the **Rule of Twelve** in business etiquette.

- The first twelve inches (from the top of your head to your shoulders).
- The first twelve steps you take.
- The first twelve words you speak.

The **first rule of twelve** tells you that people notice everything about your hair, glasses, facial expression, and yes, the knot in your tie if you are wearing one. They notice whether your collar on your shirt is pressed, the length and neatness of your hair, your complexion, your eyes, and your smile.

The **second rule of twelve** tells you to enter a room with confidence, and to look as if you have a reason to be there and are happy to be there. Smile and extend your hand. Keep your shoulders back and stand up straight. If you carry a briefcase or purse, keep it in your left hand so that the right hand is ready to shake hands. If you are coming from outside and wearing gloves, remember to remove your gloves before shaking hands.

The **third rule** concerns the first twelve words that you say. If this is a meeting, your first twelve words should always include a "thank you" of some kind. For instance, you could thank the manager or client for taking the time to see you, indicate that you're glad you could finally get together, or mention that you've been looking forward to meeting the person for a long time.

Your words should invite the other person to respond in kind, for instance, by saying "you're welcome." This approach puts everyone at ease and opens the appointment on a friendly footing. Remember, first impressions are lasting, so give those first twelve inches, twelve steps, and twelve words everything you've got.

Do You Look Approachable?

Far more important than how much our suit cost, and whether our shoes are polished, is whether or not we look approachable. Again, if we are to look approachable, we smile, make eye contact, shake hands with a good but not overpowering grip, show interest in the other person, and call them by name.

We were inherently more respectful of each other in the past, and devoted more time to the niceties of getting to know someone and explore common ground. In today's world, many people aren't willing to invest the time and effort to get to know one another. We make appraisals, and assumptions, and form decisions, all within the space of a few seconds.

Positives and Negatives

Use this chart to identify the positive and the negative signals that you could send with various elements of body language.

	Positive	Negative
Facial Expressions		

Other Body Language		
Tone of Voice		
Words		

Dressing Appropriately

Impressions count! If you want people to believe in your products or services, you have to put some thought into dressing well in order to project the image that you want. Once you have established a relationship you can ease up a bit, but you should always look professional and remember that you are an ambassador for your company on each and every sales call.

Work dress has become very casual compared to what it once was. While many companies still write a dress code that outlines the limits of what to wear at work, there are also animated discussions in human resources offices about what is appropriate to wear to work, and how employees may push the envelope. Visible tattoos, piercings, and individual or eclectic styles of dress can be encouraged in some workplaces, but many companies are still struggling with how to respond to these issues.

In making sales presentations, it's **always important to dress well**. Plan what you will wear so that it is in line with your customers' expectations. Remember that you can never go wrong if you dress well. Sales people often wear some kind of company clothing, which is also appropriate (such as an embossed logo on a polo shirt, dress shirt, or jacket, for example) as long as the items follow the guidelines we are providing here.

We've seen salespeople who show up in wrinkled clothes, with poorly tied ties, dirty shoes, and clothes peppered with cat or dog hair. While our clothes don't say everything about us, what kind of reaction do potential customers have to someone who presents in this way?

People used to be very committed to **tailoring** their clothes to fit and hemming trousers, skirts, and dresses. Unfortunately, very few people even know how to repair a lost button these days, and it can actually be challenging to find a tailor in some communities. Just remember that having clothes that fit well make you more attractive to your clients. If you speak with seasoned sales people who dress well, they probably do know where you can find a good tailor. Altering your clothes may not cost as much as you think, and it really can make a tremendous difference in how you are perceived by your clients.

Dressing to Impress

- Always choose clothes that are clean and in good repair.
- Learn how to iron so that your clothes look presentable.
- Make sure your hems are sharp and in the right place. Trousers must never drag on the ground, and skirts should not higher than the top of the knee.
- Using staples or double sided tape does not mean that you have hemmed your clothes properly. Think about building a wardrobe that helps you look classy and competent, and that will help you to complete your own hemming or find someone who can.
- Shoes should be clean and polished. Even casual shoes can stand a good brushing and coat of polish. If your shoes look like they need fixing, get them fixed. We're repeatedly shocked at the number of people who go on sales presentations with dirty shoes.
- Women do not need to wear pantyhose in hot weather, but be careful: if legs are exposed or your toes are peeping out of dress shoes, they need to look good.
- Men and women should never, ever wear clothes that are better suited to the beach (such as Bermuda style shorts, flip flops, or rubber-bottomed shoes). The only exception might be if you are selling a new line of beach wear, and even that would be pushing the envelope.
- For women, forget about showing cleavage or wearing tight or revealing clothing. Think elegant when it comes to your sales career.
- Fingernails aren't clothing you put on, but they do bear mentioning here. Fingernails can send all kinds of messages, and dirty nails are never, ever appropriate. We're not saying that you need to get professional manicures. (In fact, you should be careful of acrylic nails which, while popular, harbor all kinds of bacteria and can cause permanent damage to your nail bed.) You can learn to keep your own nails clean and presentable.

Managing Scent

- Fragrance is something we have to be hyper aware of. Lots of people have sensitivity to chemicals and fragrances. Many workplaces will post signs and have policies that limit the use of scent. As a sales person and visitor to other workplaces, be aware of this and keep your own use of fragrance to a minimum. Select products that keep the scent in the immediate vicinity or your own body, rather than choosing those that float or hang in a room. Be aware that if you are visiting hospitals or other health providers, scented products are often banned.

- If you live and work in areas that are exposed to high heat and humidity, you are going to sweat. There is nothing pleasant about smelling someone else's sweat (just try travelling on crowded busses or trains if you don't believe us!), and there are a few things that you can do to help control your own body odor. First, use underarm deodorant daily and carry an extra stick that can be reapplied in high heat. Secondly, keep your clothes (particularly dry clean only blazers, jackets, or sweaters, which can trap perspiration odors) clean. You can also carry a small, portable product like a spray fabric refresher to help, but again be aware of wafting fragrance that might be an annoyance to your customers.
- Today we are fortunate to have access to inexpensive, washable, great fabrics that can lead to a professional wardrobe. Some of those fabrics are even super treated with chemicals and specially finished hems so that they are easy to iron and resist stains. Take advantage of these materials if you can!
- The smell of smoke stinks. If you are a smoker, you may not be able to smell the effect that your cigarette has, but know that the rest of us DO smell it. If you are smoking outside and come indoors, the smoke smell wafts off you and into the room without fail. Resist the urge to have a cigarette directly before you enter a meeting, and save it until afterward. Smelling smoke trailing off of someone will leave a lasting impression on your clients that will not be eradicated by that great outfit you are wearing.
- Bad breath is also something that you need to be very aware of. Coffee, smoking, and food all have an impact on what your breath smells like. We have access to portable, waterless tooth brushing and breath freshening products that you can carry in your car or briefcase, as well as effective breath mints. Avoid chewing gum; it doesn't send a professional impression.

Creating a Professional Package

- Notebooks, briefcases, and the pens you use are, by extension, part of your attire (for our purposes here). Are you one of those salespeople who looks impeccable, and then pulls out a tattered, well beaten note book where you record notes with a 49-cent pen? Is your briefcase an old backpack that you've proudly hung onto since college? Is your briefcase as clean as your shoes? Remember that you are presenting yourself as an entire package.
- Give some thought to your vehicle as you prepare for sales presentations. Your car doesn't have to be brand new or expensive, but it does say things about you. It's important that it is clean and looks in good repair. We've been in great sales presentations and then left the building only to be followed out by a client who wants to ask a few more questions or perhaps just see us out nicely. If the back seat of your car is full of empty coffee cups or food wrappers, what does that say about you?

Tip: If you are not sure whether your clothes are reasonable, ask someone whom you see as a mentor or your manager.

Presentations

Preparation

You have 15 minutes to prepare your two to three minute presentation. You don't have to reinvent the wheel; just incorporate what we've discussed today into your presentation.

The presentation will include:

- Your name
- Your company
- The product or service that you sell
- How it can benefit the group

Notes

Evaluations

Element	Rating 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent)	Notes and Suggestions
Opening		
Voice		
Delivery		
Content		
Gestures		

Eye contact		
Posture		
Warm smile		
Use of visuals		
Handling of questions		
Closing		
Departure		