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# Five blunders that can kill a presentation

**D**uring the course of the year, I have had the opportunity to attend numerous meetings, in-services, trade shows and conferences. I love attending these functions, learning new information and networking with new people, yet I am continually amazed at the level of effectiveness of many presentations. Some I attended were excellent, some were OK and some were awful.

Whatever business you're in, success depends, in many cases, on your ability to communicate effectively. How many opportunities have you seen lost because of a poor presentation? How many times have you walked away from the podium unsure of how well you reached your audience? Was the topic of immediate use? Were there specific "takeaways?" Was the audience motivated to take action?

An effective presentation can be rewarding. The benefits for the audience can involve ways to save time or money, or to make their lives easier or more successful. And you, as the presenter, can benefit from the recognition that comes from making all this happen.

While the remainder of this article is specifically crafted to identify several key blunders, I have provided resources at the end that will guide you in developing and making an effective presentation. With these thoughts in mind, I recommend you make a concerted effort to avoid the following "no-nos."

1. *Lack of audience insight.* When

your message is not tailored to your audience, they begin to wonder about the point you are trying to convey, what the takeaways are and why they should even care.

2. *Absence of time management.* At most meetings and conferences, time is of the essence. When you don't start on time or end on time (including time for questions), you can significantly impact the speaker and audience who are following you. I've seen speakers become extremely upset because they could not get in the room to set up in a timely manner to be ready for their session.

3. *Poor PowerPoint presentation.* I am continually amazed by the profusion of poor PowerPoint presentations — having far too many slides for the presentation followed by too much text on each slide; background, font design and coloring that require the room to be darkened; so much animation you get a headache because of the movement; a speaker who reads every line on the slide while also turning his back to the audience; a presenter with such text-heavy slides who says to the audience, "I know those of you in the back probably can't see this, so I'll read it to you!"

4. *Inadequate voice volume.* In order to listen and learn, an audience needs to be able to hear the speaker. It becomes quite distracting when members of the audience continue to interrupt, and ask the speaker to please speak up. Once again, I find it disheartening that so many speakers

are not cognizant of making sure their audience can adequately hear them.

5. *Insufficient handouts/materials.* There are few excuses for this blunder. I recently attended a conference where more than 75 percent of the speakers did not have sufficient handouts. All of those speakers who ran out of materials passed around a piece of paper and asked members of the audience who wanted the information to write down their name and email address. Out of seven sessions where I was involved in this process, it's now two months later and I have received only one handout.

Certainly, giving a presentation is not an easy task. It requires significant research, organization, public speaking skills, practice and self-confidence. I encourage you to consider the following resources in your quest to develop and make outstanding presentations:

- Tips and Tricks On How to Become a Presentation Ninja (<http://www.noupe.com/how-tos/tips-and-tricks-on-how-to-become-a-presentation-ninja-2.html>)

- Ten Tips for More Effective PowerPoint Presentations (<http://money.howstuffworks.com/business-communications/effective-powerpoint-presentations.htm#page=11>)

- Ten Tips for Designing Better Visual Presentations (<http://collaborate.csc.noaa.gov/TrainingNetwork/blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=12>)

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