

Team Presentations

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In the work place, every presenter ends up as part of a team that needs to deliver a group presentation—it's unavoidable. In essence, team or group presentations string together a series of presenters giving individual presentations. Thus, all the same behaviors and dimensions required of presenters still apply to each individual in a team presentation. Yet, team presentations make additional demands on presenters. The strategies below focus on helping presenters deliver effective team presentations.

1. **Anticipate extra preparation time:** Team presentations involve extra planning and coordination effort among the team members to make certain every team member knows what to do and say and when to do and say it. You're coordinating people in addition to delivery and content.
2. **Calculate your team time constraint:** People don't like fast-talking used-car salespeople or fast-talking presenters. Be aware of your time constraint and the amount of information you can convey in the time given to your team (i.e., 110 words or 7 sentences per each minute). For a 30-minute presentation your team has 210 sentences or 3300 words to make your point.
3. **Focus everyone on team's objective, action, and theme:** Individual team members must focus and link their segment(s) of the

presentation to the team's overall objective and the team's primary theme. Themes are usually repeated phrases and/or ideas that help drive home your most important takeaway for the audience. Every sentence must bring you closer and your team closer to achieving the action and the objective the team established. Review each sentence in each segment and determine how it links to the team objective, audience action, or the team theme.

4. **Design uniform visuals:** The team needs to develop a consistent appearance for all its visual aids. Certainly, you want to have different and appealing visuals (as opposed to textual aids that are nothing more than cue cards for the speaker and end up detracting from the speaker's presentation), but you want to make sure that every visual has a uniform look. Two additional points: First, remember that each team presenter must remain the center of attention—the deck of PowerPoint slides should never take center stage. Visual aids aid the presenter! Second, use message captions to be sure each visual delivers a message to the audience. Compare these captions and determine which caption delivers a real message: (1) Cost Data (2) Costs reduced 22% over 2 years
5. **Incorporate frequent organizational statements:** All team members need to make frequent,

upfront organizational statements for each distinct segment to provide the audience with “road signs” telling them what’s ahead. Remember, audiences get lost easily when there’s only one presenter. Team presentations—without clear, concise organizational cues—increase the likelihood that an audience will get lost.

6. **Develop seamless delivery formats:** A presentation team is being judged on an additional dimension. While very member of the team is being judged on delivery and content dimensions, team presentations are also judged on how well the team works together. Teams need to make sure that the delivery style of each presenter is consistent—this is not the time for individuals to try to outshine others on the team. You are a team and want to project the image of a harmonious group capable of operating smoothly and efficiently. Toward that end, you’ll want to be overly cooperative. Make sure that you include transitions to the next speaker.
7. **Rehearse together:** The entire team must rehearse the presentation together for two reasons. First, you risk a timing disaster if you don’t know how long it takes your team to deliver the presentation. In the work place, people are busy, and you don’t want to push the clock to the point where people are thinking about their next meeting because you’re running overtime—especially since the final moments of the presentation contain critical arguments and calls for action. Second, and just as important, you need to know what the other members of your team are planning to say and do. Rehearsing helps you tighten your arguments and include critical points you may have left out. If you don’t rehearse, you’ll never be able to assess

whether your team is focusing on all the critical points you need to make and whether your arguments are persuasive. Run a stopwatch on every team member and include transition time—the clock starts when the first person is introduced and runs until the next person starts speaking. Then, total the individual times and determine what material you need to cut. Since some segments of the talk may be more critical than others, time allotted to each team member does not need to be equal, but you do need to know how to assign time to team members when you have a time constraint. How long should the team rehearse? Until you get it right!

8. **Listen and deliver team assistance:** One of the great advantages in having team members is the J.I.T. assistance they can offer when your team members don’t have the floor. Good team members listen carefully to each team member’s talk and monitor audience reaction. If a team member misses an important point, or if the audience appears to be confused, be prepared (when able) to calmly assist your team mate (e.g., “Chris, let me add a point here.” “Pat, I think I can help answer that question.”). Don’t over do this. The demeanor you’re looking to strike here is one of cooperation that says: “look how well we work together.”

(Note: For specific guidelines on presentations, see the *Communication Audit for Persuasive Talks* at the Communication Consulting Group web site: www.ccg-usa.com)