

Platform Skills – Tips and Techniques

Speakers are judged by their audience in three categories:

- How they look
- How they sound
- How they organise what they say

The matrix below is designed as a quick reference tool to provide you with some techniques for planning an effective presentation.

| Technique | Problem | Strategy | Benefit |
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| Eye contact  | Poor eye contact causes: — Poor audience/speaker rapport — No feedback — Appearance of nervousness — Getting off track | — Establish deliberate eye contact with audience members, one at a time — Maintain for five seconds — Maintain until you complete a thought | — Two way communication — Appearance of control — Thought flow is controlled — Distracting stimuli avoided |
| Voice projection/ rate  | — Being inaudible — Speaking monotone — Looking unenergetic — Speaking too quickly/slowly | — Speak as if you are talking to a group 4x larger than your audience without a microphone — Speak at a comfortable rate concentrating on articulation of words | — Ensures you are heard — Voice sounds animated — You look energetic and committed to what you're saying |

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| <p>Feet and hips</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Movements may be distracting — Energy drained by pacing — You look nervous and unsure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Plant the feet shoulder width apart as if in a block of cement — Don't lock knees — Equally distribute weight on both feet | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Appear confident — Appear in control — Avoid distracting mannerisms — Added energy — Gestures increase and are natural — Decreased nervousness |
| <p>Hands and arms</p>  | <p>If hands out in pockets, behind the back, in front or locked at the elbow, speaker appears:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Stiff — Boring — Lifeless — Nervous <p>& locks up energy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Keep hands at your side in a loose and easy stance — Allow hands to go full extensions to make a point — Visualise the verbal — Return hands to sides | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Relaxed posture gives audience a visual rest — Gives you the appearance of command and authority |
| <p>Questions and answers</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Learning is typically less successful if participants/audience do not feel involved — Audience may tune out if there is no opportunity to ask questions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Provide examples to aid audience understanding and which relate to on the job experiences — Recognise the questioner by employing eye contact with him/her — Respond by answering the question and scanning the audience — Relate the answer to original topic — Include audience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Allows you to manage the discussion — Allows you to provide audience with information directly applicable to the topic — Learning is typically more successful if participants/audience are involved |

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| <p>Idea presentation flow</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Often presentation fails because speaker fails to organise material logically — Failure to organise material often annoys or confuses presenter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Define the purpose of the presentation and organise material accordingly — Get on the same wave length or frame of reference as your audience — Have an objective reader review the presentation and provide feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — A logical well ordered presentation puts you in tune with your audience — Enables participants to grasp key ideas quickly and contribute to the question/answer session |
| <p>PowerPoint</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Slides containing too much detail — Presenter reading directly from slides, not elaborating on key points — Poor alignment, co-ordination of slides which causes distractions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Keep them simple (one idea per visual) — Visualise the verbal — Laser Pointers to highlight key points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Audience focuses on presenter, sees him/her as an expert (adding value) — Audience is not distracted by poor visuals — Presenter is more easily able to deliver information |