

Presenting

Introduction

This article is part of our [sales guide for contractors](#).

As a contractor, and like many many other top professions, you may well be required to perform a presentation. Presenting is a great skill to learn and in your career you will certainly have to present at some stage. This might be something formally arranged beforehand with a set agenda, or something less formal and ad-hoc like taking the stage during a meeting to get your viewpoint across.

This article describes the basics for presenting well.

Nerves

In the UK, presenting or public speaking is one of the most common phobias found in adults. The truth is, if you can buy a stamp at the post office – you can present to a thousand people. It is simply you talking, but this time to an audience rather than an individual. Dealing with nerves is the first hurdle, but soon they will disappear.

Speed

It is because of nerves that most people when they first present speak far too quickly. Indeed, you should actually speak slightly more slowly than you natural speech. Practise doing this in front of a mirror and look at the way you come across.

If you are standing, you should be relaxed and upright. Present in a confident voice slowly. Rather than look at each person in turn that you are presenting to (this makes you look a bit like a lighthouse), try to more randomly look at members of your audience.

Relaxing and Controlling the Audience

Try to involve some humour into presentations – it relaxes you and your audience. The opposite is also true, if you are tense and stressed – your audience will also be tense. Make your mind up before the presentation whether you would like your audience to ask questions during the presentation or ask them to wait until the end of the presentation and then ask questions. It is imperative to maintain control of your audience and it is for this reason that it is often best to ask people not to ask questions until you have finished. Treat each presentation individually and decide.

Rehearse

It is very wise to rehearse your presentation a few times before you actually present. Find a quiet room, imagine yourself in the board room and run right through the whole presentation. Imagining also in your mind that the presentation is going well and is being brilliantly received by your audience actually helps to deal with nerves on the day and has a very positive effect on your delivery.

Slides and Visual Aids

Visual aids are of great help to presentations, but are also widely misused. If we take powerpoint for an example, many presentations have slides that are too busy with far too much information on the screen. Technically, a powerpoint presentation on it's own should not make much sense and should certainly not read like a story. When slides have too much data on them, the audience stops listening to you and begin reading the slide. Less information is better and the emphasis is always on your vocal delivery of the content. Visual aids exist as very useful back ups.

Enjoy It!

Like with so many aspects of life, you become great at presenting the moment you begin to enjoy presenting. Once you have conquered your nerves, you will take every opportunity to present and feel great while delivering each new presentation.

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