

Tips, Insights & Tactics

10 Ways to Refresh Your Presentations

Practice improves presentation.

The more you practice and prepare for success, the more your presentation will improve. Identify your strengths and use them to determine what types of preparation will be most beneficial to you. Use the tips below to help you refresh your presentation skills.



1. Follow Your Preference

Introverts may enjoy diving into research, organizing and losing themselves in details. Depth of knowledge builds confidence, improving your presentation. Extraverts may enjoy talking with experts or visiting customers to expand their knowledge. Allow your natural preferences to guide your presentation development.

2. Make Every Performance Count

Practice your presentation using your visuals in front of a mirror, family or friends. Then practice again in front of colleagues familiar with your topic. Use their feedback to improve content and delivery. Time yourself to ensure your presentation fits within its allotted time and to improve your pacing.

You don't need to memorize your speech. If you've practiced enough your notes will keep you on track without having to read them word for word.

3. Project Your Success

When presenting, speak from the diaphragm, loudly and clearly enough so the people sitting farthest from you can understand what you're saying. Speakers often have a different sense of time than those listening. Pause after key points to allow your audience time to absorb them—or for dramatic emphasis.

Vary the tone of your voice appropriately, to enhance what you're saying. Avoid filling time with "ums" and "ahs". A silent pause is far better.

Make a conscious effort to observe your body language in relaxed, comfortable settings. Try to achieve the same natural, but poised, posture when presenting.

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4. Prepare Before Every Event

If possible, arrive at the speaking venue early to ensure you're familiar with the equipment, and that everything's working. Come prepared for technical difficulties, like a backup of your presentation on a memory stick—or the ability to proceed without it entirely.

5. You Can Do It

If public speaking fills you with anxiety, practice breathing and relaxation techniques to calm yourself. Remember, the audience is not really focused on you, they're focused on what you can tell them. They are receptive to learning and want your presentation to succeed. Try to focus on sharing information not on yourself.

6. Seek Understanding

One of the keys to a great presentation is knowing your audience. If possible, before it's time to begin, take five or ten minutes to meet a few of the people you'll be presenting to. Use what you learn about them to make small, but meaningful adjustments to your talk. And when you look out at the group from the podium, there'll be a familiar face or two.

7. Pause for Effect

When you take the stage, pause for a moment before you begin. Acknowledge the audience with a silent smile or welcome greeting. Eye contact is a great way to keep people engaged. Use it throughout your presentation. About two seconds is ideal. And spread your gaze around the room, left to right and front to back.

Keep your audience in view to help you gauge their reaction to your content. Signs of engagement are eye contact, note taking and

nods of agreement. If attention is waning, ask a question or two to reengage your listeners.

8. Focus Forward

When projecting your presentation visuals on a screen behind you, it's a good idea to glance over your shoulder from time to time to check everything's correct. Pause, when you do it. Never read from the screen behind you. Make sure you're facing the audience whenever you're speaking.

9. Show Leadership

How do you handle an unexpected disruption during your presentation? The audience will likely take its cue from you. If you acknowledge the interruption, it will shift even more attention to it. If you ignore it, you may be able to minimize its impact. Either way, it's best if you can decide how to handle it quickly and act accordingly.

10. Prepare to be Questioned

Most presentations conclude with a Q&A session. Instead of showing a slide that reads "Questions" show one that summarizes your key points. It will serve as a good reminder and help stimulate the questions you're after.

Unless you're certain everyone can clearly hear the questions asked, it's usually a good idea to repeat them before you answer. Keep your response crisp and focused, like the body of your presentation. Try to anticipate potential questions and prepare a few backup slides with relevant data or images. You may never use them, but if you do, your audience is sure to appreciate the extra effort that went into them.



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