

Speaking aids

General Principles

To add more impact to a presentation, speaking aids are generally used. The trap with using such aids is they can very easily ruin a presentation.

The sin most committed is not speaking to your audience! Time and time again, this will be observed and yet it is entirely in the speaker's control.

Most aids use electricity to work and hence it is a case of when, and not if, they'll let you down. Always have a fallback plan for such an occurrence. It also follows that they are gadgets that you need to learn how to use. Do this well before the presentation. A week before is suggested, 24 hrs before if pressed for time but not on the day!

As with any other speaking, preparation is essential, including a full dress rehearsal with the aids before the Club.

Using a Microphone

Things to know and things to do

1. Arrive early so that you can experiment with your system and set volume levels. Try to get a combination of distance from the mouth and volume setting that eliminates feedback but can be heard easily from any audience position. Have someone move about the area to check levels.
2. Check the sensitivity of your microphone. Some microphones that are designed to limit feedback must be placed close to the mouth in order to work. If you are new to microphones and if you have a choice, go for a microphone that is effective some distance from the mouth because this will give you much greater freedom of movement.
3. When speaking, always be aware of the microphone. Microphones work much better if held at a constant distance from the mouth with the voice being directed towards them. So if you want to look to the right, move your head to the left while turning to the right. This will keep your voice directed at the microphone and keep your levels constant. If you must move your face away from the microphone, to say reach for a speaker's aid, don't speak for that short period.
4. If you are accomplished in speaking without a microphone be aware that the microphone might be sensitive to varying volume levels. A degree of voice variation that might be highly effective in un-amplified speaking might prove excessive for your system. It is best to experiment and practice, especially before an important presentation.
5. Plosive overloads are a common problem for speakers not familiar with microphone use. They are the distorted 'P' sound when a speaker's mouth is too close. If the mouth distance cannot be varied because of other considerations the problem can be overcome by directing the voice just over the top of the microphone rather than directly towards it.
6. Lapel microphones are the best option because they move with you, keeping a constant distance from your mouth regardless of where you move. They give you the greatest freedom of any microphone; the set and forget option.

7. Radio microphones offer convenience and freedom of use but be aware that quality equipment must be used to ensure reliability. Stray radio signals from outside can interrupt this kind of equipment, often without warning.

Microsoft PowerPoint

Introduction

This is very powerful software that can really add a whole new dimension to speech presentation. For an effective delivery, you have to master three separate skills. These are;

- Speech Presentation.
- Slide Construction.
- Fluency - with synchronising the speech with using the software.

Since there are three separate skills to master, it follows that it will take three times as long to prepare for an effective presentation.

Don't fall for the trap of relying on the software to carry your presentation. It won't!

Speech Presentation

The skills required for speech presentation follow the same rules as prepared speeches.

To repeat the main aspects of prepared speeches;

- Speak to the audience, make eye contact, and avoid speaking to the screen. Be warned, it is very difficult not to look at what you're talking about (the screen)...so beware!
- Be very clear about what your message is.
- Make sure the opening and closing reinforce your message.

The temptation to look at the screen can be lessened by having a slave monitor judiciously placed so you can see what is being displayed while speaking to your audience.

Slide Construction

It must be stressed that the person writing the speech should direct the slide construction. This is because the speech and slides must simultaneously give the same message otherwise you'll only confuse your audience. If you spend hours preparing a speech, then allow hours for preparing your slides, longer if you're not familiar with the program! For well prepared slides, allow 30 to 60 minutes per slide. Your slides should be made with the following in mind;

Be very clear what the purpose of every slide is and how this directly supports your speech. Introduce your speech with a header slide.

Eliminate the repetitiveness of bulleted statements by including questions, photos, diagrams and animations. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words and appropriate animations are worth ten thousand!

Highlight which particular part of the slide you are referring to. There are numerous ways this can be done with PowerPoint. Seek help if you're not sure how.

- Avoid cluttered slides. ie. too much information on one slide.
- Insert blanking slides to clearly segregate parts of your speech if needed.

- Finish your speech with a closing slide.

Fluency

The art of making a presentation flow smoothly can only be achieved with practice. Do two trial presentations before the Rostrum Club as a minimum to be familiar with the timing of the slides and your speech.

This practice will make you more comfortable with the equipment and help identify possible hitches.

Always save the final presentation with a PPS file extension and place this file on the desktop as an icon.

(If not done, the presenter has to open up PowerPoint and try to find the appropriate file which is usually buried with the drafts. It is embarrassing and often done with apologetic mumbles. It is distracting to the audience and seriously impairs the presentation as a whole.)

From the familiar Windows Screen, a simple double click on the icon will launch straight into your presentation. Lean, clean and efficient!

Handling Questions

If questions are expected, a blanking screen pause (Hotkey Toggle "B" for a black screen or "W" for a white screen) will stop your presentation while you answer the questions.

If questions prompt discussion about a particular part of a slide, a right-click will bring up a shortcut menu with a pen function. Select this and you can draw on the screen by dragging with the mouse to clarify what you are referring to. Pressing "E" will erase your scribbling.

If questions are referring to another slide, type in that slide number and enter ie (< number >+ENTER). This will take you directly to that slide. By having a hard copy of your presentation, you can locate the precise slide number very quickly. Go to "File>Print" and in the "Print what" dialogue box you are given a number of options. You'll have to experiment to see what suits you best.

Setting Up

Make sure you set up at least an hour before the presentation so you have time to sort out any problems encountered, checking the following points;

Check placement of the projector so as not to obstruct audience view.

Place your Slave Monitor with the back facing the audience so that you can see your audience and monitor at the same time.

Make sure your electrical leads are not trip hazards.

Do a complete test to make sure all equipment works.

Finally, have hard copy notes/handouts available as back-up for when the inevitable does happen - you lose power! and believe me, that does happen!

For a really comprehensive series of notes go to the Kodak website at www.kodak.com. The notes can be found by the following instructions:

Type in "digital learning centre" in the search field and click search. Double click the result "digital learning centre" about four returns down.

Five books will be shown. Select the book "DLC Plus" > Chapter 3. Advanced Amateurs > Lesson 2. Basic Multimedia Presentations.

Browsing this site will reveal other information relevant to using Microsoft PowerPoint.