

GLOBAL CITIZENS
FOR CHANGE

CITOYENNES
DU MONDE
EN ACTION

Presentation Skills

Fear of public speaking is one of the most common phobias in the world. But doing successful presentations is key in creating action in your community. Whether you are talking to an elected official, the media, trying to get volunteers for your committee or talking to kids at a local school strong presentation and delivery skills is an asset that is essential to mobilization.

This tool will help you:

Prepare you to deliver great presentations

There are hundreds of books and seminars that will give you tips on how to do a successful presentation. Regardless of the terms or techniques they use the message is generally the same, a good presentation is the result of good preparation.

In Advance of Your Presentation:

Get to know your Audience

Find out everything you can about your audience before you plan your presentation. It may seem like some audiences are the same but going to a classroom where they have just completed a segment on world issues or poverty will be very different than being the class' first impression on the topic. If possible try and find out who has talked to the group in the past, so you can build on what knowledge they already have. If there is someone who is coordinating your presentation, ask in advance what their objective is for your presentation.

Determine a Goal

Be sure to consider the purpose of your presentation – Ask yourself what you hope to achieve by talking to this audience. Write your goal down so you can refer to it while you are creating your presentation, and stay on track.

If your goal is to get people in the audience to take action you will need to give them something to do. Come prepared with a petition or be sure to write down the Make Poverty History Web-site on chart paper or a chalk board so the action is clear and accessible. If you want the audience to learn more about issues of poverty or the Millennium Development Goals develop a flyer that lists where they can find more resources.

Develop your key Message(s):

Know the key point you want your audience to walk away with. Ask yourself this question if someone from the room I just spoke to walked into an elevator after hearing my talk and a person in the elevator asked “what did the speaker talk about?” What would be your ideal answer?

Write down the one or two key sentences that you want to deliver – this is your thesis or your key message. Make sure that the techniques you use to build the content of your presentation (listed in the next section) all return to supporting this key message.

Be sure to state your key message in your introduction and conclusion.

Developing your presentation

Content

During your presentation you will want to reach out to all members of your audience. One mistake that people often make is assuming that all people are effected by the same information and techniques as they are. As a speaker it is your job to recognize that people will react differently to different types and delivery of information. A successful speaker will consider different methods of communicating an idea and incorporate different techniques into their presentation. In general there are three main tools to communicate your message:

Logic:

Using some numbers and statistics is one way to appeal to members of an audience. Use this technique sparingly, and be sure to always keep in mind that too many numbers can be confusing. Carefully consider the statistics you choose to use, and try and use numbers that you can “humanize” with a story about an actual person.

Example:

Nearly three billion people live on less than two dollars a day. This is a staggering number, but these people are not just numbers, they are real people with real stories. While volunteering in Ghana I met a woman named Justice Aguman who was raising five kids on a small plot of land that she was farming herself.....

Values:

While it may not be safe to assume that your audience has a shared set of values, there may be some values that you may want to highlight to your audience as the bases of your presentation. Racial equality, gender equality, and the rights of children may be some basic values you may address in your presentation.

Emotion:

Evoking emotion in your audience is one of the most powerful ways you can influence your audience. Many of you will have very interesting stories and personal anecdotes from your volunteering work. When telling your stories use first names (when appropriate) and give the people in your stories life by offering a few details about them which will make them real to your listeners.

Consider with sensitivity how you depict your colleagues, host families, and communities. Remember that your story may be the only thing your audience has ever heard about the country you were in, so you will want to paint an honest picture of the community you lived and the people you met. While you may want to evoke emotion, be sure to temper stories of hardship, with the stories of the human spirit, community, and self reliance.

Language

Be careful with the language you use in your presentation. The world of international development is riddled with acronyms and evolving terms. Sentences like, "NGO's are working the Global South to support the MDGs through the MPH campaign" will mean nothing to an audience new to the material. You want to engage your audiences by having them understand an issue, not feel excluded by the language you use.

You may even want to address some terms you would be using at the start of your presentation, for instance: "The term 'third world' is no longer widely used, so throughout my presentation I will use the term 'the global south'.

Audiovisual

A Power Point presentation or slide show can be very effective tools in supporting and illustrating your message. Be sure that you only use a few slides to illustrate key points, so they maintain impact. Keep your slides simple in style, and have a format that is consistent. Lastly be sure to test all AV equipment before your presentation.

Practice

Practicing your presentation out loud with a friend beforehand is a great way to make sure that your flow is logical, your timing is right, and helps with nerves. Be sure to ask for honest feedback, and suggestions.