

Presentation Organization

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Clear, concise, organized presentations help your audience get the message.

An effective presentation leaves little to the prospect's imagination. The main ideas are prominent, clearly explained and presented in logical order. The presenter sticks to a well-designed plan without wandering off on tangents or leaving the audience wondering where the presentation is going. As a result, your prospects understand the benefits of your product, which in turn helps them decide to buy. Organize your next presentation according to these steps to give your buyers all the right ideas.

Analyze. Before you start thinking about the content of your presentation, think about why you are giving one in the first place. Get to know your audience and their preferences and quirks, find out how much time you will have to talk and decide what action you want your audience to take when you are finished. Through careful questioning you should already know your prospects' wants, needs and hot buttons - design your presentation content around them. Careful analysis before you get started should reduce preparation time, ensure your use of appropriate terminology, help you anticipate questions and objections and tailor a topic quickly for a new audience.

Funnel. You might have a lot of information to share, but that doesn't mean your buyers want to hear all of it. Address only those selling points that you know are of particular interest to your buyers. Envision pouring all you know about your product into a funnel, which then narrows your focus to three or four main ideas. If you want to share additional information, distribute it before or after your presentation so prospects can read just what they want.

Focus. To stay on track during your presentation, use a focus statement. Your statement isn't revealed to your audience, but serves as a constant reminder of how your information will be defined, developed and included in your presentation. Incorporate these three elements into your statement:

A presentation goal. Ask yourself what you want your audience to know, feel or do as a result of your presentation.

A presentation theme. To identify your theme, decide whether you will be informative or persuasive. Compose a theme that offers a benefit, i.e., "To persuade the audience that the new product will save time."

A presentation category. Your theme usually determines your category - a word or phrase that tells your main points. Categories of information include steps, methods, types, benefits and reasons why. If you want to persuade your listeners that your product will save them time, offer specific reasons why (category) it will save time (theme).

Identify. Your category of information will help you determine your main points. Brainstorm for all the main points related to your category (using the example above, all reasons why your product will save time). Remember that your main points should be important to your prospects. If you end up with more points than your audience can absorb, organize them under three or four main headings that will help them remember. Tie your main points to benefit statements that show prospects why those points are important.

Map. With a thoughtfully designed blueprint you help ensure a smooth and effective delivery. Jot down an outline of your presentation with key words and phrases (use terminology prospects will recognize) onto a "cheat sheet" you can use to trigger your memory and get you back on track quickly if you are interrupted. Use bold face and italics to help you find your place on the map easily, and to help you remember which words to emphasize.

You give presentations to let prospects know why they should buy. Make the most of your opportunity by delivering the information in a way that makes the benefits of your product crystal clear. Prospects that understand what you have to offer and how it benefits them are far more likely to make your presentation pay off with a sale.