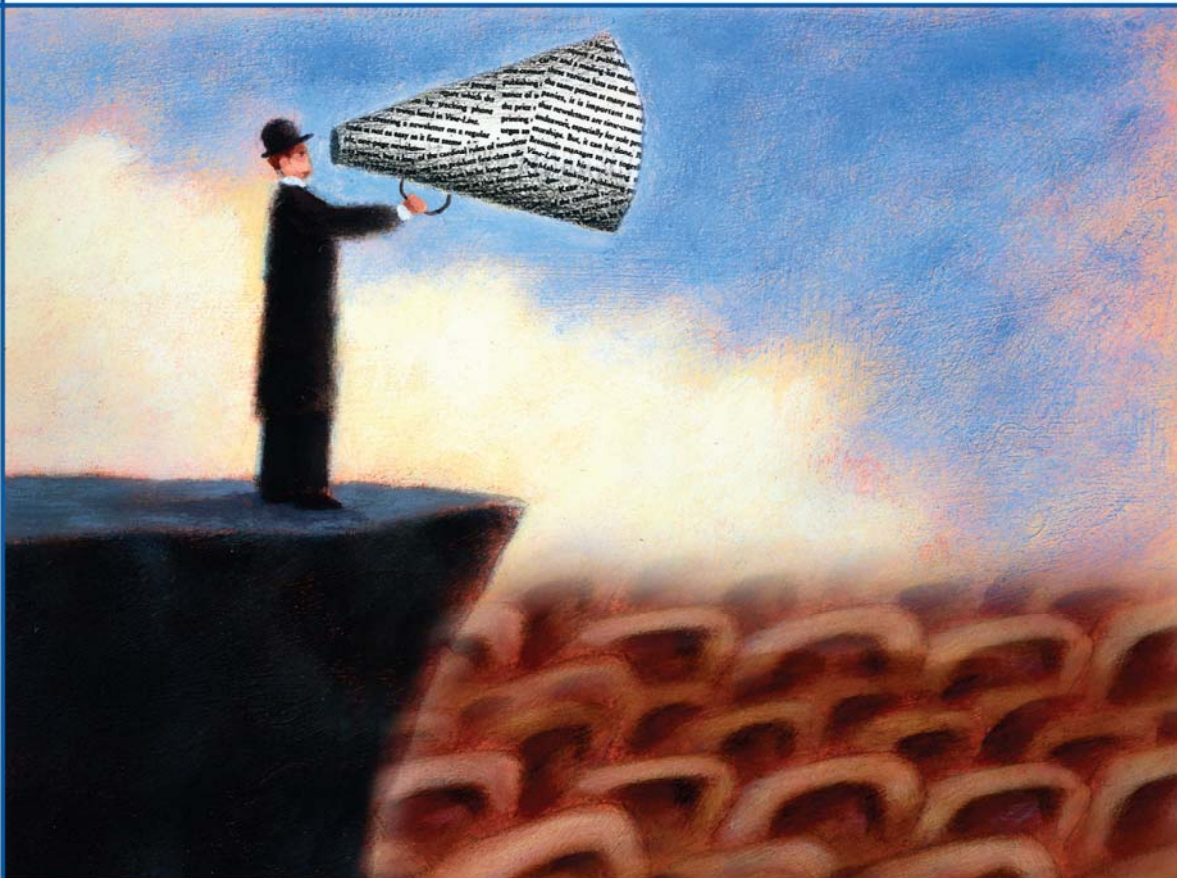


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- ✓ Become a More Effective and Efficient Presenter



Christee Atwood

ASTD Trainer's Workshop Series

Presentation Skills TRAINING

Christee Gabour Atwood



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Key Concepts of Presentations

What's in This Chapter?

- ◆ Discussion of the impact of presentation skills on the workplace
- ◆ Explanation of basic presentation concepts
- ◆ Section-by-section overview of comprehensive presentation skills training

We are constantly competing for the attention of our audiences. Recent studies have noted that, at any given moment, only about 20 percent of those in an audience are actively listening to what's being said.

Attention spans are getting shorter and more fragmented. If you doubt this, turn on a news network and notice what you see: Not only is there a split screen with faces in at least two different locations, but also you have text scrolling across the bottom, the channel name in a corner, and usually some other breaking news, weather update, or promo for a later program somewhere on the screen. With that much sensory stimulation in their “relaxation” time, our audiences can hardly find it easy to concentrate on a lone presenter standing at the front of a room.

This is why it's no longer effective simply to *lecture* our audiences and expect they'll get the message. Effective presentations now must address more than just one learning style to appeal to learners whether they are visual, auditory, or kinesthetic (hands-on). They have to include valuable information, of course, but they also need to incorporate a sampling of entertainment and some collaboration with the listener/learner.

The key concepts I'll address in this workbook are of real-world value for your workshop participants, and they're excellent reminders to you as a presenter. What follows is an overview of the key aspects of presentation that are covered in the various workshop activities.

Overview of Presentation Concepts

This workbook offers four workshop agendas so you can choose one that suits your needs and scheduling requirements. The two-day workshop is an in-depth presentation course, offering all of the concepts that are relevant to the topic. The other formats are condensed to cover the most vital topics with shorter practice times. Based on the needs of your organization, you also can offer various combinations of the exercises from the two-day workshop in shorter sessions.

The two-day workshop focuses on the two main elements of a presentation: the *content* and the *delivery*.

The first segment of the workshop evaluates your learners to see what types of presenters they are when you begin the workshop. You'll probably find you have an array—from the avoiders and resisters to the reluctant and even the enthusiastic. With active participation in your workshop and careful attention to the follow-up action plan, it's possible to see even the avoiders move toward the other end of the presenter comfort spectrum. By starting with minor presentations, such as introductions, moving into small-group and then full-group presentations, and finally following up with specific development plans, your learners will benefit from the gradual conditioning that creates comfortable presenters.

The basics of presentations are addressed in the next section of the workshop. These basics include the four types of presentations—informational, instructional, persuasive, and inspirational. The text also reinforces the simple ABCs of presentations: accurate, brief, and clear.

The workshop segment on messages dissects the three main parts of the messages we send—words, tone, and body language—and presents exercises to draw attention to the way each of those elements affects how a presentation is accepted by the audience. Because this information deals with basic communication concepts, it's useful even for attendees who never step in front of an audience of more than one person. Many mixed messages in today's workplace result from inconsistencies in tone, body language, and words. For example,

the manager who leans back and acts distracted may actually give the mistaken impression that the message he's communicating is not important. This section helps learners recognize and adjust the various messages they send.

The section on nervousness addresses the stress of presenting and enables the participants to practice their presentation and communication skills in a small-group setting as they brainstorm ways to overcome their fears.

The focus of the course then turns to the design of presentations, using the formula Get Ready, Get SET, Go. *Get Ready* stands for the planning stage of the presentation. *Get SET* uses the "SET Formula"—short answer, evidence, and transition—to structure short talks and each segment of longer presentations. This is a real-world formula that works well for impromptu speaking and question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions because it reminds learners to conserve their words. If this formula shortens just one of the meetings you attend each week, it's done its job.

In the workshop's next segment, learners are introduced to the presentation planning form. This reusable form is a tool they can use whenever they have to create presentations. It walks the users through an analysis of their purpose in speaking, the likely audience, and the main points to be conveyed. It also helps participants see how the rules of brainstorming can be used to create a presentation.

Participants then practice impromptu speaking and learn about the importance of the "elevator speech." This speech preparation is another tool to teach speakers to condense the message to its most vital information so it can be delivered in the length of time it takes to complete an average elevator ride.

The workshop segment concerning rapport building is useful in everyday interpersonal relationships as well as in front of an audience. We've seen how some speakers connect strongly with their listeners. They accomplish it with body language, by mirroring and matching tone and pace of speech, and by observing their listeners' reactions. In a lighthearted exercise, participants will be invited to find things they have in common with a group in only three minutes. The exercise helps them realize that developing rapport is not something that takes decades; it just takes a willingness to communicate.

Next, participants will go through each of the stages of preparation for a presentation, from the design and writing to the checklists for on-site arrangements. They'll experience the step-by-step process of preparation for a formal presentation. They'll discuss the impact of gestures and receive a tool that

gives additional guidelines for the effective use of gestures and body language in front of an audience.

The next workshop section lets learners step back and consider how they react as audience members. To do that, they'll complete an assessment to identify what type of learners they are—what style of learning is most natural for them. Those learning styles—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—then will be analyzed to see how they can be addressed through the use of proper visual aids. In this section, the participants will work in groups, with each group preparing a presentation on the benefits of one of the visual aids. The other groups will debate the findings. In this way, all attendees get a chance to see a debate session. And, with proper facilitation, they'll get the added lesson that conflict is not always a negative experience. Instead, it can be a learning experience for all parties involved.

Flipcharts and PowerPoint slides, visual aids that are most “abused” by presenters, have their own segments in the workshop. Participants will learn to use these tools effectively and will go through a learning activity to identify bad decisions in design on a PowerPoint slide.

An area that arouses fear for many presenters is the problem audience member. The difficulty of managing a disruptive listener—what is diplomatically called a “challenging situation” in the workshop—is addressed in a brainstorming session that suggests ways to handle some of the most common (and a few very unusual) negative behaviors of audience members.

Humor is a wonderful addition to any presentation, but its misuse can cause damage to the presenter's credibility and reputation. Good humor is used to diffuse frustration, reduce anxiety, get a point across in a gentle manner, add a touch of levity, and sometimes just to wake up an after-lunch audience. As long as humor isn't hurtful or directed at anyone but ourselves, it's a positive component of presentations. The humor section of the workshop uses a few fun exercises to help participants “grow their funny bones.”

Your learners will study the best ways to prepare for Q&A sessions. To counter the jolt of an unexpected Q&A following a presentation, the workshop covers the concept of creating a second closing to a presentation. Having a standby closing waiting in the wings lets the presenter finish the surprise Q&A on a dynamic note.

All of the preparation in the workshop leads to a five-minute presentation by each participant, followed by a self-evaluation and a peer review.

The workshop closes with a tool to help attendees incorporate activities and exercises into their meetings and presentations, and with the development of an action plan to support the transfer of this new knowledge into their everyday lives.

For use as a follow-up, each of your learners will fill out an action plan that another participant will mail in 30 days. Receiving this plan a month after the workshop offers a gentle reminder to use the skills they worked on during the workshop.

What to Do Next

- ♦ Review the agenda of the two-day workshop to see which activities target the needs of your group.
- ♦ Determine the length of the workshop you'll offer.
- ♦ Tailor the content of the workshop to suit your organization's and participants' needs.
- ♦ Make room and equipment reservations.



If you find you need help determining the needs of your group, go to the next chapter where we'll look more closely at the process of assessing your organization's needs and at the various instruments that can help you in that task.



