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Powerful Presentations

Developing practical guidebook for students

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Throughout centuries, public speeches have been one of the most powerful tools to make a change in the world. Nowadays, in digitally rich cultures, they have even more potential and broader reach. Presentations have become a widely-adopted learning and teaching and default business communication tool. However, regardless criticality of presentations in people's private and profes-sional lives, their quality often leaves much to be desired and seeks more attention. University environment, where hundreds of PowerPoint Presentations take place every day, is not an excep-tion</p> <p>Therefore, the main purpose of the thesis was to research the topic of effective presenting, partic-ularly in academic context. The objective was to identify and address students' points of interest and challenges when performing at public. It was necessary to draw attention to the problem of poor presentations and suggest new insights to change students' attitude towards it. These goals were achieved through the survey among students, deep research of topic related sources and creation of a student's guidebook.</p> <p>The guidebook represents a practical component of the thesis. Derived from the author's passion for public speaking and life experiences, the guidebook, in a creative and short format, aims to shift people's opinion about presenting in public, give food for thought and practical solutions to the most common challenges. The guidebook makes no pretense of substituting specialized sources but plays a complementary and inspirational role.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis topic was discovered through participation in a course 'Business communication in the world of diversity and Social Media' provided by International Summer School at The University of Coruña (August 2014). The course aroused interest in a subject of effective communication and stimulated its in-depth research in a form of a thesis. Given the broadness of the term, however, it was crucial to narrow the study area to the maximum. The final choice of the topic was driven by potential practical use it could deliver to students and author himself.

Throughout life, most of the people happen to perform in front of a public. Some do it occasionally, others – on a daily basis; some – because they are forced to, others – because they truly enjoy it. Within University environment, and International Business studies especially, presentation becomes a critical tool in learning and teaching process and persists such in a professional setting. Presentation format varies significantly from job interview to academic presentation to sales pitch. The diversity of areas presentation is applied to makes it a highly valuable skill and sophisticated science at the same time.

Despite the importance of presentation as a communication tool nowadays, the quality of many leaves much to be desired. Poor presentations take place in all levels and contexts from student's marketing course assignment to business meetings to NASA reporting. Despite the fact that in educational context, for example, PowerPoint presentations have taken over other traditional ways of teaching and learning, overwhelming majority of these presentations (coming both from teachers and students) appear to lack well-defined objective, high-quality visual execution, and captivating message.

Poor quality presentations in academic context not only hinder effective educational process but also affect personal and professional development of each particular student in a long run. Therefore, the main objective of the thesis is to draw students' attention to the importance of powerful presenting as well as give unusual insights to the problem with the help of practical guide. The questionnaire among students assisted to identify issues the latter find the most essential and challenging in public presenting, and the results laid in a basis for defining both thesis and guidebook content.

The thesis starts with speaking about presentation in general. It discusses why the topic is important and provides the definition of presentation and basic terms related to the topic – a glossary. Moreover, common attitudes towards presenting are discussed and should be paid attention to because in many cases they need to be reconsidered.

The third chapter focuses on different types of presentations based on such criteria as objectives and delivery format. The purposes presentations are given for vary from informational to persuasive to goodwill building. Each type has its own particularities, which should be considered if we want to present effectively. The same is true for delivery format as the choice of the right way to deliver plays a crucial role in how the speech is perceived.

The forth part is devoted solely to *Group Presentations*. According to the survey, students prefer presenting in a par/a group to individual performance yet face numerous challenges that need to be addressed. Therefore, the chapter elaborates on the concept of group presenting, leadership, power distribution and consistency and coheveness achievement in a group. In the end, the chapter suggests several recommendations to facilitate group work and make it more effective.

In the context of public speaking, audience represents one of the most, If not the most, critical aspects as no speech can exist or makes sense without the audience. Chapter 5 *Audience*, therefore, reveals why exactly audience is important and how to identify and profile it to shape compelling message and deliver it in the best suitable way.

The sixth chapter focuses on the research process; it shows the sequence of events from goal definition to planning to implementation methods followed by data analysis and results description. The creation process, composition and content of the practical guide are also represented in this chapter. The thesis is finalized with the discussion section where main challenges, learning outcomes and further research development ideas are presented.

2 PRESENTATION

*Technology has given us many ways to communicate,
but only one is truly human: in-person presentations.*

Nancy Duarte

2.1 Topic Importance

“The ability to speak passionately, clearly, and visually is more important today than ever before — partly because of the fantastic reach that our talks can have, largely thanks to the power of online video”. (Reynolds 2011, 17.) The latest technology and Internet brought ample opportunities to presenters to educate, inspire, and motivate millions of people through the power of word. Yet, they also brought challenges. The Internet has resulted in constant and loud external noise deadening or distorting messages while PowerPoints enslaved the vast majority of public speakers. Thus, presenting in today's world has become a strive for balance between human resources and technology, where the latter must be a servant, not a master. Unfortunately, it is not always the case and should be fixed.

One of the characteristics, which makes presentation skill so critical, is its universality. While some skills, like drawing or accounting, are necessary only for people of certain professions, strong presentation skills, on the contrary, are essential and beneficial for everyone, despite occupation, occasion or context. "Whether you're giving a presentation at work, giving an account of yourself at an interview, making a speech at a wedding or speaking up at a public meeting, they [skills] will help you to say what you want, clearly and persuasively." (Levin & Topping 2006, 1.) The great variety of areas in life, where presentation skills are applicable, makes them a valuable asset to acquire and sophisticated art to learn.

If we speak about less 'global' reasons supporting public speaking finesse and focus particularly on benefits for students, a host of them could be named. Firstly, a presentation is not only an excellent teaching method, but also an effective learning tool. Because in order to give a powerful speech, one should prepare thoroughly, which implies investigating topic and choosing relevant content; thinking of organizational pattern and deciding on the style of a speech; and finally practicing through it and memorizing key points and main parts. These actions naturally result into presenter's deep comprehension, digest and knowledge of a chosen topic.

Moreover, presentations that students deliver throughout their study period can be viewed as rehearsals of their future professional speeches. Academic presentations provide an excellent ground for training, trying and improvising the whole arsenal of techniques and ways of performing. At the same time, university presentations allow more room failures unlike business and social speeches where stakes are much higher and the so is the price of a mistake.

Last but not least, performing in front of an audience is an effective exercise to gain self-confidence, lucidity of mind and clarity of speech. In addition, throughout the practice of presenting, we gain a power of observation and skills of critical thinking and analyzing. By simply learning to present, students can develop themselves in multiple dimensions, which enhances interpersonal relationships and brings wider career prospects.

To conclude, strong presentation skills have become an essential asset in today's world, where the word along with gaining enormous influence and spread thanks to technology and Internet has to struggle to be heard due to overall surfeit of information. Only a strong presentation can make a message stand out and people act. Only effective eye-to-eye communication with an audience, whether comprised of fellow-students, committee or colleagues, can enrich both sides and make a change. Because "no matter how impressive the technology becomes, no matter how many features and effects are added, the technology of the soul has indeed not changed and humans can be only approached through a sincere dialogue." (Reynolds 2011, 8) And this art of a dialogue, or presentation, must be mastered if we want to get our messages and ideas across and make a change.

2.2 Defining *Presentation*

"The purpose of definition is to set boundaries and to focus attention. Definitions ask people to look at certain parts of a process while ignoring others. The question to ask in evaluating definition is not, 'Is it right or wrong?' Rather, the question should be, 'Is it a useful guide for inquiry?' "(Trenholm & Jensen 2006, 4.) Unlike 'culture' or 'communication', the word 'presentation' does not have hundreds of definitions yet still suggests up to fourteen of them (Collins 2015). The interpretations vary from 'the act of presenting' (Merriam-Webster 2015) to 'the position of a baby relative to the birth canal at the time of birth' in medicine (Collins 2015) to 'a sense datum' in philosophy (Collins 2015).

However, we should choose definition corresponding to the thesis topic in order to set clear boundaries and address key goals of the research. As stated in the introduction, *the main objective of the thesis is to identify common challenges that students face when presenting on the stage*, which means that 'presentation' in this thesis work refers to communication and, more precisely, public speaking area. Therefore, the most relevant definitions from authoritative dictionaries and literature include the following:

noun, **pre-sen-ta-tion** -

- a talk giving information about something (Cambridge University Press 2015)
- an activity in which someone shows, describes, or explains something to a group of people (Merriam-Webster 2015)
- a verbal report presented with illustrative material, such as slides, graphs, etc. (Collins 2015)
- by presentation we mean a talk or speech given by a presenter (sometimes more than one) to an audience of two or more people (Levin & Topping 2006, 4.)

Each definition stresses upon some essential aspect of presentation such as speaking activity, and its various forms (showing, describing, explaining), amplifiers (audiovisual equipment), subject and audience. However, none of them mentions two critical points about presentation: *purpose and outcome*.

Often 'to inform' is regarded as a default purpose of any presentation. However, the verb 'inform' itself is hollow and lacks direction; mere informing cannot be the main purpose of a presentation, or, a meaningful presentation. The latter aims to motivate or invigorate, inspire or teach, anger or entertain.

As for *outcome* aspect, by this we mean what we want **to happen** as a result of a presentation. Obviously, we want people **to act**, where actions differ significantly depending on the goal of presentation. For example:

- “You want *to convince* the committee **to increase your budget by 10 percent next year**.
- You want *to entertain* the youth club so that **they enter the state go-cart competition**.
- You want *to inspire* college students **to vote for the first time.**” (Hough 2014, 19)

Thus, if we try to combine all the aspects discussed above to create our own definition of 'presentation' that will correspond deeply to the purpose of this particular research, we will get the following:

Presentation is a talk or speech given by a presenter **for**/to an audience often with the support of audiovisual equipment, which aims to motivate, invigorate, inspire, teach, anger or entertain (etc.) in order to make them (audience) take some action.

The last note is to explain why the preposition 'for' is in bold font. "A successful presentation is not only given to the audience, it is given for the audience. It certainly isn't just a speech launched in the general direction of the audience with a 'take it or leave it' attitude. It follows that when you are preparing a presentation you should always have the needs and interests of your audience at the forefront of your mind. Your presentation is for them." (Levin & Topping 2006, 4.)

2.3 Basic Terms

To feel confident within a certain area, one should primarily get acquainted with its most basic and essential terms. This facilitates effective communication and makes participants of conversation be on the same page. Thus, the aim of this subchapter is to introduce the reader with the basic terms within field of presentations. The glossary for this particular thesis was composed throughout studying literature, articles and related sources stated in *References*. The main criteria for the words chosen were frequency of use and significance within topic context.

The list focuses mainly on the most general and commonly used vocabulary in public speaking, excluding jargon and very specific terms, which are required in further stages of mastering this art. Nonetheless, the glossary perfectly meets the needs of students who just start presenting on a regular basis or decide to improve existing skills.

The Presentation Glossary is presented in APPENDIX 1 for a more convenient use.

3 TYPES OF PRESENTATIONS

Start with the end in mind.

Stephen Covey

Contexts where speeches take place vary significantly, so do presentations as they naturally correspond to and serve the goals of event or occasion. To present effectively, it is necessary to distinguish these contexts and adapt and craft performances accordingly. This chapter provides an insight into the types of presentations and reveals challenges related to them. The main emphasis, however, lays on the academic presentations in order to maintain students as target audience of the thesis.

There are several possible criteria for classifying presentations. For instance, the presentations can be differentiated on the basis of their objective, speech situations, or delivery format. Each case deserves special attention and is discussed further in detail. The theoretical background comes from the books 'Business and Administration communication' by Kitty Locker (2013) and 'Public speaking success in 20 mins' by Learning Express Editors (2011), which are perfectly suitable for students and, thus, meet the main objectives of the thesis.

3.1 Presentation Objectives

To prepare powerful presentation, it is critical to define final destination, or purpose. '*What do we expect to achieve by presenting?*' and '*What do we want our audience to do as a result of our speech?*' are probably the most essential questions a presenter should answer in the very beginning, because only once we know our destination, it becomes possible to develop a map to get there. In other words, identifying purpose of a speech allows to create compelling message and choose the most effective tools to deliver it to an audience. According to Locker (2013), there are generally three main objectives for giving oral presentations: to inform, persuade and build goodwill.

3.1.1 Informative Presentations

As the name suggests, informative presentations simply aim to inform an audience on some topic. The main characteristic that differentiates this type of presentation from others is that 'it is only intended to provide information' and the audience are left to decide what to do with it by themselves. Therefore, informative presentations are not designed to provoke actions like persuasive genre, for instance, or teach a practical

skill like demonstrative speech. As for the latter one, the authors suggest considering demonstrative ("how-to") speech separate from informative genre. However, due to significant similarity between them, we would confine ourselves solely to informative type, while implying both, to reach report conciseness (LearningExpress, LLC. 2010).

Informational presentations include talks, seminars, proposals, workshops, conferences, and meetings where presenter or presenters share their expertise, and information is exchanged. "In a business format, it might be a supervisor explaining new forms, products, regulations, or filing procedures to employees. During the sales process, the sales person may provide information on the product or service to a prospective customer. In a retail situation, newly hired sales clerks may attend a presentation on selling techniques or loss prevention. In educational setting, the brightest examples of the genre are lectures, course presentations, internship and thesis seminars". (BusinessTown.com, LLC. 2001-2003).

Informative speeches are useful as an introduction to some topic that is unfamiliar to the audience. This means that in order to give a valuable informative presentation, a presenter should primarily profile the audience and identify what topics, facts, and figures will appeal to **them** in particular. For instance, a presentation, originally designed for Google professionals, will not deliver any value to first-year IT students due to its complexity, even despite the abundance of unique and worthy content. Thus, the principle mission - to inform - will be failed because the listeners will not be able to understand the material and benefit from it.

The main trick with informative presentations is that it is not simple to simply inform. The goal, appearing straightforward from the first glance, is hard to be reached in reality for several reasons. Firstly, it is a daunting task to choose and decide on a content that meets listeners' needs and corresponds to their profile. Secondly, defining data's volume is also a challenge: what is the golden mean between not enough and too much information? The same 'happy medium' question is related to finding a balanced theory/practice ratio when presenting: how to provide sufficient knowledge without losing practical insight? Finally, presenter should determine intensity of interaction with the audience: how to follow agenda while still involving listeners into discussion?

Since academic presentations (course presentations, thesis and internship seminars, lectures etc.) are informative in nature, as mentioned before, they pose all stated above problems in front of a student or a lecturer, making presenting a demanding and time consuming task. Further in the chapters and guide book, each of these challenges is

addressed and solutions/recommendations are suggested. Once digested and followed, they will aid a presenter 'to move the audience from being uninformed to being informed. From being uninterested in a subject to being interested. From being stuck in a process to being unstuck' (Duarte 2010, 19.)

3.1.2 Persuasive Presentations

Persuasive presentations share many common features with informative genre. However, they are not designed just to provide information on a subject but rather state a certain opinion and attempt to persuade the audience of its validity; 'they motivate the audience to act or to believe' (Locker 2013, 608). These two components - opinion and persuasion - make persuasive genre by far the most challenging of all. However, the following research work provides only brief description of persuasive speech to give some idea of it while still focusing on academic speeches.

The goal in many persuasive presentations is a favorable vote or decision. For example, speakers making business presentations may try to persuade the audience to approve their proposals, to adopt their ideas, or to buy their products. (Locker 2013, 608) "Persuasive presentations, which are sometimes called transactional, are often motivational. For example, during a sermon a priest might attempt to persuade the congregation to accept the teachings of the church in order to reduce racial tensions". (BusinessTown.com, LLC. 2001-2003) In general, persuasive speeches occur in all possible life contexts and take a great variety of forms from Emma Watson's "I'm a feminist" speech at the UN to Vladimir Putin's "Olympic Bid of Sochi 2014" to *Prince* EA "Sorry" song.

Unlike informative presentations, characterized by objectivity and neutrality of a speaker, persuasive speeches should carry strongly emotional and subjective transformational message. This requires not only profound knowledge of a topic from a presenter, but also his/her deep personal connection and compassion with it. Only it becomes possible to give an influential speech, when one knows what he/she stands for and why. Moreover, the topic choice in a persuasive genre is a truly delicate issue: a subject should be controversial - not inflammatory, based on one's own passion and interest - yet socially-oriented, provoking - yet respectful. Finally, the knowledge of the audience profile becomes utmost critical as persuasive presentation not simply provides information but interferes with people's attitudes, opinions, and values and attempts to influence them. The concept of audience in public speaking is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 Audience.

3.1.3 Goodwill Presentations

Goodwill presentations are designed to entertain, please and validate the audience. Their main purpose is to give credits for people's work and achievements; invigorate for future successful performance; enhance commitment and loyalty towards organization; to entertain and help people relax; and strengthen both professional and private relationships ties among participants (BusinessTown.com, LLC. 2001-2003).

The brightest examples include company awards night to honor the best employees; community service recognition dinner to praise local leaders; awards banquets to recognize the top competitors among schools and sport teams; and all kinds of ceremonies to show appreciation, respect and admiration. Each of these events usually "includes some kind of presentation, most often in the form of a speech and sometimes with a slide show, video, or multimedia event. Sometimes they are ceremonial - for example, when inducting a new officer, dedicating a memorial plaque, presenting an award, or delivering a eulogy." (BusinessTown.com, LLC. 2001-2003).

There are several major difficulties related to goodwill presentations. Unlike in informative or persuasive genres, where a speaker usually knows in advance about his upcoming presentation, a person in the event can be initiated to become a speaker spontaneously - to give an impromptu speech - which can be intimidating and disarming. In this case, the common principle of public speaking applies: consider one's audience and speak to the best of one's knowledge. Moreover, when making a speech at a special occasion, whether prepared or impromptu, the most important things are to be appropriate and stay focused; and remember that the whole reason for speaking is the occasion itself, so thoughts should always remain centered on that occasion (LearningExpress, LLC. 2010). Finally, special occasion speeches (goodwill presentations) are generally encouraged to be brief, to-the-point and emotionally rich.

3.2 Presentation Delivery Format

According to Locker (2013), there are three basic kinds of presentations when it comes to delivery format: a monologue, an active discussion and an interactive presentation. Each has its strong points and drawbacks to be considered when deciding which type to apply to one's speech.

3.2.1 Monologue Presentation

In monologue presentations, the speaker is the only one who talks and talks without interruption. Questions from the audience are allowed only during Questions & Answers (Q&A) session, which is held in the end of the presentation, at which time speaker functions as an expert. Otherwise, no interaction with the audience is foreseen. (Locker 2013.)

The speaker plans the presentation in advance and delivers it without deviation. Class lecture is the most common example of monologue speech, which makes the former one dull for the listeners who stay passive and uninvolved. To compensate audience's minimum participation in a speech, the speaker should possess not only profound knowledge of/in a topic, but also excellent delivery skills and charisma.

3.2.2 Guided Discussion

The issues for guided sessions are discussed and agreed upon in advance between the speaker and the audience. In this case the presenter functions as a facilitator, rather than an expert with all the answers, and helps the audience to extract and apply their own knowledge and experience. Moreover, the speaker regulates equal participation of the present members by engaging in discussion those who are shy and restraining the most active ones. Finally, the speaker plays a role of lightning-rod, smoothens tensions and resolves conflicts between discussion participants. (Locker 2013)

Guided discussion is an excellent format for presenting the results of consulting projects, when the speaker possesses the expertise in a subject, but the audience is the one to implement the solution once it is validated. This presentation format is much more time-demanding than a monologue speech, but it results in a more consistent audience's response and feedback, more efficient cooperation and fruitful brainstorming, and more commitment to the value of decisions made. (Locker 2013)

3.2.3 Interactive Presentation

Interactive presentation is basically a conversation between the speaker and the audience, even if the former one stands up in front of a group and is the only one who has access to a microphone and other audiovisual equipment. A good example of interactive speech is a sales presentation, where a sales representative intensively interacts

with the audience by asking questions to access the information on buyer's buying behavior and, consequently, shape a good offer. (Locker 2013)

Even if presentation is structured and planned thoroughly in advance, the speaker still allows a considerable amount of time for the audience to share their opinions, feelings and attitudes towards the subject on the agenda. The experience turns beneficial for both parties as the speaker receives an opportunity to gather first-hand data from the audience while the latter get a chance to bate their curiosity and obtain personalized answers to particular questions. (Locker 2013)

3.3 Presentations by the number of participants

Presentations can be delivered individually or as a part of a group. Each format carries certain characteristics that can be turned into benefits both for the speaker and the audience, when used right. However, the very same characteristics can become impediments to successful speaker's performance and listeners' firm grasp of a subject. The following chapter sheds some light on particularities of presenting individually, while group presenting is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4 'Group Presentations'.

Obvious from the name, individual presentation is given by only one person, which is the most common delivery format - one speaker in front of the audience. This results in absolute responsibility of one person over the entire process that brings both undeniable benefits and daunting challenges.

Individual presentations allow a speaker to gain complete control over each stage of presentation from brainstorming to implementation to actual delivery without any outside influence, if decided so. This gives freedom of decision-making and enables speaker to use and demonstrate all his/her potential. Moreover, solo-speakers can proceed with work at their own leisure and pace, which brings significant flexibility. Finally, organization process becomes more facile when there is no need to take into consideration other members' schedules, competences and personal traits of character.

On the other hand, in solo-presentations, a speaker is the one who carries the entire workload on his/her shoulders without a possibility of delegating tasks. This makes certain projects too heavy for a lone person to cope with and, thus, impossible to be completed successfully. Also, individual presenter has to rely solely on one's own knowledge, skills and ideas, which limits the diversity of opinions and experiences adopted in presentation. Lastly, individual presenter doesn't have an opportunity to

benefit from mutual learning within a team that comes from sharing and exchanging expertise and culture (in international teams).

Overall, individual presentation format can be used in all contexts and genres of public speaking; and in majority of cases, it is the most appropriate one. However, substantial projects, requiring diversified skills and knowledge from different areas, may represent a daunting challenge for a solo-presenter due to their volume and complexity, especially if the speaker has narrow specialization and limited experience in performing at the audience. In this case, the solution is group presentation.

4 GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Group presentation represents one of the key issues of the thesis for two main reasons. Firstly, group work has become an integral part of a study process in Universities, including Savonia UAS, with numerous courses culminating in a team presentation. The same is true for a professional field, especially with a growing power of technology and, thus, virtual teams. Secondly, the survey (See Appendix 2) revealed that the majority of students feel more confident when presenting not alone - in a pair/group. These two factors make group presentations a crucial and valuable subject for research.

Group presentations are usually requested to achieve certain goals and complete certain projects that demand effort and expertise of more than two members. These goals and projects take an unlimited variety of forms from company's annual reports to R&D solution development to students' marketing course task (The Public Speaking Project 2011). "High stakes also call for teamwork, both because the efforts of multiple talented people are needed and because no one person wants the sole responsibility for a possible failure."(Locker 2013, 204)

The main benefits of working on a group presentation include alliance of knowledge and competences, energy and efforts of several personalities that allows completing heavy and demanding tasks. Moreover, preparing a group presentation is a valuable learning tool as it requires engaging and developing numerous skills: collaboration and coordination, listening and providing feedback, conflict resolution and time management. Finally, group presentation can be a good environment for certain people to overcome stage fright and nervousness as they feel more self-assured when standing at the audience in line with other members.

However, as beneficial as group presenting can be, it also represents a formidable problem. The challenge starts already from the perception of group presentation, where the emphasis is often put on 'presentation', not on 'group' resulting in team interaction falling short and, thus, poor final product (public speaking project). Moreover, "in presentational speaking it is important to view the group as a **speaking** group, which is a collection of three or more speakers who come together to accomplish message content goals. The emphasis on "speakers" is critical because audience members come to a presentation for the speaker content and not necessarily the group's relationship" It is vital that speaking group members succeed in identifying each other's level of speaking skills in every stage from planning to performing. In a nut shell, every

group of individuals aims for interpersonal harmony and connection but the priority for **speaking groups** is reaching message flow and continuity rather than harmonic personal rapport (The Public Speaking Project 2011).

One of the main difficulties of group presenting lays in management and coordination of group's resources such as knowledge, time and energy, leading to the question of leadership. How to take into account personal traits, potential and knowledge of each member and apply it in the most beneficial way for group performance? How to divide tasks evenly and achieve equal contribution of each participant? How to manage meetings and schedules in the most convenient way? How to encourage intensive brainstorming sessions and provide feedback? These and many more questions have to be addressed to create a worthy final presentation. For instance, according to the survey students find the most challenging to manage equal involvement of each group member in all stages, divide power among members, and achieve consistency in performance style-

Since group presentations are not discussed in the complementary guide, brief solutions to above mentioned issues are suggested in the thesis' following subchapters

4.1 Leadership in speaking groups

Relationships within a group must be built and maintained simply because they are composed of individuals with different personalities, work styles, expertise, and availability (The Public Speaking Project 2011). Group members expect that their opinion and word are considered, work is divided evenly, participation is equal and enthusiasm is mutual. The reality, however, is often similar to IMAGE 1, which went viral among students



IMAGE 1. Every group project (Pinterest 2015)

Therefore, it becomes vital for a group to develop and implement communication strategy that will correspond to the needs of *this* particular group. Communication plan functions like a constitution for a country with its rules and regulations, members' roles and tasks assigned, decision-making and conflict resolution tactics, assessment criteria and time frames, and aims to boost and optimize group's performance for achieving best possible results.

The first step in elaborating communication plan is to choose a leader with the most suitable for *this* speaking group leadership style, who will assist a team to function smoothly and effectively throughout every stage: planning, organization and delivery. "There are three small-group leadership styles - highly directive, participatory, and negligent.

A *highly directive leadership style* is where a leader uses an authoritarian method of dealing with group members.

A *participatory leadership style* centres on a designated leader who offers guidance, suggestions, listening, and concern for members while also showing concern for completing the task.

A *negligent (or laissez-faire) leadership style* is characterized by a leader who offers little guidance or direction". (The Public Speaking Project 2011)

For speaking groups, it is also preferable that a leader possesses strong communication and speaking skills to guide a group towards successful **speaking** performance.

Appointment of a leader, even with highly directive style, however, does not diminish participation, importance and decision power of other members. Locker (2011) argues that effective teams combine three kinds of leadership: informational, interpersonal and procedural.

- *Informational leaders* generate and evaluate ideas and text.
- *Interpersonal leaders* monitor the team's process, check people's feelings, and resolve conflicts.
- *Procedural leaders* set the agenda, make sure that everyone knows what's due for the next meeting, communicate with absent team members, and check to be sure that assignments are carried out (Locker 2013).

This means that, despite the possibility of one person being in charge of all three dimensions, in a more common scenario they [leadership dimensions] are taken by three (or more) people. In some teams, formal and informal rotation of roles and responsibilities takes place naturally, resulting in a rather even power distribution, where everyone – and no one – is a leader (Locker 2013).

In general, to ensure equal and fair distribution of workload and power among speaking group participants, appointing a leader is not enough as he/she can only facilitate processes, act as an intermediate in complicated situations and help members manage themselves better. Thus, two most critical factors in achieving harmony of work are 1. joint elaboration of communication plan with precisely defined roles and 2. each participant's mindfulness about his/her essential and unique contribution to common results.

4.2 Consistency in group presentations

The survey revealed that more than half of students find reaching consistency in performance style one of the most challenging tasks in group presentations. This is no surprise as several individuals with different backgrounds, speaking skills, expertise and fears have to perform like one to reach a common specific goal – satisfy the audience. Therefore, the following subchapter concentrates on the techniques that can help reaching this goal.

Firstly, how do we define 'consistency' and integrate it into public speaking context? Cambridge Dictionary provides the following definition of 'consistency' – "the quality of always behaving or **performing in a similar way**, or of always happening in a similar way"; Dictionary.com – "agreement, harmony, or compatibility, especially correspondence or **uniformity among the parts** of a complex thing"; Longman Dictionary – "the quality of always **being the same, doing** things in **the same way**, having **the same standards** etc. - used to show approval". Each definition emphasizes 'the same' in the sense of regularity, harmony, and concord, with dictionary.com specifying them happening 'among the parts of a complex thing'. When applied to a group presentation, consistency becomes a quality when, according to Emma Lenden, communication mentor and author, "message, structure, slides and group appear and behave as one. A group presentation is one presentation with a number of presenters delivering it. It is not a number of different presentations coming together. It must be prepared, structured and delivered in a unified way". (Lenden 2015) After analysing literature and articles, related to group presentations, the following recommendations and instructions on reaching group presentation consistency appeared to be named more often by authors and professionals in the communication field.

1. To move in the same direction and towards the same goals, a team should define goals of a presentation, which must be clear and precise and agreed upon and understood by each team member. Wood J. (2011) suggests that the purpose of the assignment – in a form of a well-coined sentence - should be **written down** and kept in front of group members to assure everyone stays on track and does not lose the focus after numerous research activities and discussions (The Public Speaking Project 2011).
2. Oral content for the presentation should be discussed thoroughly starting from the most important elements such as introduction, transition, and closing to more specific details such as word choice, idioms, and jargon as well as rate, pitch, volume, pronunciation and general mood of performance (The Public Speaking Project 2011).
3. Appearance plays an important role during presentation. Dress code should be discussed and followed to look as a group. The choice of outfit depends on the occasion and audience. Proper and suitable physical appearance not only bonds group members and creates the feeling of belonging but also establishes trustworthiness and connection with the audience (The Public Speaking Project

2011). Facilities for presentation are to be considered to avoid mess and uncertainty among group members before and during presentation, which results in additional nervousness and time loss. Size of the room, provided equipment, existence of stage/lectern, seats for the group before presentation starts, availability of the room for rehearsal etc. are to be acknowledged prior to final presentation. Awareness about the setting allows a group to behave as a group also in their movements and postures (The Public Speaking Project 2011).

4. The actual presentation starts as soon as a group enters the room and continues until the audience's final clapping (sometimes even after). Therefore, a great deal of attention should be given to the body language and facial expressions even when others are speaking. Looking bored and yawning, whispering to and giggling with the by-side group member (a usual scene at University presentations) distract the speaker and damage credibility of the whole group (Lenden 2014).
5. If the visual material (technology and non-technology) cannot be produced by a single person, then the team should elaborate an utmost clear and precise guidelines and criteria to achieve unified style and content coherence of a final product. It is preferable that one skilful person then brings members' presentation parts together, polishes roughness in transition and verifies that content is logical (The Public Speaking Project 2011).

To sum up, consistency in group presentations is a complex quality that can be achieved through thorough preparation and hard work on every process' stage. However, the basis for coherent and consistent presentation primarily lays in effective communication strategy with clear objectives and rules, guidelines and criteria, tools and agenda. Intensive and constant conversation among group members is the key not only to successful public performance but also to mutual learning and personal growth.

5 AUDIENCE

If the chapters of the thesis were to be ranked according to their importance, then undoubtedly, Audience would lead the list. Why? Because presentation simply *cannot* exist without the audience. The audience is the reason why any speaker comes on a stage. Whether Beyoncé or Bill Gates, George Carlin or Coptic Pope, they all are 'there' for a sole reason - the audience. This is why such public speaking tips like 'imagine your audience in underwear' or 'imagine you are the only one in the classroom' are inappropriate - they suggest either humiliating or, even worse, ignoring the audience, while the audience *must* remain the main and the only speaker's focus.

Thus, the following chapter aims to define *audience* and explain why knowing the audience is the most critical aspect in public speaking as well as dispel myths and misconceptions related to the topic and describe the process of profiling the audience.

5.1 Topic Importance

As mentioned above, audience is the cornerstone of public speaking as the latter one simply would not exist without the audience. That said, isn't it enough just to acknowledge their presence and present the way we feel like? Yes, it is enough in case we present only to 'get done', and far not enough if we want to make a positive change with the help of our speech. Since in this thesis work we assume the latter is the case, consideration and knowledge of the audience becomes a critical issue.

Powerful presentations, the ones that bring positive shifts in people's thinking and behavior, are only possible when a presenter succeeds to connect with the audience, because audience 'are the heroes charged with carrying (your) big idea to fruition' (Duarte 2010, 56). They are the media via which a speaker has an opportunity to communicate one's idea to the world and put it into practice. The biggest and greatest shifts in humanity happened and continue happening through powerful public speeches: Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech for equality, John Kennedy's bold declaration to put the first man to the Moon, Mahatma Gandhi 'Quit India' for India Liberation from England, Steve Job's iPhone Launch and many others.

Apart from excellent oratory skills, the above mentioned leaders shared a deep knowledge of who their audience (often several different interest groups) were and

how to get connected by speaking 'their' language. The understanding of audience's needs, problems and motives was a key factor that helped to shape and convey a moving, almost personal message to thousands of people; the speakers aimed to show not that they were interesting but **interested** – **in** a subject and **audience** (Reynolds 2011, 105.)

Even though most people never get to speak in front of a crowd, many have to perform in front of their group mates and colleagues, local community and company's management; and even these relatively small presentations have a potential to generate knowledge, ideas and change, once the message is targeted right and dialogue speaker-audience is established. In short, the greatest value of presentations is that they can be an effective tool for creating something new through sharing one's personal story.

5.2 Audience Profiling

As mentioned above, knowing the audience is fundamental to the success of a presentation. It is necessary to identify who they are, their motives and channels to reach them.

5.2.1 Audience Identification

The first step in audience analysis is to identify who the audience is. Kathy Locker (2013) and Nancy Duarte (2010) suggest two different classification which, when integrated, can provide a more complete and objective picture. The former classification is based on the audience's stance and influence towards organizational presentation, while the latter divides audience according to the type of action that listeners are able to take after a speech.

According to Locker (2013), organizational messages have multiple audiences:

1. A **gatekeeper** has the power to stop a message instead of sending it on to other audiences. The gatekeeper, therefore, controls whether the message even gets to the primary audience. Supervisor, assigning the message, a person of a higher rank in the organization or even outside the organization can be a gatekeeper.
2. The **primary audience** decides whether to accept recommendations or acts on the basis of a message. They are to be reached to meet presentation's objectives.

3. The **secondary audience** may be asked to comment on a message or to implement ideas after they've been approved. Secondary audiences also include lawyers who may use a message—perhaps years later—as evidence of organization's culture and practices.

4. An **auxiliary audience** may encounter a message but will not have to interact with it. This audience includes the “read-only” people.

5. A **watchdog audience**, though it does not have the power to stop the message and will not act directly on it, has political, social, or economic power. The watchdog pays close attention to the transaction between presenter and the primary audience and may base future actions on evaluation of a message (Locker 2013).

Nancy Duarte (2010) argues that the audience consists of four distinct types of people capable of taking action: doers, suppliers, influencers, and innovators (IMAGE 2). Acknowledgement of this classification enables to shape a message, particularly call for action, in a way that audience easily understand how they can help to promote the idea. Most people are able to carry at least one of four action types effectively.

Who are they	Doers	Suppliers	Influencers	Innovators
What they do for you	<i>Instigate activities</i>	<i>Get resources</i>	<i>Change Perceptions</i>	<i>Generate Ideas</i>
How they do it	These audience members are your worker bees. Once they know what has to be done, they'll do the physical tasks. They recruit and motivate other doers to complete important activities.	These audience members are the ones with the resources—financial, human, or material. They have the means to get you what you need to move forward.	These audience members can sway individuals and groups, large and small, mobilizing them to adopt and evangelize your idea.	These audience members think outside the box for new ways to modify and spread your idea. They create strategies, perspectives, and products. They bring their brains to the table.

IMAGE 2. Four types of people in the audience (Duarte 2010, 43.)

5.2.2 Audience Portrait

Duarte in her book *Resonate* (2010) encourages speakers to seek deeper understanding of the audience in order to link their interest to presenter's idea. She argues that conventional segmentation (demographically based) is not enough to establish a sincere and powerful conversation with listeners due to its impersonal and general nature. Instead, or rather in addition to usual segmentation, Nancy Duarte (2010) recommends to 'study them' {audience} and 'walk in their {audience's} shoes' to switch from social status analysis to personality discovery. What are the audience's values, lifestyle, motivations, preferences, fears etc.? Answering this type of questions (IMAGE 3) can help create almost personalized content and, thus, build strong connection with the audience.

WHO THEY ARE	LIFESTYLE	MOTIVATION AND DESIRE	INFLUENCE
	What's likable and special about them?	What do they need or desire?	Who or what influences their behavior?
	What does a walk in their shoes look like?	What is lacking in their lives?	What experiences have influenced their thoughts?
	Where do they hang out (in life and on the Web)?	What gets them out of bed and turns their crank?	How do they make decisions?
	What's their lifestyle like?		
	KNOWLEDGE	VALUES	RESPECT
	What do they already know about your topic?	What's important to them?	How do they give and receive respect?
	What sources do they get their knowledge from?	How do they spend their time and money?	What can you do to make them feel respected?
	What biases do they have (good or bad)?	What are their priorities?	
		What unites them or incites them?	

IMAGE 3. Who your audience are (Duarte 2010, 65.)

When delivering presentation to group mates/ colleagues/ company's management – people from one's close surrounding, the task of identifying and portraying the audience represents less of a challenge thanks to constant contact and interactions. In this case, the problem is to identify a need/question/situation that should be addressed and solved. For example, a thesis presentation to fellow-students, apart from research results, could include recommendations and tips on efficient work or interesting sources of information that would help them complete their own task easier and faster.

6 RESEARCH

The following chapter describes the thesis research process in all stages - from topic selection to actual research to final findings. The practical outcome – creation of a student’s practical guide on powerful presentations – also represents an important topic of the chapter.

6.1 Research Questions & Objectives

As mentioned in the Introduction, the thesis topic was discovered through participation in a course ‘Business communication in the world of diversity and Social Media’ provided by International Summer School at The University of Coruña (August 2014). The course aroused interest in a subject of effective communication and, combined with past observations during my studies, evolved in a thesis subject - ‘Developing strong communication skills. Powerful Presentations’.

To be more precise about ‘past observations’, they were related to presentations given in Savonia UAS and ESDES Ecole de Commerce (Erasmus host school) both by students and teachers. The quality of many, from viewer’s and listener’s perspective, left much to be desired. The main problem observed was lack of enthusiasm and interest about presentation that could be traced not only in delivery itself but also in weak preparation, irrelevant content choices, and poor visual support. This personal dissatisfaction and realization that my own presentation skills had a significant room for improvement encouraged immersion in the field of communication.

More thorough contemplations about the topic provoked numerous questions about the role of presentations in individual growth, learning process, education system and even world evolution. However, since the focus is limited to University environment, the issues chosen to be addressed in the thesis framework include:

1. Can any action be taken to change attitudes towards presenting among students and show that regular course presentations have much more power and importance than we imagine?
2. What are the main challenges students encounter when presenting?
3. Is there any way to help students deliver presentations of a higher quality while making the experience more joyful and rewarding at the same time?

Creation of a practical guide for students, based on quantitative research and relevant theories, was adopted as a final solution to the above listed questions. Its principal objective could be formulated as following:

'To be inspiring, rich, yet concise source about powerful presenting for students'

6.2 Research Methods

The main methodology applied in this thesis work was quantitative research in a form of a survey (see Appendix 2) that provided the content outline both for the theoretical and practical parts. To be more precise, the first group of problems that students face in presenting was formulated based on personal experience, observations and suggestions, which had to be proved relevant or irrelevant, true or false through a scientific tool – survey. The following example illustrates the algorithm applied for the process of topic selection.

While initially, conflict resolution was suggested to be one of the main challenges for students in group presenting, the survey results showed it was not, with preceding answers such as 'manage equal involvement of each group member in all stages', 'divide power among members' and achieve consistency in performance style'. These problems, therefore, were selected as one of the ground topics of the thesis. The same logic was applied throughout survey analysis: alternatives that received most of the votes formed the content of both theoretical and practical thesis components.

Once the range of problems was defined, the intensive work with secondary sources started. The sources included the best-known and praised literature on public speaking and presenting, related articles, webpages and online courses. The list of highly-recommended sources on a topic is presented in a practical guide to help students start their immersion in communication field.

The survey was created and executed in Google Forms, a free, user-friendly and convenient tool for carrying out surveys and their analysis. The questionnaire comprised 14 questions of different types: multiple choice, scale and open-ended. It was spread among the students of Savonia UAS, ESDES Ecole de Management as well as ERASMUS students from both universities, reaching total number of 108 respondents from all around the world.

The primary data for the thesis was gathered through questionnaire and personal observations. Numerous discussions with fellow-students, friends, teachers about public

speaking and presenting, in particular, as well as group works also assisted as a source of first-hands information.

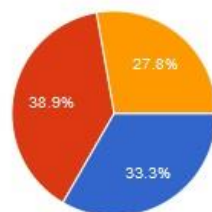
6.3 Survey Results

According to the data collected from questionnaire, more than half of the respondents are neutral about public speaking ('I will present if I have to but never on my own initiative'); around 30% - strongly positive, and only 20% - don't like or fear public speaking. The figures show that students in their majority do not oppose to public speaking, and probably, if provided interesting and new perspective on presenting, could become more enthusiastic about it.

Overcoming stage-fright and speaking without notes/PowerPoint were named the main challenges in individual presenting. While stage-fright is almost innate phobia of many people (yet beatable still), the difficulty to speak without notes/PowerPoint rather indicates lack of attention towards presentation preparation among students. Because thorough preparation (audience analysis, questions & objectives, content choice, language, rehearsal etc.) naturally results in ability to speak mostly without supporting material. Therefore, both issues, stage nervousness and preparation, are addressed in the practical guide.

Curious results were received on presentation delivery format: presenting individually vs in a pair/a group. Only 33% of respondents feel more confident when presenting on their own, while striking 67% prefer to have a partner/company on stage (See Figure 1). These preferences underlain the choice of group presentations as one of thesis key topics.

I feel more confident when presenting...



on my own	36	33.3%
in a pair	42	38.9%
in a group	30	27.8%

FIGURE 1. Students' preferences in presentation format

Moreover, unlike initial prediction that conflict resolution would represent the main challenge within speaking groups, students actually named 'managing equal involvement of each group member in all stages'(57%), 'dividing power among members'(54%),

and 'achieving consistency in performance style'(54%) as the main difficulties in a group format delivery (See Figure 2). All three issues are addressed in Chapter 4 Group Presentations.

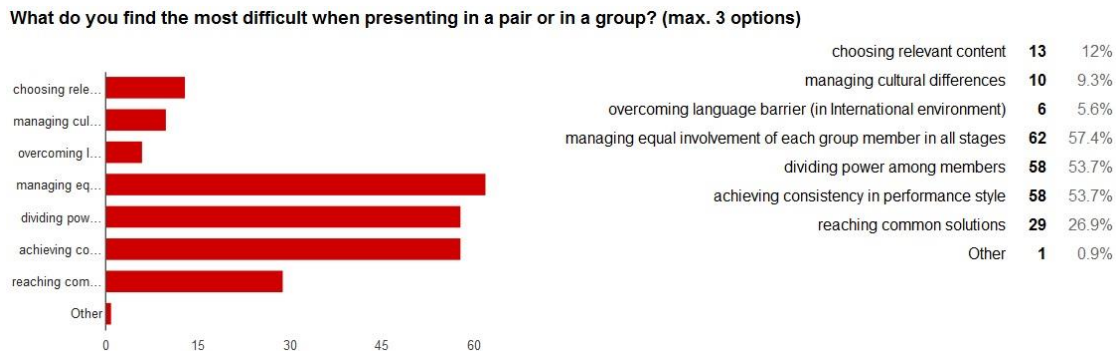


FIGURE 2. Difficulties when presenting in a pair/ a group.

Last but not least, the question 'If you had a chance to obtain any 3 skills to make you a powerful presenter, what would they be?' helped significantly to reveal not only the qualities students are missing themselves but also qualities they think make a great presenter. The top answers included (self) confidence, body language, improvisation, sense of humor, and strong loud voice. These aspects are discussed in more detail in a practical guide.

7 Practical Guidebook

The chapter is dedicated to a practical part of the thesis work – a guidebook for students. It explains the idea behind the guidebook as well as describes its creation process.

7.1 Ideas and goals

Participation in a Business Communication Course, awoken interest in the subject, desire to make a change and thorough research resulted in a creation of a practical guidebook for students, dedicated to powerful presentations. The main objective behind this guidebook is to provide students with an information source, elaborated specially for them and their needs, which would make them look at public speaking from a different perspective.

What makes the guidebook truly unique is its personal nature, derived from author's passion for...surfing and ocean. 'Tips from The Ocean and Surfing for Great Presentations' is a collection of public speaking advice offered through the parallels with the waves, ocean, nature, and sport. The purpose of this move was to present a well-known and much-discussed subject from a different perspective, with a fresh touch, to make it memorable, entertaining and helpful.

To some extent, creation of this kind of guidebook is a proof that we have a power to present usual things in a new light and captivating manner by adding our personal vision and story behind them, even when working within a formal environment. The same is true for oral presentations.

7.2 Creation process

The creation of the guidebook represents one of a core and most challenging tasks in entire thesis process. The work on the guide could be divided in two main parts: content and graphic execution.

The main challenge with content component was to decide what information to choose. Huge number of literature, articles, on-line courses and interactive web-pages offered

overwhelming amount of data to be explored, chosen, filtered, transformed and combined with personal experiences. To achieve desired conciseness and richness of a final content, several rules were established:

- to consider survey results as a datum point for choosing guidebook topics
- to analyse personal experiences in public speaking from a student's stance and correlate it with survey results to keep students as a target group
- to provide less common perspective on a problem
- to create metaphors and use inspirational quotes and examples to illustrate key points more vividly
- 'Less is more'
- to be provoking and unpredictable to evoke interest

In the end, the guide comprises five chapters, each drawing attention to some critical issue of presenting – preparation, right attitudes, eye contact, being in the moment and constant improvement. Apart from giving common tips, the chapters pose questions to challenge our perception of public speaking.

Graphic execution turned out to be not less demanding than content part. Despite outsourcing designer solutions to another person, hours and hours of correction were required from both sides. The main bottleneck was working with GoogleDocs. Despite its distinct advantage allowing teams to work from different places, certain graphic tools and file converting processes were hard to follow. For example, converting Word format files into PDF caused text and pictures 'swimming' on a page and all the work had to be done again. Moreover, sharing files caused similar problems. In the end, Microsoft Word was adopted to create final visuals, transformed in final PDF file.

The main difficulties in graphic solutions were related to fonts. Which fonts reflect best the message? Which fonts are pleasant and easy to read? How to keep layout simple yet original? Where should '**bold**' or/and '*cursive*' be applied to emphasize without overdoing? These and many other questions were to be answered in the process.

In general, creation of my own guide resulted in reconsideration of books', magazines' and web-pages value. It has never occurred to me **how** much effort, thought and energy is required to create them. The number of detail to take into account, from word choice to structure to design, is truly overwhelming and demands perseverance and discipline. However, the results are more than rewarding.

8 DISCUSSION

Even though research goals can be considered as reached, the thesis process turned out to be demanding. The main difficulties were connected to time-management, deadlines and self-discipline; completing the work gradually and persistently was the most daunting challenge.

Another bottleneck in the effective work was a relatively broad topic. In the beginning, 'powerful presentations' appeared as a narrow-enough area of research. However, along the way, it became clear *how* many separate, self-complete aspects the topic actually comprised: body language, Power Point presentations, group presentations, audience, structure etc. Consequently, the questionnaire serving the topic of the research, lacked preciseness and focus, and despite succeeding to define the range of problems, it failed to request more specific data. In the end, the research had to be done in width, not depth.

The last significant challenge is related to creation of a practical guide. The main idea was to find an original way of speaking about such a broadly covered topic as presenting in public. Moreover, the guide was supposed to cover several topics in a way that would provide a reader with the key knowledge on just few pages. The content had to be memorable, entertaining, helpful, yet concise. The solution to present the material through parallels with the ocean and surfing – two author's great passions – brought the feeling of self-realization while the opportunity to add creative touch and personality to the formal academic work hopefully handy for fellow-students – satisfaction.

The thesis process has provided ample possibilities not only to enhance knowledge and competences in the chosen research area, but also develop and boost existing skills. For instance, intensive writing process in English helped to increase language proficiency and practice formal writing style; creating the guide from the scratch encouraged to master Google Docs and Adobe Photoshop Redactor and execution of the questionnaire – Google Forms. Overall, the most valuable part of the thesis process was the chance to involve imagination and creativity

The main subject of the thesis – powerful presentations – has a sufficient room for further research. As already mentioned, presenting is a complex term comprising numerous subtopics – each itself a complete research topic – audience, confidence on a stage, body language, visual presentation, persuasion etc. Also, the practical guide

has a potential to be developed into a full book, where the existing topics can be elaborated and complemented with professionals' advice, more advanced research results and new insights.

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APPENDIX 1 Presentation Glossary

A/V (Audiovisual equipment)

Abbreviation for audiovisual equipment such as overhead projectors, tape recorders, slide projectors, microphones, etc.

Audience

A group of people who come to watch and listen to someone speaking or performing in

Channel

The means by which a message is communicated.

Distance

Principle of proxemics involving the control of the space that separates the audience and speaker

Eye contact

Direct visual contact with the eyes of another person.

Feedback

The audience's immediate response to a speaker.

Flipchart

Large pieces of paper either bound or loose that are supported on an easel.

Flow chart

A visual method of representing power and responsibility relationships, or describing the steps in a process

Goodwill

The audience's perception of whether the speaker has the best interests of the audience in mind.

Handout

Any promotional or educational material given to each audience member

Heckler

Audience member who purposely annoys or bothers the presenter usually by means of verbal abuse (sometimes throws things)

Nonverbal communication

Communication based on a person's use of voice and body, rather than on the use of words.

Outline

A rough overview of what you'll say at each point in your speech

Pause

A momentary break in the vocal delivery of a speech

Pitch

The position of a human voice on the musical scale.

Presenter

A person who presents something or someone

Rapport

A relationship with the audience, especially one of mutual trust or emotional attraction.

Rhythm

The pattern of sound in a speech created by the choice and arrangement of words

Setting

The physical location where you will give your speech (see also *venue*)

Simile

A comparison of two things which, however different in other respects, have some strong point or points in common.

Stage fright

Anxiety over the prospect of giving a speech in front of an audience

Tone

The emotional attitude established by your speech, by the audience's response, or by your delivery

Topic

The subject of a speech.

Venue

The location of the meeting (also see *setting*)

APPENDIX 2 Student Survey



Presentations skills among students

Hello!

This survey is a part of my thesis work. It aims to identify challenges students face when presenting in front of an audience.

I would be thankful for each of your responses :)

* Required

Gender *

- female
- male

What is your nationality? *

What is your University and Degree Program? *

What year of studies are you in? *

- 1st
- 2nd
- 3d
- 4th
- 5th
- Other:

How do you feel about public speaking? *

- I love it and never miss a chance to speak at the audience
- I am neutral: I will present if I have to but never on my own initiative
- I don't like the idea of speaking in public
- I am scared of public speaking and avoid it by all means

What do you find the most difficult when presenting on your own? (max. 3 options) *

- deciding on content
- overcoming language barrier (in International environment)
- speaking without notes/PowerPoint
- improvising when smth. goes not as planned
- overcoming stage fright/shyness/nervousness
- managing body language
- keeping an eye-contact with an audience
- answering questions
- Other:

Do you find presenting in a foreign language more challenging? *

- Yes, definitely
- Both is the same
- No, it is actually easier

What tools do you prefer to use for complementing your presentation? (3 max) *

- Power Point
- Prezi
- Handouts
- Audios
- Videos
- Flipchart
- None
- Other:

I feel more confident when presenting... *

- on my own
- in a pair
- in a group

What do you find the most difficult when presenting in a pair or in a group? (max. 3 options) *

- choosing relevant content
- managing cultural differences
- overcoming language barrier (in International environment)
- managing equal involvement of each group member in all stages
- dividing power among members
- achieving consistency in performance style
- reaching common solutions
- Other:

If you ever rehearse your performance, how do you do it? *

Could you, please, share some techniques that you use to manage nervousness before/during presentation? *

If you had a chance to obtain any 3 skills to make you a powerful presenter, what would they be? *

Do you feel you have received sufficient knowledge and training for confident presenting on stage during your studies? *

- Yes
- Rather Yes than No
- Rather No than Yes
- No

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Tips from

THE OCEAN & SURFING

for

GREAT PRESENTATIONS



TIPS FROM THE OCEAN & SURFING for GREAT PRESENTATIONS

 by Valeriya Gogunskaya

 **Designer:** Johny Vieira

Thank you, dear Johny, for being a big part of inspiration for this guidebook and creating such a beautiful form for my ideas and thoughts.

Kuopio 2015

EVERY PRESENTER HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE GREAT;
EVERY PRESENTATION IS HIGH STAKES;
AND EVERY AUDIENCE DESERVES THE ABSOLUTE BEST.

- Nancy Duarte

CONTENTS

SORRY!

THE GUIDEBOOK YOU ARE HOLDING IN YOUR HANDS DOESN'T HAVE A TABLE OF CONTENTS

TO MAKE THE JOURNEY A BIT MORE SPONTANEOUS AND UNPREDICTABLE...

 JUST LIKE THE OCEAN!



FOREWORD

I spent summer 2015 surfing at a lovely Santa Rita beach in Santa Cruz, Portugal. In the meantime, I also had to work on my bachelor thesis. Who could think that two rather exclusive activities would interlace one with another to become the guidebook you are holding in your hands? The guidebook on powerful presentations that was inspired by Magnificent Ocean and Surfing.

The idea behind weaving surf motives into the lines of this guidebook is to bring some freshness and novelty to the way we see public speaking. The goal is help boost your speaking skills, bring a drop of inspiration and a breeze of thoughts. Hopefully, vivid parallels with ocean, nature and sport will make you at least a pinch of salt more intrigued about presenting on stage.

Enjoy the ride!

val



BE! IN THE MOMENT!

IT'S ALL ABOUT WHERE YOUR MIND'S AT

- Kelly Slater

Surfing equates to living in the very moment of 'now'. When you ride a wave you leave behind all things important and unimportant, the purity of the moment is upon you.

- Bill Hamilton

BE! IN THE MOMENT!

There is one beautiful and essential wisdom we should inherit from the Ocean and Surfing. The wisdom that should permeate in every part of our lives.

LIVE IN THE MOMENT.

Once you enter the water with the board, all what matters is the water, the waves, the Ocean and pure Self in this very water, these very waves, this very Ocean. Everything around is constantly moving, billowing and changing, but your mind stays tranquil while the heart is breaking out from excitement and joy. The Past only exists in the form of the waves that formed thousands miles away and traveled to you. They become your present and turn Past again in no time. Ironically enough, the Future also only exists in the form of the waves that are going to appear from the past. In the end, it's all just about waves...and you there, out of time, in the moment.

When you are there, in the moment, you are just being, observing and absorbing the beauty around. You celebrate being, you celebrate the moment, you celebrate life. You are conscious, attentive and responsive. You are connected and tuned to the people who are there with you. You resonate with the Ocean and nature in its rawest form. Every second of surfing, from getting into the water to floating in the line-up to catching a wave, you stay ultimately focused. This is the time when you feel utmost alive simply because you finally live.

You may be wondering why these lyric contemplations are poured onto the pages dedicated to public speaking. The reason is straightforward, almost banal. The ability to be in the moment is a skill that we lack to communicate better with the audience. Everybody speaks about eye contact, body language, stage fright and PowerPoints, and very few – about speaker's absolute presence (or rather absence) when on a stage.



But the problem is there. So many presenters are self-centered as if they are the main event, not the audience. *How do I look like? How is my voice? Did I iron my pants? Omg, I didn't.* and so on and so forth. They care about outfit, equipment, slides, notes, lights, which seems kind of them, but it's not for the audience, it's not to appear as a failure. However, in pursuit of perfection, presenters miss the essence of public speaking – connection with the audience. They are too busy with themselves for that.

To boost the quality of presentations we give and receive, it is necessary to shift the focus from inward to outward. In other words, a speaker should switch a focus from himself to the audience and ambience around.. Both sides will benefit. Speakers will be able to release energy, rotating non-stop without exit and causing nervousness, and share it with the audience. The latter will enjoy more personal and caring attitude and good energy flow, multiply it all and send back to the presenter...

This mutual exchange will create relaxed and propitious atmosphere, where it is natural to be oneself and make mistakes, where it is possible to focus and live the moment. Once the speaker is focused and fully present, he/she is able to notice and feel the tiniest fluctuations of audience's mood and feelings and respond to that accordingly and satisfy their needs better.

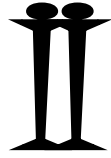


Tips

- ⚓ Do all the preparation **before** coming on stage. Once there, **be there**. Stop worrying about things that cannot be changed and, therefore, don't matter anymore. You know, when you go for a wave and realize you have forgotten to wax it, it's pointless to moan about it, you just have to keep going and concentrate on the wave. The same with presenting. If you forgot your usb key, PowerPoint cannot be projected or wearing pants would be more convenient than a skirt, just **drop it** and work with the audience and what you have **now**.

- ⚓ Even if something important, like your computer, doesn't work, please, carry on! Don't repeat each time to the audience '*Oh, if only I could show you my presentation, you would understand what I mean...*'; '*Such a pity I cannot illustrate it with the pictures from my slides*' etc. Refocus and act upon the actual situation, with or without laptop, in pants or in a skirt, with good or bad lighting. The audience is not there to listen to your complaints and regrets, but to hear your speech. Audience and their satisfaction must be your ultimate focus!

- ⚓ Don't think and worry too much about making mistakes. Even if you are 200% prepared, they will happen, tiniest and smallest, but they will. Being afraid to make a mistake means focusing on the future and missing out on present...and your presentation. Like Patrick Swayze brilliantly coined '*Fear causes hesitation, and hesitation will cause your worst fears to come true.*'



GET THE ATTITUDE!

ABILITY IS WHAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF DOING.

MOTIVATION DETERMINES WHAT YOU DO.

ATTITUDE DETERMINES HOW WELL YOU DO IT.

—Lou Holtz

Well I'm always working on constantly everything. I never take the approach that I'm doing as well as I possibly can... I always think there's more and I think if you don't have that, you are not driven to be better.

- Kelly Slater

There are no mistakes. Only new paths to explore.

- Gregory David Roberts

Perfection is not a destination; it's a never-ending process...

Enjoy!

- Jim Bouchard

Pain is temporary. Quitting lasts forever.

- Lance Armstrong

ATTITUDES!

Surfing, or rather surf lifestyle, is an endless source of great attitudes and lessons of wisdom that can be adopted by public speakers to learn more productively and present more effectively.

Embrace what you have and what's coming.

The Ocean is unpredictable and different in every moment. Even if you checked forecast and go in the water fully prepared, you can never know what is going to happen next. The only thing you can do is to **go with the flow** and work with whatever the Ocean gives you. There is no way to conquer the waves but it is possible to work, or cooperate, with them.

It is very similar when dealing with audiences. The most accurate analysis of your public and thorough preparation cannot guarantee your presentation unfolding as planned. Unexpected things constantly happen, and you should be aware of that and be ready to improvise along the way.

In the end, that's what makes each surf session and each speech unique and inimitable in its beauty. That's the pricelessness of it.

Connect!

In the water, you find yourself with people of all kinds of backgrounds, professions, and values. Yet, on a line-up differences don't matter because everyone is equal before the Ocean. What matters, though, is that you all are there for a shared love for surfing. And this love becomes a basis for bonding, even if it is just in the water.

Audiences, like surfers on a line-up, consist of various personalities, yet are there for the same reason – to hear your speech. The only way to build connection with this heterogeneous group is to identify and **concentrate on what you share in common, and not what sets you apart.**

Persevere!

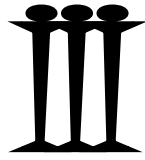
Before succeeding to ride that wave, you will face quite some challenges, both physically and emotionally. The fear and panic, discouragement and illusion of stagnation (or even degradation), loss of belief and disappointment in yourself are just few experiences on the emotion list. Afterwards, terrible wipe-outs, exhausting work-outs, injuries, and maybe accidents with other surfers are guaranteed physical experiences. Failures of all kinds are natural and inevitable. But what matters is your **readiness to fight fear, persistence and determination** to continue and achieve.

To become a strong presenter it takes as much as it does in surfing – practice, practice, practice! Sometimes, even hours of work and 110% dedication still will not bring intended effect. That's where your perseverance should kick in: embracing the mistakes, acquiring new knowledge and continuing the way.

There is always room for improvement.

They say perfection doesn't exist. **The pursuit of perfection does.** It is always possible to advance, take it to the next level, from foams to green waves to barrels. It is always possible to work on your style, technique or mindset - a lifetime journey.

Your presentation can always be better than this one. With sharper message, better structure and more powerful visuals. Your delivery can always be more convincing, original and revolutionary. Don't stop.



PREPARATION GOES FIRST

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BY FAILING TO PREPARE, YOU ARE
PREPARING TO FAIL.

- Benjamin Franklin

Can you guess what most people who are worried about their presentations refuse to do? Practice.

- Scott Berkun

If I am to speak for ten minutes, I need a week for preparation; if fifteen minutes, three days; if half an hour, two days; if an hour, I am ready now.

- Woodrow Wilson

PREPARATION GOES FIRST

The Ocean will not hesitate to remind that you must be prepared, physically and mentally, to go there. You'll experience the washing machine, catch few waves straight onto your head, hit the bottom, and feel absolutely discouraged. In extreme case, you will never come back to water again, in very extreme - from the water. Even though, dying literally while giving a speech is not a common scenario, dying figuratively takes place quite often. Mostly due to lack or absence of preparation. Neither in surfing, nor in public speaking it is possible to wing it and succeed, especially when waves are huge and stakes are high.

Obviously, even the most thorough preparation cannot guarantee successful performance but it does minimize chances of failure. There will be always factors beyond our control, but a part of a good preparation is to be prepared for that as well. What is more, practice enables us to manage unexpected situations in our favor. Think of stand-up comedians: the way they play with the audience seems to be so flawless. Pure improvisation...backed up with hours and hours of practice. Self-confidence, naturalness, and responsiveness are logical results of proper preparation; fear, shyness, and diffidence are euphemisms for poor preparation.

The more you do on land, the better you will perform on water...and the more you will **ENJOY**. Identifying ocean conditions, choosing suitable equipment, good warm-up and determined state of mind do wonders. The same is true for your speech. The more you do on your own, the better you will perform on stag

Tips

⚓ 'We don't know where we get our ideas from. We do know that we do not get them from our laptops,' John Cleese perfectly noticed. So, before opening PowerPoint, or better your laptop, take a pen, a notepad and set off for some place, where you are able to reach the utmost focus.

⚓ Get to know your audience!!! Who are the people you are going to talk to?

Start with 'why' question. Why do you present? Why does your idea matter?

⚓ The main goal of a presentation is to make a change. What is the change you want to make by your speech? Nancy Duarte (Resonate, 2010) calls it 'Move from' à 'Move to'. For example, you want to make students turn from feeling reluctant to excited when it comes to writing their thesis; or you want to move your audience from being indifferent to intrigued about surfing.

⚓ Tell a story! Garry Reynolds (The Naked Presenter, 2011) suggests to follow a simple plan for creating a compelling message:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Identify causes of the problem
3. Show how and why you solved the problem

⚓ Formulate your core message– the one you want people to remember

⚓ Brainstorm! Brainstorm! Brainstorm! Generate as many ideas as possible.

- ⚓ Filter down your ideas only to the ones that support your core message. Audience don't want to hear it all and think too much deciding what is the most important to perceive. Remember that, like Stephen Keague (The Little Red Handbook of Public Speaking and Presenting, 2013) wittily said, 'No audience ever complained about a presentation or speech being too short'.
- ⚓ Elaborate a powerful structure for your presentation!
- ⚓ Turn words into pictures. Relevant visuals are great amplifiers of a speech.
- ⚓ Rehearse! Rehearse! Rehearse! "The confidence that comes from practicing makes it possible to improvise and respond to unexpected things—like hecklers, tough questions, bored audiences, or equipment failures—that might occur during the talk.' (Scott Berkun 2010) Practice sets you free from worrying about your material and thus allows being fully present during your speech.

Finally →



Preparation goes first

SHOW RESPECT.

There is one issue to take into consideration when deliberately choosing no preparation or rough preparation. Audience members devote **their precious time** to listen to your speech, and the more they are, the bigger cumulative time is.

For example, when thirty classmates are listening to your 10 mins. marketing presentation, they spend 5h of their time vs. 30 mins. of yours (performance + poor preparation).

Does this equation look respectful and fair towards your audience and their time?

Preparation is a token of respect not only for yourself but also for the people you perform for.



IV

LOOK!



ENGAGE WITH THE EYES.

EYE CONTACT

Surfing is a lot about observation. Before going into the water, you should check the Ocean. In the water, you look around to understand the behavior of the waves; you look at other surfers to see what they are doing and going to do. When going for a wave, you keep an eye on it till the very last moment, until it catches you. Constant eye contact is essential to understand, foresee and act upon the Ocean.

And...build connection. Just like in public speaking.

We've been told it thousands times – keep an eye contact with our audience. But have you ever questioned yourself, why?

The main reason is that presentation in its deepest sense is a dialogue between a speaker and the audience. A speaker, contrary to a common believe, does not speak at or in front of but **with** and **for** the audience. Now, think of a dialogue with a friend. What is the most eloquent evidence that you both are connected, tuned and interested? Right, eye contact.

Eye contact is crucial for creating mutual response. Speaking eyes to eyes helps to notice and analyze audience's fluctuations in mood and attitudes and respond to them in a natural way. Remember that speaker, constantly stuck in the notes or glued to a PP slide and hypnotized by his own speech? He wouldn't even notice if people get bored, take out their phones and bless free Wi-Fi. When awoken from hibernation, he'll get frustrated nobody's paying attention and leave a room aggrieved.

Eye contact is a magic tool. Not only it allows us to see what is happening around but also affect it. A lack of attention from an audience member can be easily regained by approaching one deliberately and looking directly in the eyes. A momentum can be built simply by keeping silence and making eye-contact with the listeners. Trustworthiness can be created when a speaker argues his opinion without removing his gaze. Finally, eye contact can let you be free, be yourself and be human. Because eye contact is something instinctive and natural to human conversation. While reading from notes and PowerPoint or watching your feet – not.

When you are in the ocean, it is vital to observe consciously and attentively, otherwise you get smashed by a wave, or crash into another surfer, or simply miss out on the beauty around. When you fail to observe and look the audience, you risk to be smashed by the wave of dissatisfaction, crash into the wall of indifference or simply miss out on a chance to make a change.



Tips

- ‡ Before your presentation, go speak with few audience members to create initial rapport. Then during actual speech you'll have a feeling there are few friends out there and making eye-contact will be much easier.
- ‡ Eye contact should seem natural, which is only possible when looking at actual people in a room. Faking eye contact by checking out back wall or focusing on any random point in a room will be disclosed at some point and weaken trust and connection between you and the audience.
- ‡ Make sure your gaze travels across entire room, including corners and back rows. If establishing eye contact with every audience member is impossible due to big number of attendees, just make a few in each room zone – when you look at one person, the ones sitting nearby also get a feeling you look at them.
- ‡ Regain attention of a dreamy attendee simply by subtly cutting the distance and looking directly in his/her eyes until noticed.

Think if you need all the above tips at all. Because if you are well prepared for and enthusiastic about your speech then eye contact will be there naturally simply because that's how humans communicate.

V

STYLE

STYLE IS THE DIFFERENCE, A
WAY OF DOING,
A WAY OF BEING DONE.

-Charles Bukowski

PLAY YOUR CARD

Surfing is a way of self-expression in a movement, a dance on water or, if you want, with the water. While techniques represent a solid ground, based on nature's eternal laws, style is a form of performing a technique; a variable that changes from one person to another. While technique appeals to our brain, style conquers our heart and soul. While technique can be measured, style can only be felt and perceived.

Style is a quality of uniqueness, deriving from one's self and from what we originally have as human beings. It is the talent to perform to the world what we've got from the birth and experienced in life in our own way. Our character, body constitution, appearance, way of thinking can become a basis for style. In surfing. Dancing. Speaking. Anything.

To develop one's style, it takes realization of who we are and what we have. These are often peculiar traits that underlay the style. Extra flexible, overweight, super-fast, with strange voice, giant tall, over-emotional, a stutter, with exquisite memory... Everyone plays their card...which makes them stand out, inspire, and encourage. Overweight surfer Jimbo Pellegrine rocking hollow, giant waves. The tallest surfer Hellman Andy Carter creating his 'folding chair' or 'transformer' style. A famous Australian singer Megan Washington, who has a stutter, deciding to sing to communicate with people. Fast paced and hoarse voiced Tony Robbins being one of the most inspirational presenters. All these people share one thing – they turn special qualities they have (sometimes controversial) in performance with unique style. They play their card.

In today's mass market and standardized world, people have a weakness for imperfections and genuineness. In case of the audience, their members crave to see a real person in front of them, with vulnerability and...own style. The latter means acknowledging how you are, working with it and sharing it with people. The main goal of being yourself and playing your card is to create faster and deeper connections with the audience that will help you to get your message through.



Tips

- ↳ Look at yourself and try to think, what qualities and talents you have that make you unique and could be valuable in the context of public speaking. Loud voice, good sense of humor, ability to play music instrument, scaptivating storytelling, unusual appearance – it can be literally anything.
- ↳ Once you have identified your unique qualities –pack of cards – choose one, work on it and start playing! Perform a song on a guitar to illustrate you speech message, for instance!
- ↳ In a long run, you can pick several qualities of yours, develop them and start combining for more vivid and effective communication.
- ↳ Watch public speeches of people that inspire you or create controversial feelings. Ask yourself what there style is about? What personal qualities underlay it? What does make his/her style attractive/unattractive? Do not try to immitate but check for hints!

CLOSEOUT

As a closing word, I would like to say that this guidebook doesn't pretend even closely to a main reference point when preparing your presentation. Rather, its main goal is to draw your attention to some critical aspects of public speaking and give you food for thought...and hopefully, a bit of inspiration.

Even though recommendations you found on the previous pages were largely based on the works of such presentation gurus like Nancy Duarte, Scott Brucun, Garr Reynolds etc. and influenced by their opinions on the subject, the overall content has a great deal of personal touch to it, derived from my own experiences and observations, thoughts and feelings. Probably, the latter makes this guidebook unique - when I googled, no one seemed to have ever made parallels between surfing and presenting in public.

This guidebook - a written presentation on presentations - is a proof that we can always find a way to speak about oh-so-much-discussed-already subject in our own manner and from our own perspective and maybe, just maybe receive a bigger chance to get our message across.

Hope, this guidebook brought few refreshing insights to your mind shores.

Best wishes,

Val



Santa Rita Beach, Aug 2015

Photo V. Gogunskaya