

SIGMA Radius

360 Leadership Assessment



Leadership Series

**Great Leaders
Are Great Presenters**



GREAT LEADERS ARE GREAT PRESENTERS

Presentations differ on their length, scale, and importance. From small, short project briefings to a team of three employees, to large productions where you outline the future of your organization to major stakeholders, the success of all presentations depends on the ability of the presenter to organize information, convey ideas, and garner support. A successful presenter will leave their audience convinced of the points being made and ready to make changes in their own attitudes or behaviors going forward. Unsuccessful presentations may differ in why they fail, but all have the same result: an audience who is uninterested, uninspired, and completely unchanged by the ideas or information presented to them.

Presentations are common in the workplace, and often leaders are expected to step up to the plate and deliver presentations that are enlightening, inspiring, or compelling. The leadership characteristic 'Formal Presentation' is the ability to deliver an interesting, informative, and organized presentation. A leader may not need this characteristic on a day-to-day basis, but when it is required, it is essential for the success of a leader's presentation.

Are You Doing All You Can to Make Your Presentations Enlightening, Inspiring, or Compelling?

In assessing your presentation skills, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does this presentation give valuable or interesting information?
- Is there a message or idea I want my audience to leave with?
- Have I designed my presentation at the appropriate level for my audience?
- Am I telling a compelling story?
- Do I use visual aids effectively?
- Have I given myself enough time to prepare?

Before Your Next Presentation, Remember...

Preparation is essential: Some believe that the ability to give a captivating performance is all about confidence and charisma. Many spend time trying to learn the correct body language and vocal tone that will convey assurance in themselves and their ideas. This shifts the focus away from *what* you are presenting and moves it to *how* you are presenting. It is important to remember that it is the ideas not your behaviors that make or break a presentation. The words you say are more important than the presence you have in front of a crowd, and that is where most of the time and energy should be invested when preparing for a presentation.

Consider your audience: Knowing who you are presenting to is useful in knowing how to present your information. Different stakeholders will have different interests. For example, if you are introducing a major change in your organization, board members may wish to hear about the impact this will have on profit and productivity, while workers will want to hear how

this changes their daily activities. Always tailor your information to your audience, from the level of detail provided to the tone of your message. In an even more basic sense, your audience will also determine the language that you use. Avoid using jargon for those unfamiliar with your area of expertise, while also refraining from over-explaining concepts to those well-versed in your topic. Both over- and under-explaining are quick ways to lose your audience and ensure your message remains unheard.

Presentations can be an effective communication tool: Communication is another characteristic that is essential for leaders to succeed. This involves keeping employees informed about decisions, events, and developments that are ongoing in your organization. Effective communicators are seen by their employees as fair and supportive. Presentations can be another method of giving information to employees. When writing a presentation, remember that the sharing of information and ideas with employees is related to more positive leader-follower relationships. Use presentations when you need to share updates or developments with a large number of employees at once, or when you need to tell a compelling story to introduce new ideas or changes to your direct reports.

Three Ways to Keep Your Audience Engaged

The following steps can help you to be a better presenter:

- 1. People prefer to listen to stories than a list of facts.** In order to communicate information to others, they need to be attentive and willing to listen. The best way to hold the attention of an audience is via story-telling. Many presenters do this by either relating their topic to a current event or cultural reference, or by weaving a careful example throughout their presentation. Telling a narrative not only helps keep the attention of your audience, but only helps them to later recall the information. When crafting your story, remember to have a clear beginning, which states what your topic is, where you are going with your story, and why it's important. Throughout, don't get so bogged down in details that the story is lost, and remember to keep the level appropriate for your audience. Finish with a strong conclusion that recaps where you have been and ties up any questions you set up in your introduction. People should leave your talk with a clear understanding of the problem you are addressing, the reason why they should care about this issue, the solution you are proposing, and the value of implementing your solution. These types of talks are not only more engaging, but also more convincing when you are seeking the support of your employees.
- 2. Choose your visual aids carefully.** There are many options when it comes to visual aids in presentations. Most commonly, presenters often have a slideshow to accompany their speech. Individuals also make use of photographs, videos, comic strips, and clips from television shows. In fact, in many places, a presentation automatically translates to a slideshow with a number of lines of text per slide, accompanied by pictures or videos to add interest and break up all the writing. These tools are overused, and often result in the presenter reading or repeating information displayed in text. This is not to say that using slides or visual aids is inherently bad, rather leaders should consider if visual

aids will add a significant contribution to their presentation. If the slides are simply used to display the information one plans to say, they are likely distracting for the audience and will result in boredom. If the slides are used to elaborate or enhance what the presenter is saying (e.g., a graph showing a trend in data within an organization as the presenter talks about the global trends), they are worth investing the time and drawing the attention of your audience. Simply keep in mind that aids are just that, something that should help your presentation, not something to be relied upon to create interest.

- 3. Practice makes perfect.** While charisma is not necessarily required to give an effective presentation, audiences can tell when someone is unprepared to speak. Nerves are expected and understood, but there is a big difference between someone who is nervous to speak publicly, and someone who is nervous because they do not understand the material they are presenting. Always prepare your presentations well in advance, and give yourself time to practice your speech. Some presenters like to leave themselves a lot of flexibility into what they will say, others like to write out talking points to stay on track and remember all parts of their story, while others still prefer to memorize their entire script. Each leader will need to choose the method that is best for them, however the important thing is to be comfortable with the material, to know your story and how it will unfold, and to be prepared for questions that may arise during the presentation. Never read directly from slides, notes, or teleprompters. Give yourself ample time to practice your speech, both alone and in front of audiences. Remember, the ideas you present are the most important part of a presentation, and practicing the words you will use to convey these ideas will increase your confidence in the material and help you tell a convincing and compelling story.

Resources



[Ted's Secret to Great Public Speaking](#)



[How to Give A Killer Presentation](#)



Develop your ability to stay objective and other leadership skills by taking advantage of SIGMA's [Coaching Services](#).

Contact SIGMA for coaching on developing your skills as a leader.

SIGMA Assessment Systems, Inc.

Email: support@SigmaHR.com

Call: 800-265-1285