

# **SIGMA** **Leadership Series**



**Great Leaders  
Are  
Great Presenters**



# GREAT LEADERS ARE GREAT PRESENTERS

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**All the great speakers were bad speakers at first.**

**– Ralph Waldo Emerson**

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. 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 required, it is essential for the success of a leader's presentation.

## Importance of this Characteristic

Presentations differ in their length, scale, and importance. However, from small, short project briefings to a team of three employees, to large productions where you outline the future of your company 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 convince their audience of the points being made and leave them ready to make changes in their own attitudes or behaviours 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.

In assessing your formal presentation ability, 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?

## Improve Your Formal Presentation Skills

**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. Consequently, 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 behaviours, 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 you should invest most of the time and energy when preparing for a presentation.

**Consider your audience:** Knowing who you are presenting to is useful in knowing how to deliver 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. Also, refrain from over-explaining concepts to those well-versed in your topic. Over or under explaining is a quick way 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. So, 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.

## Start Doing These 3 Things Now to Present More Effectively

The following steps can help you become better at formal presentation:

- 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 also 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. Remember to keep the level appropriate for your audience. Lastly, finish with a strong conclusion that recaps where you've been and ties up any questions from 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 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, a presentation may automatically translate to a slideshow with a number of lines of text per slide. This may be 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 you use slides simply to display information you plans to say, they are likely distracting and will result in boredom. In contrast, if you use slides to elaborate or enhance what you say (e.g., a graph showing a trend in data within a company as the presenter talks about the global trends), they are worth investing the time and drawing the attention of your audience. Keep in mind that aids are something that should help your presentation, not something to rely 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. For example, nerves are understandable, but there is a big difference between being nervous to speak publicly and being nervous because you don't comprehend the material you're presenting. Always prepare your presentations well in advance and give yourself time to practice your speech. Some presenters like to give themselves flexibility regarding what they will say, while others like to write out talking points to remember all parts of their story. In addition, others may even prefer to memorize their entire script. Each leader will need to choose the method that is best for them. However, it is important to be comfortable with the material, to know how your story will unfold, and to prepare for questions that may arise during the presentation. Additionally, never read directly from slides, notes, or teleprompters. Give yourself ample time to practice your speech, both alone and in front of audiences. Finally, remember that the ideas you present are the most important part of a presentation. 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 formal presentation ability 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](mailto:support@SigmaHR.com)

Call: 800-265-1285