PROJECT MANAGEMENT
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE
A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

Speaker Guidance
VIRTUAL Project Management Symposium

Presenting at the UMD Project Management Symposium

Each individual speaker session is scheduled for 45 minutes. It breaks down to: a 5 minute introduction, 30 minute presentation and 10 minutes for Q&A. Your 30 minute presentation is your opportunity to show case your ideas to your peers. Model your 30 minutes like a TED Talk. TED talks are generally 18 minutes, not 30, but if you use the techniques used to develop a TED Talk, it will keep your presentation focused and your audience more engaged. One way to break things up in your presentation is to use polling or show a short video.

Develop an Idea

Think about what you want the audience to take away from your presentation. You should not have more than 3 big ideas but one is easily enough. A good idea takes evidence or observations and should lead to a conclusion.

Share What You Know

You do not need to be the world's foremost expert, but you do need to be an expert on your topic. The audience relies on you to give accurate information – please check and verify your facts! If you are presenting research, make sure your idea is backed by the facts. Give relevant examples, concisely presented. Identify opinion or developing ideas as such.

Prepare, Outline and Script

There is no single theory that offers the best structure for your talk. But, follow the guidance for TED Talks, see https://www.ted.com/talks/nancy_duarte_the_secret_structure_of_great_talks.

This is the structure that they have found to work particularly well:

1) "Start by making your audience care, using a relatable example or an intriguing idea.
2) Explain your idea clearly and with conviction.
3) Make the persuasive case about how, and why your idea should be implemented.
4) End by addressing how your idea could affect your audience if they accept it."

The primary goal of your talk is to communicate an idea effectively. Follow this structure:

Introduction

A strong introduction is crucial. Draw in your audience members with something they care about, make them curious and answer WIFM (what's in it for me). Get your idea out as quickly as possible. Don't focus on yourself. Don't open with a long string of statistics.

*Material from the TED Talk Speakers Guide was used in preparation of this document.

Body

Make a list of all of the evidence you want to use. Think about items that your audience already knows. Define what you want to convince them of: the new knowledge, research, or practice you believe will be valuable to them. Prepare your list based on a logical sequence. Then see if you can cut out items and still make the point. Ask yourself again, "what are the key takeaways I want the audience to know." Don't use jargon, or explain any new terminology. Don't let citations interrupt the flow of your talk. Place them in the fine print on your slides. Note anything that is best conveyed visually and use slides or videos for this. Only use slides for key points and visualizations.

Conclusion

Find a landing point in your conclusion that will leave the audience feeling positively toward you and your ideas. Don't use the conclusion to simply summarize what you have already said – tell your audience how this information might impact their lives, if implemented.

Script

When you have developed your outline to the point you are satisfied with the logic sequence start writing a script. Be concise. Use present tense, strong and interesting verbs. Your script is likely to be revised many times until you are comfortable with it.

Create Slides

Power Point slides can be very helpful but they are by no means necessary. White-boarding is better if you have the software to do it! If you decide to use slides, please use the template provided and remember:

Use as little text as possible – if your audience is reading, they are not listening.

Font size should be 32 points or larger. Try to use font in speaker's template (or something similar).

A picture is worth 1000 words – this old adage is true!

No single slide should support more than one point.

Only use images or graphics that you have created OR have permission to use. Always cite the source.

Have someone review your slides to see if they make sense and check for glitches.

Presenting Using a Virtual Platform (We are using Webex)

Basic protocols include:

1) Make sure the camera is at eye level and look straight into the camera. If you are using a laptop you are going to need to prop it up on something to get the camera at your eye level (a stack of books works fine).

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2) Avoid backlighting that puts your face in silhouette and have a warm light source in front of you so that the face is clearly visible to the community.

3) Have a good mic. The mic's that come with computers are not very good and pick up a lot of ambient noise. We suggest that at a minimum you use a lavalier mic (we like the Purple Panda) but there are many good ones on the market

4) Pay attention to your background and be sure you are the main focus. If you want to use a virtual background it is a very good idea to put a green screen behind you to minimize distortion. Two YouTube videos that address presenting in a virtual environment that you might enjoy are shown below:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YO6utfQm7Bg

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=bFIFFIN-_4I&feature=emb_logo

Rehearse

So, once you have built your presentation the next crucial step is rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Rehearsing will undoubtedly lead to minor refinements in your draft presentation. It doesn't matter how many times you have gone over your talk in your head, stand up, look in the mirror, and rehearse. Check your timing, pay attention to your posture, repeat, repeat, and repeat until you are totally comfortable. Then, you are ready to present!

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