

## PARTICIPATORY PRESENTATIONS

*This needs review of books in biblio for language and structure. Also needs to talk about how to get participation from group as part of the presentation. Also this assumes a lot about the reader knowing about the role of images; it is not an independent module on its own.*

A survey found that top executives indicate, as competent as they are, that public speaking is their greatest fear. This is a frequent response by individuals in any field, shying away from presentations with such excuses as "someone else can do it better", or "speaking is not my style; I am more of a 'ask person' than a 'tell person'" or "people fall asleep when I am speaking".

Nevertheless hundreds of presentations are delivered daily in every field. In higher education giving lectures is a primary teaching strategy.

Education research now indicates that the learning process is enhanced by using the multiple intelligences. Lecturing only addresses the rational so other methods of visual, audio and kinesthetic learning need to be incorporated into the process of presenting. The question for giving effective presentations is how to integrate other approaches into giving presentations to best communicate images and deliver messages so that optimal learning can take place.

We have all experienced poor presentations where we were impatient with theoretical material that seemed unimportant because it was delivered in a boring manner. Many of us have stood in front of groups that seemed to drift away from what we were saying.

Whether giving a five minute or one hour presentation, the purpose is to set a context, enabling the group to become open to new images. As the presenter one wants to shower people with new images to shift their perspectives or to add information and support emerging images. This is an important aspect of the learning process: to have ones images emerge as comprehensive, related to the future, disciplined and focused.

The presenter intends:

- to raise a question within a particular context;
- to engage the student and awaken concern about the arena being addressed;
- to focus the arena to allow new decisions to be made; and
- to couch information in memorable images so that it is remembered.

As much as presentations are often feared and although they are not the only method for learning, they still can be a very effective method for transmitting important information and setting a context for decision making. Therefore this module lays out four key steps to enable making presentations more effective. Giving presentations is about life; since we all have life experience, e we are fully qualified to make presentations. We are out to communicate images that become

the handles for remembering information and which will give a context for responsible decision-making.

## **I. PREPARING THE PRESENTATION**

The preparation steps are similar to the steps of the workshop method.

### **A. STATING THE OBJECTIVES**

The first step in preparing a presentation is to decide the topic of the presentation and to think about the audience you intend to address. What in your presentation is the key image that you want to shape peoples imaginations? There are two primary objectives: the *rational objective* of what you want the audience to learn or remember and the *experiential objective* of what you intend for your audience to experience as a result of being addressed.

### **B. BRAINSTORMING THE SUBJECT**

It is important to objectify what you already know about the subject by brainstorming everything you know about the subject: ideas, illustrations, personal life experiences, experiences of other people you have known or know of, related books, movies, stories, TV programs, additional resources to obtain other information, questions this subject raises for you and for your audience, questions you intend to raise, old and new images related to the subject, past examples, new trends or innovations, related events, conversations with people, reflections on the past, classical stories and general insights. Taking a sheet of paper and drawing eight columns with eight sections (or fewer if your wish) creates a one page worksheet of 64 boxes to put all your information. If you have small post-its, writing each idea on a post-it allows you to do the next step easier. The idea is to gather as much information on the subject as possible in one place.

### **C. ORGANIZING THE INFORMATION**

Once you have all this information gathered, it appears to be chaos and there is more information than is necessary. Now you are ready to organize the material. One value is to be able to remember the material easily, both for you as a presenter and for the audience. Research indicates that people remember up to seven points or ideas. Four major points with four points within each major point (a 4x4) has proven to be very effective. Four points provides a touchstone. Trying to fill in a 4x4 reveals where you as the presenter are clearest and where you need to do additional research. The first step of preparation includes looking through the information and discerning what the primary image is that you want to communicate and what the four supporting points are for communicating the image.

### **D. CREATING THE ILLUSTRATION/QUESTION PALETTE**

Now that you have one key image and four major points to support the image, think

about helpful illustrations and stories for each of the sixteen points. These illustrations and stories are like a paint palette, providing many different perspectives, but not all of the "colors" or illustrations are finally used. Having a question for each of the four points helps to ensure the participatory dimension of the presentation.

## II. FOCUSING THE DRAMA

Once you have determined the focus and key points with a palette of illustrations and have done the additional research for filling out the gaps, then you are ready to focus the presentation to fit the particular audience. Great presentations are like dramas: getting onstage, performing three dramatic acts, and getting offstage. The key to the presentation is building the drama to fit this particular group at this particular time. You will want to think about who makes up the group, what they need, their expectations of what will happen, their present images on the subject and what new information you plan to introduce.

### A. PREPARING TO ADDRESS THE GROUP

In giving presentations both the audience and presenter can play dual roles as teacher/learner. Both have ideas, insights, images to share from their life experiences. It requires the decision of everyone to be both participant and listener.

There are many ways to get the attention of the audience, from dramatically declaring the intent and reasons for the presentation, to exercises in which the group has the opportunity to give input. Sometimes poetry or a song are used as an indirect way too communicate the major image of the presentation. Humor can be very helpful because when the group laughs at a common issue, it ritualizes the decision to begin listening. You want to hold the attention of the group on an issue by laying out a broad context, relating the issue to the group's life, their past and their future.

Your role as the presenter is to establish a triologue, introducing the characters in the drama and their relationship to each other:

1. As the *speaker* you demonstrate the importance of the issue through your words and your style. Although you may be nervous or feel unprepared, you hang all neuroses on the doorknob upon entering the room for the presentation. You allow the confidence of your preparation and your interest in both the subject and the audience to be your strength in presenting.

2. The *audience* is the second dynamic of the triologue. As they enter they may be elsewhere in their imagination, their minds wandering to other places they would rather be at this moment or other pressing tasks that may be calling for their participation. The sooner they can become an actual voice in the triologue the sooner you will have their full attention.

3. The *subject* is the primary reason that the group has gathered. To have the subject become a part of the triologue, begin with sharing the broadest context possible. In other words the more comprehensive the context, stating both an historical and global context in relation to this particular situation, the more depth and significance the subject

will have for the audience. The future perspective of the subject in terms of trend analysis, and potential scenarios are important to hold in tension with the current contradictions in order to decide what mandates are called for. Intentionality is called for in deciding what is necessary, to build effective responsive models, to use humanizing methods to make the change and to create a discipline for follow through.

People are motivated when they see how the subject relates to what they care about; when they recognize that the future is open to being created; and when they see that their lives can make a difference. They need to be led through a journey of images that allow them to get distance from the past, to focus on the questions being raised and discern their own responses. They need to be able to see the future with new vision and develop a common hope. The possibility of looking at root causes of various problems allows people to state the underlying contradiction which can become a window to identifying alternative creative responses. They want to see deeply what difference this makes, their own roles and responsibilities and options for making responsible decisions.

## **B. DECIDING THE OVERALL RHYTHM**

The focus of the presentation is one central image with four ways to communicate it: first the exploration of the subject, then a depth look at the key issue, a dynamical description of its importance and finally a summarizing or emphasizing, describing the resolution or implications. The first point can begin with the idea in as comprehensive a picture as possible, surprising the group with the broad rational thought through dimension of the issue and how it relates to their lives. Then the drama is pulled through your life experience. Third you raise the decisions that are before the group, or break loose their thinking and understanding and struggle with life. The last act can then be the wrap-up.

Another way to consider the rhythm is that the first act is more contextual and descriptive, getting out the overall picture. The second act is more experiential, surmising how life might be different because of the event. The third is more phenomenological or feeling and emotional. And the fourth is mythological or the creation of the story.

## **C. PREPARING THE APPROPRIATE ILLUSTRATIONS**

Now one is ready to look at the illustration palette and discern what illustrations to actually use for this particular audience. Values for choosing the illustrations include: those that enhance the anticipated drama; that can be pulled through one's own life; or that will enhance the quality of the happening intended. It is important to keep in mind the uniqueness of the audience, asking what the group needs and what you need to do to make a difference in peoples lives. The illustrations are essential in adding the dynamic of the right side of the brain to the four theoretical points through creating supporting stories and images that support the points and help them to be remembered. With each story it is necessary to consider the details of the people involved, the emotions and reactions, the context, thinking through the beginning, middle and end of how to tell the story. Illustrations help the drama to flow so it is like swinging through trees from illustration to illustration. They will be most effective as you make them your own. Classical illustrations that ground people in their heritage are important as you relate

them to similar stores in your own experience today. Jokes and ways to inject humor and laughing at yourself also are important to consider as part of the illustrations. As a last step check back through the images and illustrations selected for their appropriateness making sure that there are no illustrations that may misrepresent what you intend to communicate that are not sensitive to multiple perspectives.

## **D. THE CLOSING**

Plan the concluding remarks. Do you want to end with reflections on the overall subject. What are your final words? "Having the last word" can be powerful in terms of leaving the group with a question, or a vision. Maybe there is a warning and a statement of consequences if this area is not taken seriously. Maybe there is a personal decision that needs to be raised. The ending may be abrupt, leaving the group hanging with questions, or it may be reflective as questions and answers are bounced back and forth.

## **III. EXPLORING THE TOOLBOX**

### **A. PREPARING VISUALS**

In light of the research which recognizes that 60% of any audience has visual learning as its primary mode, the use of visuals is essential. Using flipcharts, overheads, videos, or boards enables the group to focus on the subject being discussed. Think through the overall picture you desire to leave the group with. Often people take notes only on what they see in front of them. Short videos, like 5-10 minute segments of a movie, can be powerful especially when used in conjunction with reflective questions to discern and journey the reflection of the group. Visuals reinforce the essential points of the presentation. Several books have now been written about how one can create great visuals without being an artist. The truth in the saying "a picture is worth a 1,000 words" can be a bonus in shortening the presentation or at least delivering it more powerfully the more pictures are used.

### **B. USING YOUR UNIQUENESS**

Expression of your voice, gestures and eye contact are one of the most powerful tools you have. Use of *voice* has unlimited potential as you decide how to project it: fill the room, whisper confidentially, lower or raise the tone related to your points. You are the main actor in the drama, so use the person you are as a gift. Discern the *pace* of your presentation: do you want it be fast to overwhelm the group or slow and deliberate to emphasize a point?

*Gestures* and how you move your body from one place to another communicate strongly. A shift in body position can be used to indicate a shift in points of the presentation. Depending on the size person you are will determine what gestures and movement you choose. A small person can use movement to draw attention; whereas a large person may want to use low-key gestures. Hands should not be folded behind back or in front but used naturally in gestures. Stand tall without slumping over a lectern or table. You can decide to be relaxed and nonchalant or work yourself into a sweat with your intensity of effectively communicating your insights. The *eyes* can be used for subtle gestures - a simple lifting of the eyebrows or a quick wink speaks volumes.

### **C. DEVELOPING PERSONAL CONTACT**

One's eyes have the power of getting the attention of individuals in the group. By looking at the eyes of people in the group it gives you feedback as to where the group is, and what they actually understand. Careful brooding on the group before the presentation, one can decide where it is appropriate and who to call on by name in the group, indicating a personal relationship to the group and initiating a dialogue.

### **D. BECKONING PARTICIPATION**

The group brings to the presentation their own life experience. Their objective experiences can be solicited initially to create a motivation for them to listen and to enrich the imagery of the presentation. Of course this requires intentional handling because the entire presentation time can be quickly used up by a few very talkative people unless careful orchestration and contexting about short answers and ways to sympathetically interrupt when someone gets off the point or begins to monopolize.

## **IV. ADD THE FINESSE**

### **A. HONOR PARTICIPANT ROLES**

The presenter honors the role of the audience by being thought through on what is intended to say. When the presenter has used life experience, it allows the group to ground their struggle, and makes them realize their experience is authentic. The presenter plays a servant role to the group by deciding what they need to hear. To have integrity as the presenter is to be free to play the role the group needs.

### **B. IDENTIFY PERSONAL STRENGTHS**

As the presenter, you have decided to address the group with certain points. It takes a personal discipline to not be overwhelmed by any criticism that may come back or to look for approval and support from the group. It is important to critically evaluate yourself, but you are accepted for what you have done and need to allow the group to wrestle with their own problem of making a solitary decision about how to relate to what they have heard. Render up what you have done knowing that greater things will be expected. It is important to be oneself when presenting, asking the question of what self I am going to be: a spouse, parent, teacher, director, or global citizen.

### **C. ELIMINATE ANNOYING HABITS**

The use of vulgarity or any offensive language seldom is needed, necessary and can defuse the effectiveness of the delivery. The presentation is to enable the group to deal effectively with the shocks life has already provided. Unconscious picking one's nose or scratching can also be offensive to viewers in the audience.

Many times people say "ah, ah, ah" as a means for pausing and thinking about what to say next. These habits can become conscious to the presenter through use of videos and audios before or during the presentation. Sometimes one has the luxury of being able to practice the presentation with colleagues observing and willing to give feedback.

#### **D. DECIDE PERSONAL APPEARANCE**

One's appearance tells a story about who you are and what you are out to say so one wants to communicate authenticity. One's attire communicates a life stance. Harriett, a school librarian, always wears clothes and jewelry that are fun to look at, reflecting what children would be interested in. Her attire communicates that her life is about getting children's attention and to deal with them in a creative way. Attire can reflect a life stance of acceptance or can look like hell (and therefore one feels like it as well). In deciding the best image to communicate, avoid distractions like noisy bracelets, bobbing earrings, or jeans and a t-shirt that are overly casual. You want to look your best in relation to the group you are addressing, without calling attention to yourself.

#### **CONCLUSION**

In the 20th century we often don't have as long to prepare for presenting as we would like. Often we are asked at the last minute or need something spontaneously. The important thing is to follow through on these dynamics: think about the identity of your audience, your objectives, brainstorming quickly on paper all you can think about the subject, selecting the major image and 3-4 supporting points to communicate the image, discerning helpful illustrations for each point. Create opportunities to do the same presentation more than once like in classroom each succeeding year. Take time after completed the presentation to write personal critical comments regarding changes desire to make the next time.

Offer to do at departmental or staff meetings at school or sign up for education conference for teachers to do presentations.

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**PREPARING PARTICIPATORY PRESENTATIONS**

<b>I. PREPARING THE PRESENTATION</b>	<b>II. FOCUSING THE DRAMA</b>	<b>III. EXPLORING THE TOOLBOX</b>	<b>IV. ADDING THE FINESSE</b>
A. Stating the Objectives  B. Brainstorming the Subject  C. Organizing the Information  D. Creating the Illustration Palette	A. Getting Onstage  B. Deciding the Overall Rhythm  C. Preparing the Appropriate Illustrations  D. Leaving the Stage	A. Designing the Visuals  B. Using Your Uniqueness  C. Developing Personal Contact  D. Orchestrating Group Participation	A. Honoring Participant Roles  B. Identifying Personal Strengths  C. Eliminating Annoying Habits  D. Deciding Personal Appearance

Brooding notes:

\* Used to take 16 hours to prepare one hour presentation. Exhausted. Panic mode. Not necessarily creative. Want to release new ideas. The brainstorming can be done as soon as know the topic want to present. Reveals where want additional information, who and what could be resources.

\* Great speakers: Martin Luther King: image: I have a dream; I've been to the mountain top; Abraham Lincoln; Joseph Mathews - passion. Had vision; images; passion.

\* "Prestn. Skills for Fast Trackers" - survey found top executives indicate public speaking is greatest fear. Women need to use more forceful voice and have legs further apart to stand balanced, hands free to gesture. Look at one person for one thought expressing and then move to another person, looking at as many people as possible.

\* "85% of the information stored in the memory back of the brain is stored visually" - visual easiest to process and retain.

\* Outline or picture as script. Rephrase questions. Videotaping.

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8 strategies for breaking through reveries of audience with notions:

1. Speaker has a few key points that are essential.
2. Audience needs signals to indicate when to tune in to speaker.

1. Signal something important will follow: "Here is my most important point." (say in 2 ways), 2. Use silence 3. Be a visual presence by moving to different spot., 4. Speak through a megaphone - lower voice and boom out point., 5. Echo, 6. Numbers, 7. Combine numbers and movements., 8. Have audience repeat.

\* "Smart" Audiences: 4 conditions: attitudes, energy to learn, prerequisite knowledge and prerequisite skills. Anticipate attitude, knowledge and skill needed. Laughter and activities to awaken child within. Use small teams to reflect.

10 steps for creating a talk - off of the workshop and conversation method

\* Where I have given presentations: board reports; launch SIP, all clients, as preschool teacher good if hold attention for 20 minutes (Antonia - Sesame Street approach in their training programs: change every 20 minutes), report on state of school reform

\* What is response when asked to get up in front

of group? someone else can do it better; my style is to ask, not tell; I bore people when I talk (they look like they are falling to sleep)

\* Elements of an ineffective talk: when read word for word; abstract; not related to my life  
Elements of an effective talk - what this presentation is about.

\* Audience: age, background, cultures, occupation, education

\* How different from writing a report?

\* 10 steps for creating a talk + worksheets (with 7 points)

\* How presentation process is like the workshop and conversation processes

\* Lecturing popular form of teaching (particularly at college/university level) - remember 10% of what hear.

\* Lecture sets stage for... (a contextual piece for conversation, workshop, ...)

\* Teaching; reading notes; could xerox and hand out be more effective - in Africa teachers lecture as only teaching mode

\* As image changer lecturing style has certain characteristics

Aim is to produce existential dialogue with life, stand back and see from the perspective of someone else

\* Objective: raw data, Ref: associations with prior experience, Interp: Drawing participants into subject, how affect life, Exist: new relationship being taking

\* Stories brand on minds, clarify theoretical points

\* IMD course to create new methods of image change: Charting: discover images of others, Seminar: illicit images with those with whom you are working, Lecture: dramatize images

\* Intent: how carefully expose actual and internal life of us all. Out to raise crucial questions about which people need to be concerned.. Lecture sets up situation (paper)

\* Edge is spirit struggle: every person on a journey. What need? humor, stab (to sober them); embrace absurdity of life; non-chalance in crisis; passion when have distance

What learn about creating a module? Use the 4x4 method: getting out all data as quickly as possible, the wisdom of the file folder, books from the library - brainstorm on screen and then organize the points cutting out draft into new organized form. Then quickly "write" the first draft letting fingers flow and ideas be added as typing. Minimally these two steps take two hours each. Then there is a step of editing, reediting

and then sharing with Keith and Jim for their comments and re-edits. Who else? Betty? This material needs many illustrations; I need to read the chapters that people have submitted and discern what parts could be added here.