

## ***Three keys to powerful presentations***

Three things lead to a powerful presentation. The preparation, the pitch, and the product. Of these three the most important is the manner in which you prepare for any given presentation. More often than not the difference between a boring presentation, and a GREAT presentation is preparation.

## **How to Prepare:**

### ***Know Your Topic***

Knowledge is your main weapon against a lackluster presentation. The more knowledgeable you are about a subject matter the better presenter you will be. There are two easy “preparedness tests” you can take to see if you're presentation is sufficiently prepared:

#### **The Elevator Test**

You have approximately three minutes to pitch your presentation to an executive who is running to some important meeting/appointment and asks you for a “quick and dirty” rundown while descending the elevator to his car. Can you distill your topic into that presentation window?

#### **The Broken Projector Test**

You arrive to give your much anticipated presentation, only to find out that the bulb in the projector you planned on using has burnt out, and there is no replacement. Do you know the content of your presentation well enough to go without the “slide crutch”?

Also, don't lie. Your audience will be the ones to suffer if you don't get caught, your credibility will suffer if you do get caught. Don't be afraid of the phrase “I don't know”.

### ***Know Your Purpose***

Knowing your purpose helps you to tailor your presentation to the goal you wish to achieve. You would present differently if you are giving a sales pitch verses a technical learning presentation. Or presenting as a keynote of a large conference verses a small breakout that people stumble into while getting lost on the way to the bathroom.

## ***Know Yourself***

Present from a place of passion. Cater to your strengths. If you aren't the joking type, don't spend your time telling jokes. I personally find my presentation keying off the fact that I'm an UBER geek when it comes to most things which deal with Linux and Open Source.

## **How to Pitch**

Another major part of a presentation is “the pitch”. There are many different techniques, tips and tricks that can be employed to better your pitch, the number one is to have GOOD content. Stage presence is another major part of the pitch.

## ***Stage presence***

### **Connect with the audience:**

Make eye contact. There is no better way to get someone's attention than to make good solid eye contact. Just make sure that it's not with only one person, lest they think you creepy.

Shun the dark. The days where projector on == lights off are now over. Modern projectors have no issue with a decently lit room. Being out in the light allows you to connect with your audience at a more personal level.

Shun the podium. Don't hide behind stuff. It makes you seem disconnected. Look to the example of the guru, Steve Jobs, he's almost never behind a podium.

Start strong. There is no time more important of your presentation than the first few precious minutes. Don't squander them.

Keep it short. People have very short attention spans-- is that a monkey?-- keep things interesting. Work with various “Sync Points” to help people keep up.

Go Fast. Presentations should almost always be going at the rate that 75-80% of the audience think is “too fast”. Trust me on this one. Go fast, have a good handout, many “sync points” and your presentation should be worthwhile.

Keep control of your tools. Learn some tricks of your presentation software. Look at the “B” and “W” keys in PowerPoint/Impress. Never leave the presentation either. If you have to jump back to another slide, type the number of that slide, then the enter key. It looks slick.

Stand/Sit/Move. Keep active. Don't be the “Visine(TM) guy”. Engage your audience with movement.

Tell stories. People love stories. Stories, digressions, parables, examples, etc. are great emotional ways of connecting with your audience.

Repeat questions that the audience ask you. It helps everyone know what your answer goes to.

## **Slides:**

Slides should support the speaker, not the other way around. The manner in which your slides interact with you as a speaker will make or break your presentation. Good slides consist of:

Little to no text. A presentation is not a book. We don't like to be read to. Save your text heavy content for the handout.

Good Photos/Diagrams. Don't use the ClipArt that comes with your presentation software.

People have seen it all, and they're sick of it. Be careful where you get your photos however.

Copyrights should be honored. I got the majority of my photos for this presentation at Flickr.com the have a large amount of photos licensed under the Creative Commons License.

Diagrams should have thick lines. I wish I'd have known about this sooner.

Use color and emotions well. Don't underestimate the power of a happy baby.

Truth be told, the better your slides, the worse they'll be for a handout. Your goal should be “You don't want my PowerPoint deck. It won't do any good without me or the presentation!”

## **Finished Product**

Always have a good finished product. A good handout, a website, a blog, a wiki. Make sure your attendees have a good chance of taking at least one thing away from your presentation. Annotated slides are usually sufficient, however, if you spend just a little while more preparing a good full document handout, like this one, it will go over quite well.

In conclusion, I'd like to mention licenses. Because this presentation was originally done for a Linux Users Group, I licensed it under a Creative Commons, Non Commercial, by attribution License. If possible, share your presentation in a manner that others can benefit and make it even better.

Enjoy this handout and thank you very much.