

# Five Presentation Delivery Methods

Excerpted and adapted from Architect's Essentials of Presentation Skills, by David Greusel, AIA

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#### SUMMARY

Choosing the appropriate delivery format for a presentation can affect a presenter's connection with the audience. David Greusel, AIA, discusses the pros and cons of five presentation delivery formats: memorized, read from a manuscript, outlined, extemporaneous, and improvised.

## **CHOOSING A DELIVERY FORMAT**

The format you choose to deliver a presentation is directly connected to the credibility of any claims you may make about collaboration, client interaction, and teamwork. You might impress an audience with your encyclopedic knowledge but fail to persuade your listeners that you can work with others as part of a team. The less formal the delivery, the stronger the connection will be with the audience. Less formal, however, should not be confused with less prepared. The following is a brief summary of speaking styles and their principal characteristics.

#### **MEMORIZE**

Memorized speeches, the most formal kind of talk, typically sound canned unless one is gifted enough to apply the emotion and nuance of natural speaking to the memorized text. Memorizing a speech is hard work that becomes harder with age. Many speakers fear that they will overlook an important point or fail to deliver their material in a coherent and logical order. But the perceived advantage of memorization—ensuring that you will say exactly what you intend to say—evaporates when you forget your lines mid-sentence.

# READ FROM A PREPARED MANUSCRIPT

Reading a text has the same perceived advantage as memorizing a prepared speech, with the added safety net of the text. But the skill required to deliver a written text in a natural, conversational way is beyond the ability of most presenters. Participants are often impatient—or worse, insulted—when they realize that they are gaining no more from the experience than they could have gained from reading the text themselves.

#### **FOLLOW AN OUTLINE**

By preparing an outline, you can organize your presentation in a coherent way. The outline should provide just enough information about each idea to jog your memory and allow you to use fresh language each time you speak. It is important to remember that the outline is not the presentation itself and that the words you use should not be the exact wording of your outline, which may make no sense when spoken. Most computer presentations (PowerPoint or equivalent) are actually outlines of the presentations because the technology makes it easy to arrange an outline into sequential slides. While these may be useful in letting the audience know where you are in your presentation, the principal purpose of an outline is to guide the speaker, not the audience. Illustrations may be more effective in augmenting your oral delivery and helping you convey your message.

#### SPEAK EXTEMPORANEOUSLY

Speaking extemporaneously—uttering words that form in your mind at the very moment you are speaking—requires a great deal of preparation and thorough knowledge of the subject. The preparation is similar to memorization except that the focus is on the ideas to be conveyed, not the exact words to be spoken. If a speaker understands the ideas well and has carefully crafted the arguments, the appropriate words will usually flow easily at the appropriate time. Speaking extemporaneously demonstrates a command of the subject that suggests authority and trustworthiness, and enables the speaker to move freely and address questions or comments as they arise.

# **IMPROVISE**

To improvise is to react only to the stimulus of the moment. Done successfully, it can be masterful performance art; at its worst, the speaker appears unprepared, lackadaisical, and unprofessional. The risk of failure is too great to recommend it.

Improvisation is most familiar to us from the world of comedy. But much of what passes for spur-of-themoment comedy is material that has been prepared



in advance. An experienced improviser calls upon a repertoire of canned "bits" that can be adapted to almost any situation—something to think about.

## **ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR**

David Greusel, AIA, is a principal of HOK Sport + Venue + Event, one of the leading experts in the field.

## **RESOURCES**

#### **More Best Practices**

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

03.01.03 Five Basic Presentation Formats

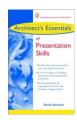
03.01.04 The Five Es of Effective Presentation

Delivery

03.01.12 How to Be "in the Moment"

# For More Information on This Topic

Architect's Essentials of Presentation Skills by David Greusel, AIA, can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending e-mail to bookstore@aia.org.



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## **Keywords**

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