

Developing Dynamic Presentations

*A Guide for
Hartford Foundation Grantees*



**A Presentation and Notes for
Bandwidth:
The Online Communications Resource
Of the John A. Hartford Foundation**

February 2007

A Word from the Bard

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one [person] in his time plays many parts...

William Shakespeare
As You Like It (Act II, Scene vii)

Effective communications and leadership are linked by performance.

Both require us to do something, hopefully well, in front of and with other people.

They require us, in a word, to perform.

In creating a more dynamic presentation or performance, therefore, there is the need to ensure you have the proper script (outline and associated talking points) and the proper setting (for our purposes here, the PowerPoint presentation).

Better presentations will...

- Improve your teaching
- Bolster the impact of your research
- Raise new funds
- Strengthen your job talks
- Help tell your family what it is you do.

There are multiple benefits to creating and conducting better talks.

They can help you in the classroom, support your efforts to push for changes in practice or policy that may come from your research or project, or they may bolster your ability to secure new dollars for that research or project, particularly with individual donors.

For researchers (and junior researchers in particular), they will certainly have an impact when you go looking for your next position.

And if you really focus hard on how you present your work, you may even be able to explain what you do to Aunt Gladys next Thanksgiving.

**What's
ahead**

1. Strategic preparation
2. Good openings
3. Solid structure
4. Powerful, visual slides
5. Strong endings

Today, we will briefly cover five key elements to a better presentation.

This kind of slide can be very helpful in that it serves to how you will structure your talk and help your listeners follow along.

It can also be helpful to forecast to your audience how long you expect to be talking. For example, you might say, "I will cover these topics in the next 15 minutes and then look forward to engaging in a conversation with you about my project." (Make sure to have questions at the ready for the audience if there are none immediately forthcoming.) Audiences appreciate knowing what's coming and if you can fulfill their expectation (and don't speak all the way through the Q and A, they will appreciate it even more.



Strategic Preparation

We're off. This slide (and others like it throughout) serve to separate the various sections of the talk. Again, this allows your audience to follow you along.

Strategic Preparation

- Know your objective.



In getting ready for a talk, you first need to know what you hope you will achieve in the presentation.

What are you trying to accomplish with this audience at this event?

What will be different as a result?

Will the group's attitudes or awareness be changed?

Will they have new knowledge, skills or abilities?

Will they agree to join in your work?

Will they give you money?

Know what you are aiming for before you begin.

Strategic Preparation

- Know your objective.
- Consider your audience.



Who will be in the audience?

Are there sub-groups or even an individual in particular you need to educate or persuade?

What do they think of you?

What do they think of your issue?

What are their values?

What moves them to action?

This is called audience analysis, and it is crucial for all communications, though sometimes difficult with a talk. You may know the audience and can answer the questions above, but perhaps you may not. It is important, however, to try to find out.

Before the talk, ask the conference or meeting organizers about who will attend (it may also be a good idea at the same time to find out how many people will be there, when the talk takes place in the context of the day, what the room is like and what A/V is available.). Ask them what they think the audience is expecting from your talk. In some cases, you may even be able to send an email out in advance of the meeting and ask participants what about your work they are most interested in.

The more you know (even it is not much), the better you can shape your talk and your message to connect to their expectations and values and meet their needs.

Strategic Preparation

- Know your objective.
- Consider your audience.
- Hone your message.



With your objective and audience clear, then you can hone your message.

A message is a clear, concise statement of what it is you are trying to get across in your talk. You may have more than one, but fewer is better. One is best. What is the one take-away you want people at the presentation to come away with? Be ruthlessly clear.

With a sense of that message, you may need to adapt your case and associated evidence according to the biases and knowledge of the audience.

In making this case, you must demonstrate the benefit, but not just any benefit of your research or project—the benefit or benefits that matter to your audience. Can the message appeal to peoples' heads and their hearts? Can it demonstrate credibility, connection to a broader cultural idea.

Once you are clear, you will want to try make that message sing, to make it memorable. You can do this using any number of poetic and rhetorical devices--alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm and repetition. Or you may have at your disposal, compelling statistics, facts, stories, metaphors that will make your message stick in the minds of your audience.

And finally, don't forget to test your message, if possible too. Nothing formal, but with friends, or best with people who represent your audience. Try it out in conversations. I like to get to the meeting early and eat lunch with some folks and test a few little parts of my talk over the dessert. Do people get it? Do they smile and get engaged? Do they glaze over? If not, I try to make some last minute adjustments.



We can't emphasize this enough. Tailoring your presentation to meet your audience's needs is crucial.

Statistics and graphs might be appropriate for an audience of researchers, but not for a lay audience. Be sure to use anecdotes and stories to illustrate your message, particularly for a lay audience or at a media briefing.

And remember the room and the time of day in which you will speak. If people have been sitting in a dark room for an hour before you start, think about structuring some kind of interaction or discussion throughout to keep people awake and focused.

2

Good Beginnings

Start Strong



Your audience will form some immediate impressions about you as you begin your talk, so make sure your opening is strong and practiced.

Elements of a Good Opening

- Connect to your audience
- Establish credibility
- Describe your objective
- Forecast time and structure

Jokes and stories may be helpful in getting an audience's attention, but they can also be distracting and even a down right disaster.

Some key elements of a good opening include:

Establishing contact with your audience. What is in it for them (again describe the benefit)? Use your opening to bring them in? In speaking to a group of junior faculty, you might connect with what matters to them and start with something like: "Today, I am going to talk to you about the critical elements of getting tenure in six years or less."

Next, you have to establish why you are the person to give this talk. You might talk about your credentials or your experience in the field. Better yet, ensure that the person introducing you establishes your credibility for you. Rather than giving them a CV or a two-page bio, write a short 1 minute intro, that your presenter can read to ensure that audience knows who they are about to hear.

Next tell them what your going to tell them, what Jerry Weissman in the very good book, *Presenting to Win*, calls point B. The audience is at Point A (uninterested, neutral, antagonistic to what you are about to say), Point B is where you want them to go (e.g., to be excited about the prospect of improving your presentations).

Finally, tell them how long it is going to take and how you are going to get there. As I noted earlier, this sets up an expectation, let's audience take pleasure in you fulfilling that expectation.

3

Solid Structure

Structuring Your Presentation

- Modular
- Chronological
- Spatial/Geographical
- Logical
- Problem-Solution



There are a variety of ways to organize or structure your presentation.

Again, the structure of a presentation helps your listener understand your argument and follow it along.

Modular – is a relatively weak structure, where you identify three areas or modules, with limited relationship to one another. It's not great, but it works in a pinch, and you can use it extemporaneously, say in a meeting. "I disagree with what Dr. Watson is saying for three reasons..."

Chronological structure is organized temporally. This presentation is organized in this way, starting with the beginning of the presentation process—strategic preparation and ending with, well Strong Endings.

Spatial/Geographical—If you have three research sites around the country, you might report results or stories from each in order from East to West or North to South.

Logical -- Here you can build your presentation like you would build a logical argument—either inductively –laying out your premise and then proving it, or deductively, laying out your evidence and ergo, your premise.

Problem-Solution—This often works well in a research context. You describe what the challenge is, how many people it is affecting, and other unsatisfactory efforts to respond, then you describe what you did to "solve" the problem.



Powerful, Visual Slides

Creating Powerful Slides

Consider what you have and...
throw most (but not all) of them
out.

Developing effective slides is not that difficult, but it will likely require you to think differently about how you use text and PowerPoint generally.

As you have seen from this presentation, I have used a dark background to improve readability and keep eyes focused on the "page."

A white background has a tendency to let the words "slide" off. I have also used divider pages to help break up the sections of the talk.

I have also varied where I place the images and bullets to provide visual interest.



Perhaps the most important idea to remember is to think images not text.

This is the slide John Beilenson uses to talk about diversity and aging. That we're all different as we age, that people age differently as well. It could also be a slide for some of the unintended consequences of the longevity revolution. He could just as easily have developed a set of bullets on this issue and laid them out, but the photo is much more effective. In fact, you can create the bullets, and then cut and paste them into your notes and find an image that conveys them effectively. Remember, you will be there to talk to the audience. They do not have to read what it is you are going to say.

The PowerPoint presentation should be the "Best Supporting Actor." One challenge with this approach is that the a print-out of your presentation can no longer be used as a leave-behind. Better to create a print out with the bullets as actual text or even better, create a separate hand-out that provides the background information more effectively.

Less is More.

Fewer lines are better.

Fewer bullets are better.

Fewer words are better.

Fewer images/charts and graphs are better.

Think of what is behind a newscasters when he talks about Iraq. A few words and images should support what you are saying, they shouldn't distract people from you. You are trying to connect with the audience. Don't let your slides get in the way.

Animation

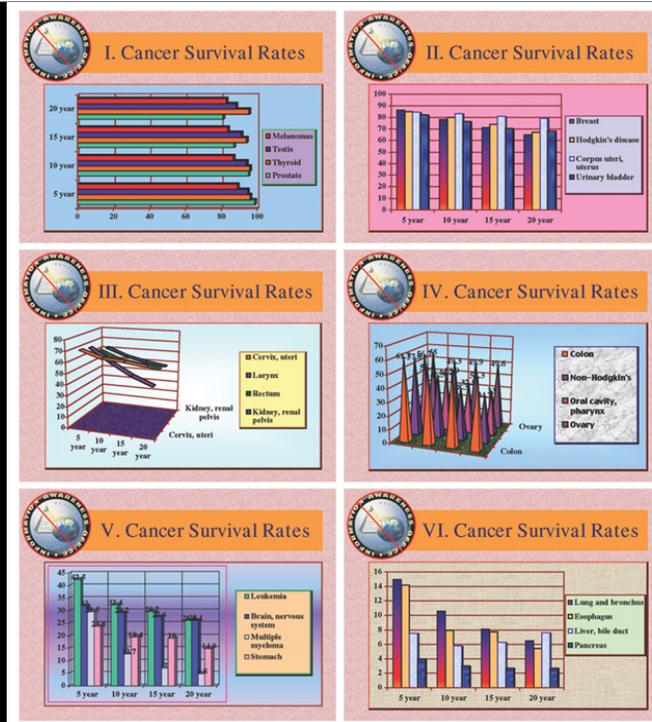
Too Much of a Good Thing?

A little bit of animation can be helpful.

We think it is particularly helpful to have one bullet at a time sweep in, so the audience doesn't jump ahead of you, but stays with you as you talk.

Of course, with PowerPoint, it is easy to go a little overboard, so avoid going for too many bells and whistles.

Check
your
charts



Edward Tufte, from Bulletin Board, www.edwardtufte.com

The default chart makers in Microsoft can yield disappointing results.

Look critically at the charts you have. Are the relevant details clear and readable?

Is the point you are trying to make from the chart or graph immediately clear.

If not, you may need to think about simplifying them for your presentation.

Check your tables

Cancer site	Relative survival rate, % (SE)			
	5 years	10 years	15 years	20 years
Oral cavity and pharynx	56.7 (1.3)	44.2 (1.4)	37.5 (1.6)	33.0 (1.8)
Oesophagus	14.2 (1.4)	7.9 (1.3)	7.7 (1.6)	5.4 (2.0)
Stomach	23.8 (1.3)	19.4 (1.4)	19.0 (1.7)	14.9 (1.9)
Colon	61.7 (0.8)	55.4 (1.0)	53.9 (1.2)	52.3 (1.6)
Rectum	62.6 (1.2)	55.2 (1.4)	51.8 (1.8)	49.2 (2.3)
Liver and intrahepatic bile duct	7.5 (1.1)	5.8 (1.2)	6.3 (1.5)	7.6 (2.0)
Pancreas	4.0 (0.5)	3.0 (0.5)	2.7 (0.6)	2.7 (0.8)
Larynx	68.8 (2.1)	56.7 (2.5)	45.8 (2.8)	37.8 (3.1)
Lung and bronchus	15.0 (0.4)	10.6 (0.4)	8.1 (0.4)	6.5 (0.4)
Melanomas	89.0 (0.8)	86.7 (1.1)	83.5 (1.5)	82.8 (1.9)
Breast	86.4 (0.4)	78.3 (0.6)	71.3 (0.7)	65.0 (1.0)
Cervix uteri	70.5 (1.6)	64.1 (1.8)	62.8 (2.1)	60.0 (2.4)
Corpus uteri and uterus, NOS	84.3 (1.0)	83.2 (1.3)	80.8 (1.7)	79.2 (2.0)
Ovary	55.0 (1.3)	49.3 (1.6)	49.9 (1.9)	49.6 (2.4)
Prostate	98.8 (0.4)	95.2 (0.9)	87.1 (1.7)	81.1 (3.0)
Testis	94.7 (1.1)	94.0 (1.3)	91.1 (1.8)	88.2 (2.3)
Urinary bladder	82.1 (1.0)	76.2 (1.4)	70.3 (1.9)	67.9 (2.4)
Kidney and renal pelvis	61.8 (1.3)	54.4 (1.6)	49.8 (2.0)	47.3 (2.6)
Brain and other nervous system	32.0 (1.4)	29.2 (1.5)	27.6 (1.6)	26.1 (1.9)
Thyroid	96.0 (0.8)	95.8 (1.2)	94.0 (1.6)	95.4 (2.1)
Hodgkin's disease	85.1 (1.7)	79.8 (2.0)	73.8 (2.4)	67.1 (2.8)
Non-Hodgkin lymphomas	57.8 (1.0)	46.3 (1.2)	38.3 (1.4)	34.3 (1.7)
Multiple myeloma	29.5 (1.6)	12.7 (1.5)	7.0 (1.3)	4.8 (1.5)
Leukaemias	42.5 (1.2)	32.4 (1.3)	29.7 (1.5)	26.2 (1.7)

Rates derived from SEER 1973-98 database (both sexes, all ethnic groups).¹⁷
NOS—not otherwise specified.

Table 4: **Most recent period estimates of relative survival rates, by cancer site**

Edward Tufte, from Bulletin Board,
www.edwardtufte.com

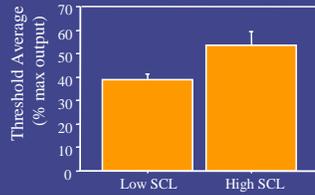
Similarly with a table—there is a lot of information here, but it may be hard for the audience to focus on the data point you are most interested in. Can you simplify something like this and then use color to highlight the one or two pieces of information you will actually talk about?

Edward Tufte is an excellent resource on this topic. (See: <https://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/index>)

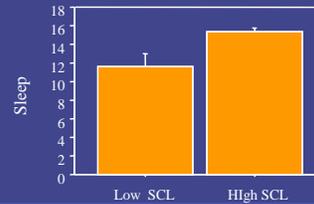
2) ALERTNESS STUDY: 16 subjects (9 high SCL, 7 low SCL) participated in Alertness pilot study
*SCL=Starbucks Caffeine Level

Key Finding: Alertness may be increased in subjects with high SCL

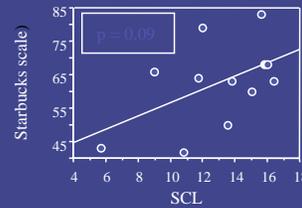
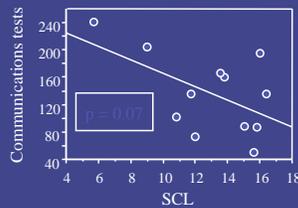
Difference in Alertness between subjects with and without high SCL Volumes ($p = 0.02$, $R^2 = 0.27$ for averaged Right and Left Hemispheres).



Difference in Sleep between subjects with and without high MRI SCL Volumes ($R^2 = 0.41$, $p = 0.02$).



Key Finding: There is a trend of increased alertness associated with better attention to PowerPoint presentations on communications skills. In a regression analysis, increased alertness may be related to better performance on the a) communications tests ($R^2 = 0.3$) and b) Starbucks scale ($R^2 = 0.264$). Similarly, lower alertness was related to slower performance on Reaction Time test ($R^2 = 0.23$, $p = 0.069$).



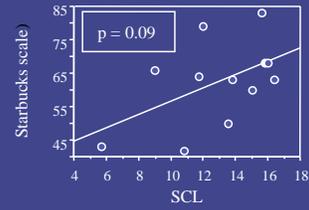
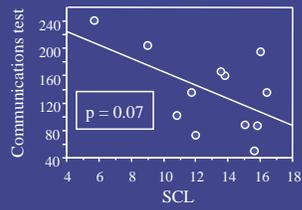
Here are a few examples of before and after slides:

This one is obviously too busy and likely not one slide, but two and perhaps four.

There is way too much text and the type sizes are way too small.

Alertness Pilot Study

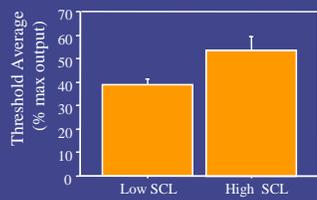
Increased alertness associated with SCL.



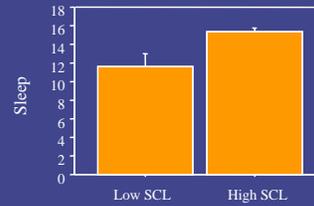
This is simpler and better, and then you can fill in the details through your talk.

Alertness Pilot Study

Increased alertness may be associated with better attention to PowerPoint presentations on [communications skills](#).



Attention to PowerPoint



Alertness

Keep them readable.

JAHF Geriatric Nursing Initiatives

- The JAHF Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training (GITT) Program (1995) at New York University (NYU)
- The JAHF Institute for Geriatric Nursing (1996) at NYU
- The JAHF Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity (2000) at the American Academy of Nursing
- The JAHF Geriatric Nursing Education Project (2001) at the American Association of Colleges of Nursing
- The JAHF Nursing School Geriatric Investment Program (2001) at AAN
- Creating Careers in Geriatric Advanced Practice Nursing (2001) at AACN

Also, if you have to use text, try to avoid putting too much on a single slide.

JAHF Geriatric Nursing Initiatives 1995-2001

- Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training Program (NYU)
- Institute for Geriatric Nursing (NYU)
- Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity (AAN)
- Nursing School Geriatric Investment Program (AAN)
- Creating Careers in Geriatric Advanced Practice Nursing (AACN)

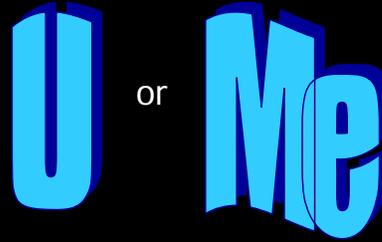
Simplify!

Lesson 2.

- Never make an



out of



Finally, using graphics can be helpful, but try to remember there is a difference between tongue and cheek and just obnoxious—as this slide from an actual presentation suggests.

5

Strong Endings

Finish Strong



Just as the beginning of a talk is crucial, so is the end. It is the last thing they hear from you, so make it memorable, or at least clear.

Make sure to remind the audience about your main message or takeaway. Tell them what you told them.

Or in Jerry Weissman's terms, re-emphasize point B—where you hope your audience is now that you have made your case. Re-connect with the audience, make the last sentence or two about them.

And finally, if possible can you find an image/quote that leaves them feeling "Ooh...Ahh," one that is both on message and has real emotional appeal.



A Final Word from FDR

Be sincere.
Be brief...
Be seated.

This last quote from one of our great Presidents, who knew a thing or two about how to make a powerful and persuasive presentation.