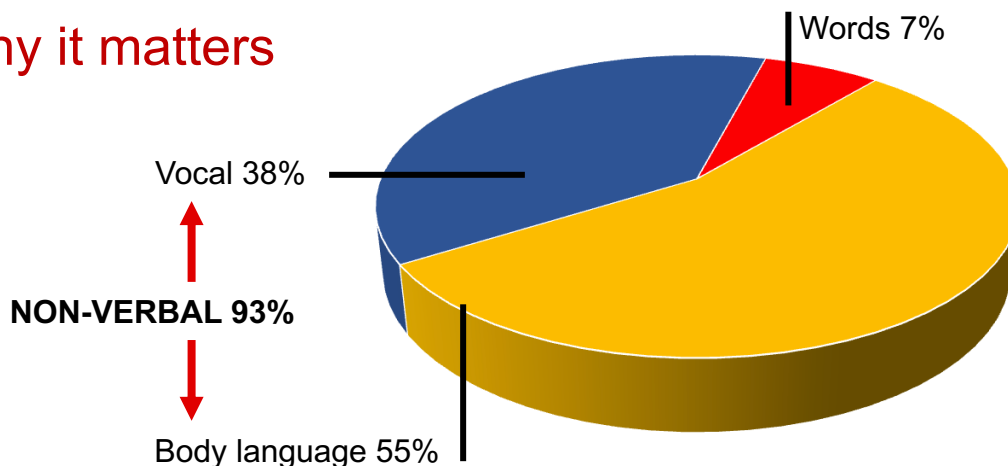


How to say it

After all the preparation, it is now down to you!

The moment arrives, you have prepared as well as you could have done, you have written content that fits well with your audience, you know what they want to hear and what information or inspiration you want them to go away with. Timings are sorted, any slides or handouts are ready, and you have practiced over and over again. Still, there is nothing like that moment when all eyes turn and there is no going back. Nerves start, but then again, what could possibly go wrong!

Why it matters



Start strong

We mentioned it with regard to the content, but consider it from the perspective of delivery. Before you even open your mouth, your audience has an impression of you and what you are going to say.



Diana Safieh speaking at Ascalon Preceptory 2023

Get them engaged from the start.

Consider a favourite TV crime or medical drama series. They may start with the crime, or the accident – e.g. someone is out jogging, they come across a body, or may be attacked etc. someone calls the police or the ambulance. They turn up and then you are hooked - you are engaged. Then, **ONLY THEN**, do they play the theme song and you see the credits! Just like the show, you may want to do the same at the start of your presentation – for everyone's benefit.

Make sure it is a good one. Walk to your spot, or if you are already there and sitting ready, then stand up to welcome your audience to your talk. They need to know that you are now starting and that you are controlling the narrative, **so be confident**. As for that walk, don't show up with a hunched back, with no body movement, no eye contact and don't start with a trembling voice, you will make your task considerably uphill. Walk swiftly, move around, gestures (all within reason of course) and this will help you appear more confident. Keep yourself upright with a good posture, smile and try to relax.

You will look more confident. You will feel more confident.

9 out of 10 speakers start with their theme song and credits – *“Hi, I’m John and I’m very pleased to be here..... and on and on....”* It is a couple of minutes before they have said anything interesting. It provides a great opportunity for the audience to check their phones or make plans for the weekend. They know who you are from the Summons or the invitation, you don't have to tell them immediately.

So consider the following to help you feel confident, get a reaction and get off on the right foot. You will get immediate feedback – and that helps you settle. They are engaged.

1

Your hook

A story, an analogy, a metaphor, a shocking statistic, a question. See the document – Presenting Pointers - What to Say.

2

Transition to the topic

Bridge the gap between the hook and what you are going to talk about. Perhaps, *“This story illustrates....”*

3

An introduction about yourself

Provide something interesting about yourself that is relevant to your topic. You can build on your credibility throughout the presentation. Then preview the subject etc.

Now you are ready to go!

What do you look like?

You need to dress appropriately. Sounds obvious, but that doesn't always mean your idea of smart! It isn't always a suit and tie, consider your audience. It may be that your presentation is part of their meeting – make sure you know the tone, show respect – and never be afraid to ask what would be considered appropriate. Whatever level it is, turn yourself out well, feel comfortable and make sure it is simply one less thing to worry about.

Engage your audience, they want to hear from you

Show up and be willing to give!

You know something, you've seen something, you've done something, you've tried something that someone else thinks others need to hear, that's why they have invited you to speak.

Simon Sinek

Authenticity engages

Be yourself – an audience can feel 'realness'. Listen to yourself and your own reasoning **FIRST**, in order to deliver a message that informs and inspires. Show your enthusiasm for your topic, it will come across. It will also help you be more **relatable**. Don't let it get out of hand though, e.g. if you are describing a medical procedure undergone by a patient, but most presenters show too little rather than too much.

Your passion sells your ideas and your stories, and remember: **PEOPLE BUY PEOPLE.**

Facial expressions

People will travel half-way around the world to meet people 'face to face'. What we do with our face is key. Be expressive. Smile and be interested. Unless you are Buster Keaton, deadpan is rarely dynamic. Generally, keep your facial expressions in line with your words.

Eye contact

Just like facial expressions, making and sustaining eye contact with your audience is crucial. It will depend on the size of your room and your audience. Some general tips:

Make sure you look at everyone

Staring at the same spot can be dull and unengaging. By the end of the presentation, make sure you have made eye contact with everyone at least once – either individually or every section if you have a large audience. Don't stare at the ceiling (you can look just over the heads of people in a back row of a large audience) or at the floor. If you want a strong connection from time to time - look at someone long enough to finish a thought – one thought, one look.

Don't be afraid, but...

Powerful and prolonged eye contact can make people nervous. Perhaps a brief glance rather than a determined stare!

Gestures

Varied facial expressions, good eye contact may seem a little odd without any movement in the rest of your body. However, over-rehearsed or exaggerated hand gestures can be off putting or look unnatural. Getting any gestures right is important. Remember that they are there to help to make your message clearer. Simple ideas such as emphasising big and small or when giving a numbered list – you can show the numbers with your hand so that both people's eyes and ears are engaged.

They can also be used for word emphasis, not every sentence or paragraph, but key words. If you are using words like 'amazing', 'awesome', 'outstanding' etc. then you can emphasise that key word by slowing down the sentence and pronouncing the word clearly and with an appropriate hand gesture.

Movement

This is often one of the most talked about points and there are many good points on either side of the question: “Should I walk around or not?”

Where you are matters and can you do that at all. A small venue where they have expected you to say a few words from your dinner seat can make it a little harder, equally if you are on a big stage or within an area of a temple, a little movement can help to create visual interest, create energy and keep different parts of the audience engaged, though constant movement becomes a distraction and can make you seem nervous.

THE GOLDEN RULE

ANY MOVEMENT SHOULD BE
CLEAR AND DIRECTED.
DON'T WANDER AIMLESSLY

There are times when it helps – if you are asking a question: “*How many of you...*” “*Can anyone tell me...*”. will all benefit from you moving forwards a little and help to engage them in the moment. An audience prefers you to talk **to** them, rather than **at** them. Perhaps change your position on stage when you change your topic!

Stand still when introducing a new topic. It adds a point of reference, drama and seriousness and an audience will pay more attention to that message. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, perhaps the one furthest from the centre slightly in front of the other to turn you inwards a little and try to relax your shoulders. Generally, don't put your hands in your pockets.

An anchor point

Divide your area into left, centre and right and make sure you devote an equal time to each. Sometimes, you will find that you take a few paces from your comfort point and then take the same steps backwards to that **same** point and then step off again in another direction. Be conscious of this in your rehearsals and if necessary, tone it down.

Swaying

You may be surprised when you watch yourself back if someone has videoed you – just how much you sway, rock on the spot or move from one foot to the other! It takes practice to stay still, make gestures and still look relaxed, but it can be done and is so much easier when you realise exactly what you are doing.

Mannerisms

Many involve movement of some kind so try and realise that you do it, ask friends for feedback if you do it at all – fiddling with a pen or your hair, chewing gum, always touching your nose, putting your hands in your pockets, pulling your cuffs etc. etc. People do have a tendency to speed up under pressure so include the pauses in your notes. If you build it into your content, it will be natural and you will find that you are less likely to fill it with the vocal mannerisms of “umm”, “err” etc.

Slow down and breathe

This is obvious, but remember to allow time in your content for you to breathe properly. It is discussed in the other Presenting Pointers relating to timings and preparation but when it comes to Delivery, then make sure that it becomes ‘your’ time. At the end of a key message - pause. Look up, look at your audience, make eye contact and take a slow deep breaths. You own the time. Also remember to take time to take slow deep breaths before you start.

Visuals can be a pain and a benefit

Again, there are pros and cons. Visuals can enhance a presentation, make statistics clearer, provide impact but can just as easily be a distraction if you don’t use them well and add to the problems you have to consider. For example, it is all too easy to expect the PowerPoint presentation to do your job for you. You put all the information on to the slide, put it up in the presentation, then repeat it out loud for those that can’t be bothered to read it! You end up being dull, you lose connection, the audience doesn’t know where to look, you or the slide or they are ahead of you and read faster than you can read and speak! To read, you need to look at the slide – you may now have your back to the audience or you start spinning like a figure from the start of Trumpton! If it is a flip chart – you may find yourself hanging from it like a bored orang-utang.

None of this is good if you don’t know how to use it, so use with caution and think about it seriously.

Your voice

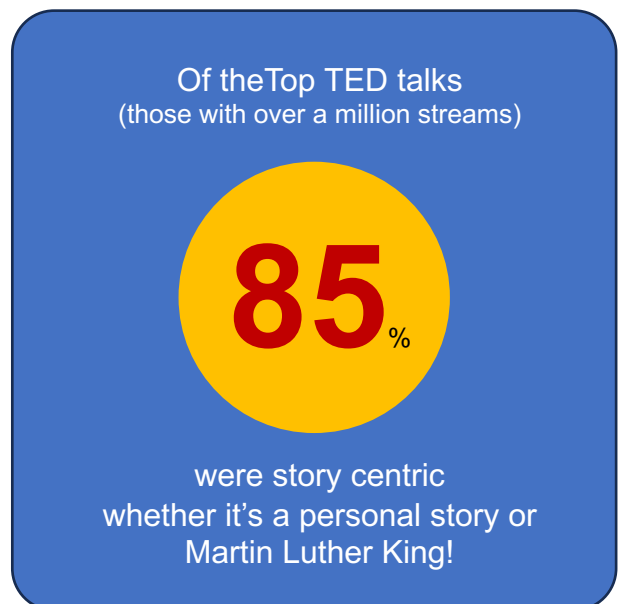
There are many videos and documents on this, you need to be able to be clear, never shout and practice being able to be heard at the back! The more you practice, the better this all comes together. Think of delivering ritual. So often, the ones you enjoy most, are the ones that have been delivered well – not necessarily the ones that have been remembered best.

Add intonation, regulate the speed for it to be the best pace you think it should be, relax and go for it. There may be foreign names or places to pronounce, speak clearly and practice how to say them. Don't practice with: *"I mustn't say X, I mustn't say X."*

Stories

Your delivery is really down to you. Your own style, what you feel comfortable doing and it will always incorporate your own strengths and weaknesses and be different from anybody else's. One thing that helps people come across more like themselves is when they start to tell a story, particularly one where they are involved – that anecdote normally saved for a party. That is what comes across well when you can harness it, and after all, stories can be fun to deliver.

A story gives you power. It is a powerful way of sending a message. Most people think in terms of pictures and a story has the ability to paint a picture. Never tell a story without making a point and if possible, never make a point without telling a story.



Stories can come across well, but don't get side-tracked or they become long winded and you start to ramble.

When it doesn't all go to plan

No matter what, there are times when things don't go to plan or you find it slipping away from you. It doesn't mean it is your fault, but it probably means that you have to cope with it. If this is something completely out of your control, one way is to be fluid and go with the flow – if you have SITUATIONAL AWARENESS, the audience will be on your side. I have had a fluorescent light fitting crash loudly to the floor at the back of the audience; and most entertainingly, once a panicked, lost goose come into a local function hall. I can assure you, both events are very disruptive. They are rarely that dramatic, but make a point of it, don't ignore it and certainly don't pretend it didn't happen. Keep that situational awareness and it will help create a closer relationship with the audience – it is a shared experience, we are all in this together!

Nerves

It is all too easy to let nerves get the better of us. It then becomes a small vicious circle. You forget a word or two, but you think everyone in the audience must have noticed, you panic a little, your hands start to shake and your mouth goes dry. You take a sip of water but the glass is shaking and you think everyone in the audience has noticed that too... and so on. But there are some steps you can take.

- **Pause**, just as before, take a deep breath, look at your audience for a moment, don't look away or ignore them. Then check your notes and get back on to what you wanted to say.
- **Gently bite the side of your tongue.** When you go dry, water doesn't always help at first, but saliva does. It will stop your mouth going dry. When everything has calmed down and you are back on track, then pause and take a sip of water with calm hands.
- **Put your paper down.** Don't start by holding a few sheets of paper. The chances are, they will shake a little, always try and have something nearby to put them on that you can see.
- **Let your practice kick in.** You have gone over it plenty of times and you know what is coming up, so all you have to do is get to that point. Stay confident, so even if you have to apologise, do so, then look at the message you wanted to deliver, say it and then you will be back on track.

- **Stay bold.** Generally, the nerves come from a fear. Fear of an opinion of others, fear of being criticized, fear of not being good enough, fear of tripping up on a word, fear of what you look like. Fear drives most of us. Defeat this with being a little more bold, audacious even. Be bold to give a speech that lasts,

You can't half step into a presentation, so even if you find you have lost your way and have to restart – do so with purpose and audacity.

- **You aren't always going to please everyone.** Accept it. The chances are that someone is not going to be as captivated as you wanted them to be. Keep the general reaction of the whole audience in mind. If someone starts to look at their phone, don't try to highlight it and call them out. Also, and probably more importantly, don't go overboard and try to spend every moment convincing that one person of every key message you give, and start hoping you get affirmative nods and smiles at every turn from them. Keep it in perspective. Not everyone thinks the same way.

There was a conference I was speaking at and another person from my company was there with me. At the end of the day's talks, there were free bacon rolls and a bottle of beer for those taking part. I was obviously pleased and said – *"Let's get our roll and beer."* He said, *"The queue is long, it'll take a while, I won't bother."* I said, *"It's free bacon rolls and a beer, come on!"* in a slightly higher voice. He said *"The queues too long and it'll be ages, count me out"*. This went back and forth for a while and I after I had eaten, I realised that not everyone thinks the same way. We both like bacon rolls and beer, but there are people who see what it is that they want and others that see what it is that is preventing them from getting it. It can be the same with your audience, there may be someone who has a different opinion regarding the hospital and its work which could be political, religious or even location based. Stay focused and stay on track.