



For project managers, the ability to communicate effectively with senior executives is often a key asset (or impediment) to career advancement. This session will thus focus on how you can represent your project more effectively while enhancing our own preparedness for leadership. We'll highlight common problems, useful formats, presentation skills, and decision modeling from vice presidents and above.

Executive Communication Skills

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Agenda

Part 1: You and the C-Suite environment

Significance, style, and surprise

Part 2: Anticipating Challenges

Common, destructive, and predictable

Part 3: Presentations that work

Rules, guidelines, and success stories

Alone

“There are two times when you are alone in life: one is when you die, and the other is when you present to senior management.”

- Rick Wallace

Failures

67% of presenters march into top-level meetings and shoot themselves in the foot by:

1. not saying what they want at the beginning
2. having too many PowerPoint slides
3. rigidly sticking to their scripts.

This is a formula for career suicide.

The good news is, the rules are simple and easy to learn:

1. know the people
2. get to the point; and
3. improvise.

"You have to literally throw out everything you learned from traditional presentation training. It's not about making a speech that educates, persuades, inspires, or leads. It's about raw decision making."



C-Suite environment



- Data driven, impatient, aggressive, time-pressured, intimidating
- Brief average tenure

Anticipating Challenges

1. Time Cut
2. Disengaged Executives
3. Food Fight
4. Decision Maker Leaves
5. Topic Change
6. Side Talk
7. Energetic Discussion

1. Time Cut

- Expect to get your time cut
- Know your goals for the meeting and your bottom line
- Come prepared with a much shorter version of your presentation
- Be prepared with an elevator pitch
- Choose three slides that will deliver your message
- Be ready to let go of your rehearsed script and go immediately to your bottom line

2. Disengaged Executives

- Don't make assumptions about what's happening
- Read the room and take action
- Re-engage with a question
- Do a process check confirming the value of the topic
- Enlist your sponsor's help

3. Food fight

- Present with executive presence
- Listen for the issues
- Move toward the group
- Handle objections
- Do a process check
- If all else fails, engage your sponsor

4. Decisionmaker leaves

- Read the room
- Focus on the decision maker
- Ask the decision maker what to do as he or she is getting up to leave
- Check with the group about what to do if the decision maker hasn't made it clear

5. Topic Change

- Acknowledge the topic change
- Handle objections
- Get help from your sponsor
- Agree to follow up

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6. Side Talk

- Do not use direct confrontation
- Politely re-engage
- Appeal to your sponsor

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7. Energetic Discussion

- Listen well
- Capture the issues
- Accept executive input
- Outline the next steps

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Anticipating Challenges overview

1. Time Cut: Have an elevator pitch
2. Disengaged Executives: Do a process check
3. Food Fight: Get help from your sponsor
4. Decision Maker Leaves: Ask for a decision
5. Topic Change: Confirm agenda/check with sponsor
6. Side Talk: Politely re-engage
7. Energetic Discussion: Don't miss anything

Approaches that work

Go beyond mere anticipation of issues to develop content and style that will anticipate needs and garner interest.

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Key Takeaways

- Start with a confirmation of time and topic
- State your "First Line, Bottom Line" and ROI
- Provide reasons for your "ask"
- Review the agenda
- Introduce key points and supporting data
- Expect dialogue and discussion
- Summarize and restate your "First Line, Bottom Line"
- Agree on next steps
- Use data rather than stories
- Follow up with key decision makers
- Remember, it's a discussion rather than a presentation

Framework for the Elevator Pitch: PREP

Position (bottom line)

One sentence: what you want and the Return On Investment (ROI)

Reason (key point)

Brief description: Why your bottom line is important to the company.

Evidence (data)

Brief description: one piece of evidence or example supporting your case.

Position (bottom line)

One sentence: repeat what you want.

R.E.A.D. strategy

Read the room

Evaluate the situation based on nonverbal input.

Acknowledge what is happening and ask for direction.

Determine next steps\

Process Interventions

- Half the group is texting, reading emails, talking on phones, or eyes glazed over.
 - Process response: "Let me stop for a moment. It looks like I've lost the room. Is this still an important topic? Do you think we're moving in the right direction?"
- The conversation turns confrontational with the executives attacking each other.
 - Process response, to your sponsor: "Jon, I'm concerned we're getting a bit off track. What should we do?"
- The key decision maker gets up and heads for the door.
 - Process response: "Excuse me Ms. CEO, I see that you have to leave. Should I stop and wait for you to come back, or do you want me to continue?"

Deep Listening



- Paraphrasing:
"You're concerned about fuel costs, is that it?"
- Question behind the Question: "Fuel costs can bring up more troubling issues about our stock price, and maybe even our future profitability."
- Moving the Agenda Forward: "Since we agree that I'll get you the documentation on our vendor's commitment, are we ready to consider the next agenda item?"

Preparing for Success

Facilitation, listening, and improvisation are key to keeping an executive audience engaged during a fast-paced, top-level meeting. In addition, a lot of preparation will mean the difference between success and failure:

- Do extensive homework on who will be there
- Use a coach
- Do a dry run
- Coordinate with your sponsor before, during, and after the meeting
- Keep your virtual sponsor in the loop

- Standard advice about public speaking: Open with something shocking and memorable, have strong eye contact, use big gestures, use stories, use strong vocal projection, etc.
- However, when you're a guest at a time-pressured, top-level decision meeting, this advice, which works so well at lower levels, could be a career killer with senior executives.
- What do you do instead? Answer: develop a new strategy based on the people, the presentation, and improvisation.

Get to the Point

You have 30 seconds to get to the point. First provide a conclusion.

- Today I am requesting \$10M* for our new marketing plan for Asia for this fiscal year.“

"You can hold off telling me what you want, and start by giving me data, data, data and I'll start poking holes in your data because I don't know where you're trying to take me. But if you tell me up front where you're trying to go, I can listen in the places that I think matter as opposed to challenging you about everything."

Style Tips

- Stand next to the screen, not at the computer. This says, "I'm fully engaged in what I'm presenting."
- Use a remote mouse to advance your slides. This gives you freedom to move around the room and not be tied to your computer.
- Use a mechanical pointer. Laser pointers are popular because they seem cool. Actually most audiences don't like them.
- Use the dual screen/notes function.
- Use the "B" key to make the screen go blank.

Five Second Rule

- 5 Second Rule. Venture capitalist Vinod Khosla has what he calls the "Five Second Rule." Khosla shows a slide for five seconds, turns it off and asks the viewer what it was about. If the viewer can't recall, the slide is a failure.
- Finally, send slides in advance. Prevents a free for all.

Non Verbal Communications

- Look 'em directly in the eyes.
- Use long pauses and lots of vocal variety.
- Use descriptive gestures that are up and out, away from your body.
- To own your space, move with purpose at transitions in your presentation, then plant your feet.
- Keep visual aids to a minimum, but when you do use them, stand next to the screen and point to what you are talking about with a mechanical pointer. (Avoid the laser.)
- Use the 'B' key to shift focus and to increase your interaction with the audience.

APPENDIX

Normal Presentation Environment

DAY TO DAY PRESENTATIONS

The People

- Audience of ordinary people
- Audience has no power over you

The Presentation

- You set the time and other parameters
- Stories and self-disclosure valued
- Opening up to you
- Handouts at the beginning
- Content up to you
- You put Q&A at the end If you prefer
- Can tolerate, though may not like long PPT presentations
- On your own for rehearsal and content review

The Process

- Process concerns rarely matter
- You are in charge
- You are the main event
- May not need Interaction
- It is a presentation
- Timing may be loose
- Controlling audience problems is your job

Not A Normal Presentation Environment

SENIOR EXECUTIVE PRESENTATIONS

The People

- Audience of time-pressured Type 'A' drivers
- Audience can fire or promote you

The Presentation

- They set and / or cut your time at will
- Stories and self-disclosure dangerous
- Make your first line your bottom line
- Handouts at the end
- Content tightly connected to company's financial success
- Q&A happens from the start
- Will not tolerate long PPT presentations
- Use other senior mentors and coaches to help review content and to rehearse

The Process

- Ability to understand and use process critical
- You are not In charge
- You are a guest at their meeting
- Interaction highly prized
- It is a "framed discussion"
- Time constrained environment
- Controlling audience problems Is their job

Types of Business Presentations

Type	Audience	Audience Focus	Visual Aids	Stories vs Data	Emotion vs Logic	Humor	Timing	Audience Participation
Speech	Community, associations / professional groups	Moderate	Rare	Heavy stories	More emotion	Yes	Short: 20 min.	Little
Standard Internal Presentation	Management peers, subordinates	Low to moderate	Heavy	Stories and data	Emotion and logic	Maybe	Long: 45 - 60 min.	Some
Senior Executive Presentation	Senior executives	High focus and engagement	Few	Data	Logic	Dangerous	Variable, Usually short Time gets cut	Very heavy discussion

Table 12.1 Types of Business Presentations



Speaking Up can make a real difference.

- What should they do if their time is unexpectedly cut short?
- How will they respond if their executive audience seems distracted?
- If executives stray off topic, should they try to steer them back?
- How will they keep their composure under rapid-fire questioning?

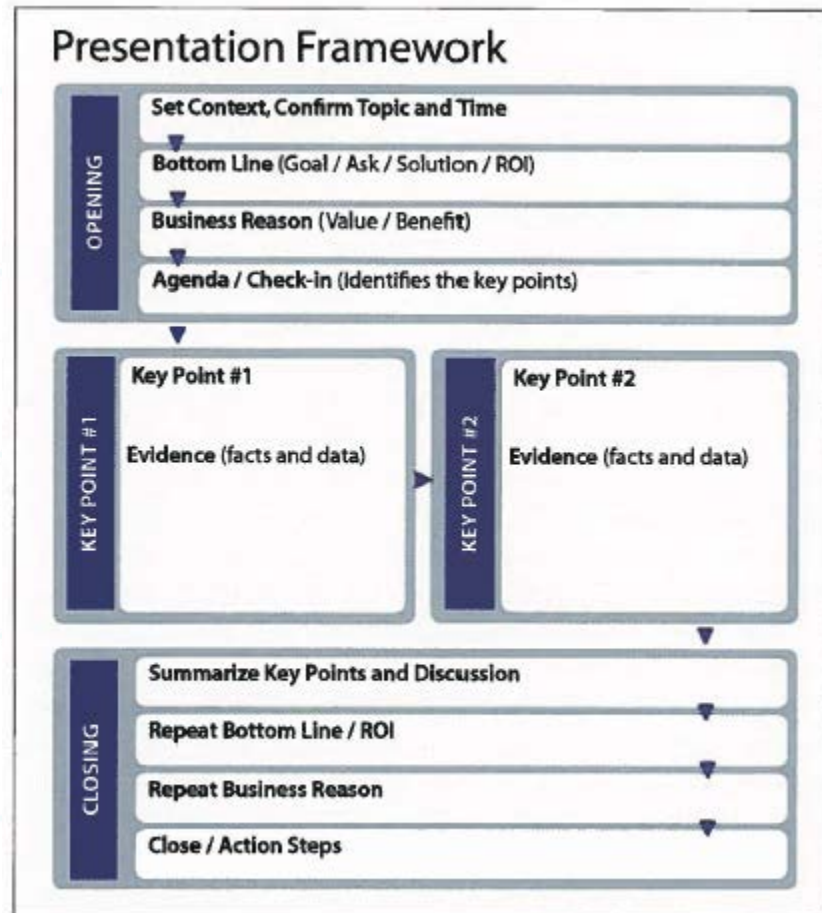


Figure 12.1 Presentation Framework

P101. Presentation Framework. Can be downloaded from <http://www.powerspeaking.com/files/pdfISEP Framework.pdf>



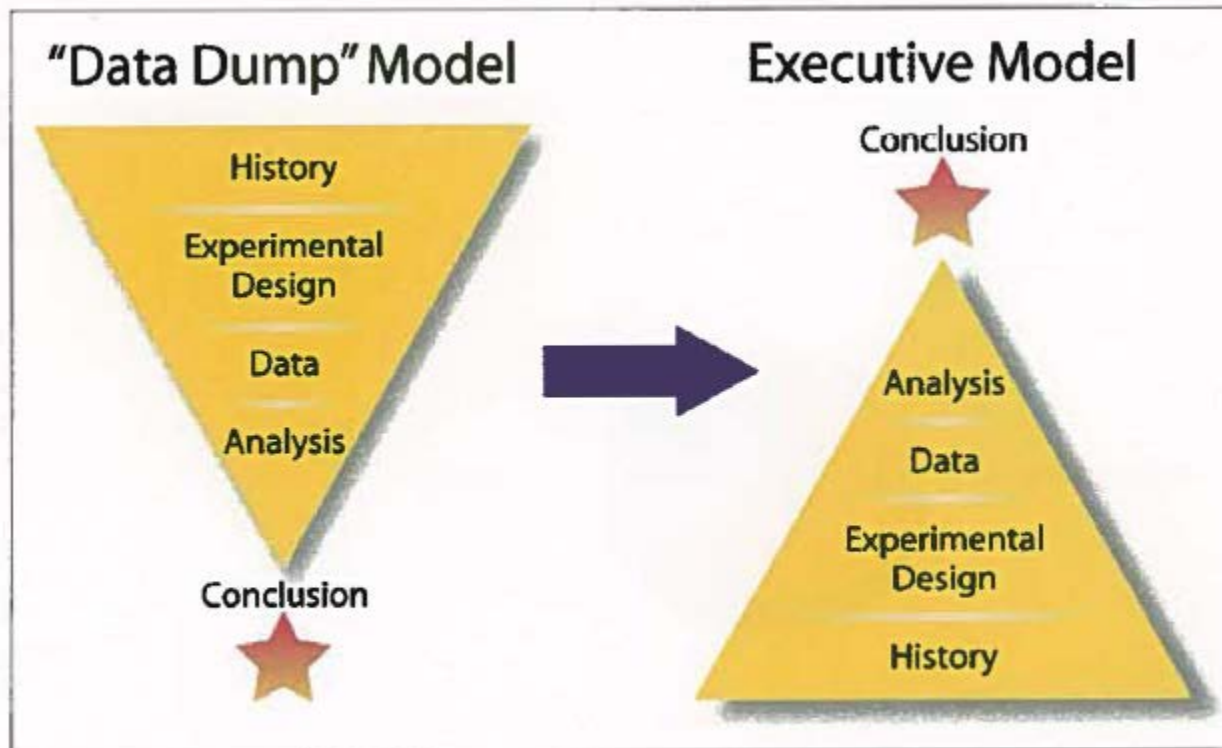


Figure 12.2 Data Dump vs. Executive Model

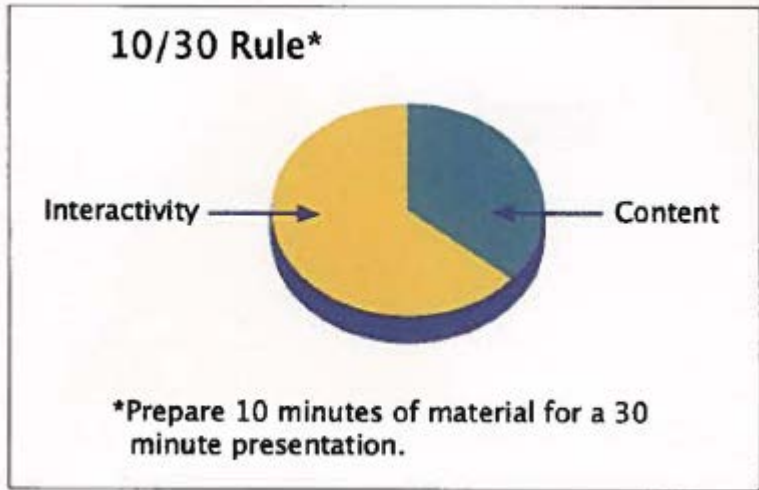


Figure 12.3 The 10/30 Rule

Not Covered in this Presentation

Additional presentation skills needed:

- How to research personalities, sponsorship, and meeting strategies in advance.
- How to develop a focused bottom line as the foundation for each presentation.
- How to construct a well-organized framework for approval from executives.
- How to convey the big picture while providing focus on the critical issues.
- How to refine their improvisational skills and active listening skills.
- How to remain calm and masterful during intense, challenging scenarios.