

What does it take to deliver high impact presentations?



Can you answer these questions?

1. When the audience hear your presentation without interrupting and without asking questions, what does that silence mean?
2. Doing good work is as important as being seen as doing good work. Do you agree with this statement? If so, what would be the key skills to make this happen?
3. We speak before we speak. And, after we speak we have not spoken. Is this possible?
4. What are the elements of a successful presentation?

Can you solve these two problems?

- a. On a busy Monday afternoon, Dan is getting ready for his weekly review. He has 20 slides to talk his boss through. And he has 20 minutes. "One minute per slide is good enough" he told his secretary colleague Lucy. She did not seem interested.. "Will the Boss give you that kind of time? In the last three reviews, you said you never got more than three minutes. You said everyone over runs their time, and when it comes to your presentation in the end, the Boss is always in a hurry. All my hard work goes a waste". Dan was just packing up for the presentation. He left saying "Good for us, Lucy. Lesser the questions the better. We can keep doing our thing". Lucy smiled to herself "I think you are losing his attention, Dan.. Why don't you understand? How can I tell you this in so many words?" Who do you think was right.. Dan or Lucy?

- b. John just finished his presentation on Project Green. His CEO smiled, and said "Thank you.. I will come back to you on the next steps. Leave me with Claire & Mathews please".

In his one hour presentation, John had detailed the opportunities and risks associated with the project. His colourful slides and dramatic videos had his 20 strong audience nod their heads. In the end there were two questions which John answered in his detailed style. Yet, CEO was not clear, turned to CFO Mathews – "Please ask Confident Consulting to study the work done by Swarup and his team, and make their recommendations. This will delay the project by a few weeks.. I will have a problem convincing the Board.. I have to face it. I will".

He then looked at Claire "Can you get people in this company to make better presentations, please?" Claire responded... "You mean run them through a PowerPoint Presentations Training Program?" CEO did not hide her irritation... "It is much more than that, Claire". What do you think CEO meant by that?

Have you ever wondered why some presenters are impactful?

Is it their 'presence'? Is it the voice? or language? Or the story?

Presentations that leave a lasting impact, require many elements to be woven together. A high impact presentation is a winning blend of Substance and Style.

Like an enchanting tapestry. It delights us. It makes you think...fills you with energy and conviction.

How important is this skill?

Research indicates that the people with good speaking, listening and interpreting skills are more influential than those without these skills. This is not surprising. The need for proficiency in delivering High Impact Presentations has always been there. And this need has been and will be felt increasingly in our workplaces. The reasons are obvious to an observant eye:

- As digital technology pervades our lives, our attention spans are reducing. To a presenter, this makes it even more challenging to sustain audience interest.
- Increasing competitiveness in Organisations demands the ability to present well-crafted solutions with confidence and verve.
- Employees want leaders who persuade, motivate, energise and influence.
- Leaders take decisions based on the facts of the case AND the way it is presented to them

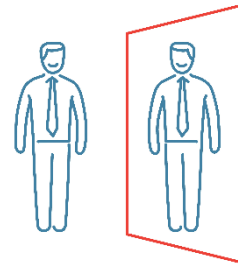
So proficiency in delivering High Impact Presentations is in effect, an imperative for ALL. High Impact Presentation is a core skill and gives the presenter that slight edge that makes a huge difference in audience acceptance.

Obviously to cultivate the skill of making high impact presentations, one must want to do this well, and want to enjoy doing it.



Here are the six elements of successful High Impact Presentations

1. **Self-awareness:** Understand your personality, build winning strategies around your strengths. Ask yourself – Am I people-centric? Do I share information with openness and generosity? Am I ready to be challenged? Am I mindful? Am I in the highest state of concentration?



2. **Preparation & Practice:** Behind every powerful public speaker and presenter, there is tireless effort.

Material is garnered with care, structured neatly, and the entire body is strung together with sign posts making content seamless and audience-centric.

There is a tendency to reach for content as a first step... perhaps this impulse reflects our comfort zone. The structure defined by the objective and audience profile, needs to be thought through first. The flesh is then built around the structure- this ensures a rhythmic flow and a logical sequence.

Well-structured content makes concepts and messages crystal clear. It dwells in the minds of people because the 'why frame' is addressed first - why we need to do what we need to do and how. **Structured content is the foundation for powerful deliveries and deserves utmost thoughtfulness.**

Effective speakers share 3-5 arguments that support their personal story and key messages.

3. **Personal Projection:** People perceive what we say by our voice, tone and body language. As we speak, we reach out by our verbal communication (7%), Voice (38%) and Body language (55%).

Voice level is the decibel quotient and is best utilised when it emerges from the diaphragm. Voice level needs to be resonant and deep and this can be developed through exercises.

A positive **tone** falls pleasantly on the ears and improves attention. Variation in **speed** and the appropriate use of "pause" brings a variety to the presentation and makes it appealing.

Our emotions mirror our thoughts and beliefs, so when our voice expresses our emotions, it engages the listener and he or she is inclined to be persuaded by the presenter.

A confident **body language**, posture, eye contact, positive facial expression, positive clusters of hand movements and energy... all of these contribute to creating impact.

In short, Personal Projection is about the need to make three connects with the audience- Energy Connect (through body language), Emotional Connect (our feelings and people-centricity) and Intellectual Connect (substance).



4. **Executive Presence:** An aura. People with executive presence radiate confidence and poise even under pressure. It is a kind of magnetism that draws people to them. It is a combination of many factors - speaking skills, assertiveness, ability to read an audience or situations, composure, credibility, clarity and conciseness.

If it sounds like it is impossible to achieve executive presence, don't be despondent!

When we enhance our knowledge and skills on a continuous basis, our talent remains sharp and honed. Competence and humility creates a serenity within us. We are now almost there... with personal reflection, practice and coaching, **Executive Presence is eminently possible.**

5. **Storytelling:** An age old skill, storytelling has been used as a tool to engage, convince, to evangelise, to act and to laugh and to cry. We never grow up! There is a childlike curiosity to know, to feel, to be simple.

What does it take to deliver High Impact Presentations?

An insight document from Mercuri International

Stories and humour can lighten serious topics. It is a leveller – the best way to be part of the audience and yet stay apart. Stories bring variety and bounce to a presentation. Sometimes a poignant moment is best illustrated by stories.

Today story telling has become a serious pursuit for many in business, education and other walks of life. A skill worth acquiring. Listen and learn from storytelling sessions. Watch the way the voice is modulated and direct speech is used... It is good fun learning.

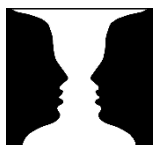
6. **Simplicity:** This is the hallmark of excellent presentations. To be simple is not easy. It calls for vast knowledge, high degree of communication skills, respect for others and keen listening skills. To be concise, we need to be simple in thought and judicious with our spoken words.

Like it is often said - "It takes years of intelligent effort to be simple". Simplicity adorns a presentation like a brilliant jewel. **People value simplicity and respond to it with trust.**

High Impact Presentations are not easy to learn and deliver... however a determined effort on all the six elements will bring in the desired result.

How earnest is your desire to master this coveted skill?

Can you go back to the situations discussed in the beginning of this document? How would you answer those two questions now?



"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

– George Bernard Shaw
