

## Akuro Limited – Presentations and Lectures

A lecture is delivered to a large number of learners by a teacher (usually in person, but can be by broadcast, video or film). A conventional lecture would be 50–55 minutes of uninterrupted discourse from the teacher with no discussion, the only learner activity being listening and note-taking. Lectures will not necessarily include visual aids. Presentations follow a similar pattern but are more likely to happen outside formal education for example in the workplace. Presentations might be shorter and would definitely include visual aids — possibly of a high-tech nature.

There are many advantages to using presentations and lectures as a delivery method for training. Although the disadvantages are fewer, it is important to acknowledge them and to take measures to minimise them as they are significant and can undermine the learning experience.

### Advantages

- Up-to-date info can be given quickly and simultaneously
- Learners quickly get overview of subject
- Learners can be stimulated by good lecturer
- Familiar form of delivery
- Cost-effective
- Easy logistics
- Lends itself to use of acknowledged expert in the field
- Content can be controlled
- Pace of delivery can be controlled

### Disadvantages

- Doesn't allow for different learning abilities or speeds
- Passive
- Time and location controlled by the teacher
- Is often perceived as “boring” by learners

There has been a lot of research carried out on learning experiences which sheds light on the appropriateness and value of presentations and lectures as a delivery technique. When preparing your presentation it is good to bear in mind the following:

- The brain has an average attention span of 10 minutes unless the trainer does something to stimulate attention, e.g. ask a question, show a slide, change the pace
- When a message is given once, the brain remembers only 10 per cent a year later — when the message is repeated six times, recall rises to 90 per cent
- The brain is more likely to remember the beginning and end of events
- Recall is high when mnemonics or analogy is used
- Recall falls rapidly after 24 hours without review
- The brain prefers rounded diagrams and figures to square
- The brain prefers colour to black and white
- The brain remembers unusual things very well

### **Tips for delivering effective presentations and lectures**

There are some people who are natural speakers. They can speak without preparation, without notes, without visual aids and put together a presentation on their chosen or accepted subject that will impress, inform and captivate their audience. In so doing they might violate all the tips and guidance offered in this section but they will nevertheless be gifted trainers. Most of us need to develop and practice our speaking and presentation skills and following the guidance below will assist in preparing and delivering an effective and professional presentation or lecture. Some of the tips will also be relevant to other kinds of delivery methods.

#### **Introduction**

- Say whether the learners may ask questions
- Tell them whether and when to take notes
- Tell them about the handouts
- Outline your presentation

## **Find out about your participants' existing knowledge**

This is also a good way to “warm up” the class.

- Ask the class questions
- Give them a (brief) written test or quiz
- Find out what they have done before

## **Organise your information well**

- Make sure you know enough about the subject to be able to respond to searching questions which are not part of your presentation
- Your lecture/presentation should have a beginning, a middle and an end or follow some other logical structure
- Remember you might need to re-orient your learners half way through
- Explain how the presentation fits into the overall training
- Relate your session to previous and subsequent elements of the training

## **Relate to learners**

- Place subject in context
- Identify with something they will find useful
- Use analogies
- Use illustrations and diagrams to help clarity
- Use examples which will make the topic interesting for learners

## **Language**

- Use plain and simple language
- Use words that the learners know
- Write up definitions for complex terms or provide a glossary handout
- Explain abbreviations
- Avoid jargon and unnecessary repetition (but remember to reinforce important points)

## Body language

- Be sure to make eye contact with the class without focusing too much on any one individual
- Remember to smile and look confident
- Avoid excessive gesturing which can be distracting
- Find a comfortable posture so that you stand balanced and relaxed

## Voice

- Use voice tone and pitch to avoid monotony
- Pace yourself slowly enough to be clear — you will need to speak much more slowly than your usual talking speed
- Pause to allow time for words to be digested

## Clothing

- Wear clothes that make you feel confident and comfortable
- Aim to wear clothes that will not alienate your audience — if in doubt it is best to be smarter
- If “lucky” ties and ear-rings help boost your confidence, wear them
- Remember loud or inappropriate clothes can distract your audience

## General tips

- Know your subject
- Keep to your time (practice delivering the presentation to be sure that the timing is right)
- Be honest — even if it means admitting you don't know the answer
- Be enthusiastic
- Be yourself

## At the end

- Summarise content and/or review main points
- Refer to bibliography and further reading as appropriate
- Allow time for questions

## Visual aids

The most common technique for making lectures and presentations more interesting and effective is the use of visual aids. Lecturing can be a boring and therefore ineffectual way of delivering learning. Visual aids are used in presentations and lectures to illustrate the subject, they can help to break up the monotony, providing a visual stimulant to reinforce what the learners are listening to. The most common forms of visual aids are:

- Overheads (also know as OHPs, slides or transparencies)
- Photographic slides
- Powerpoint presentations
- Objects, pictures or documentation which is handed around the class but which do not constitute a handout

More detail on developing effective visual aids is given in the Teaching aids section.

## How are presenters and lecturers assessed by the audience?

Making presentations and delivering lectures can be a very daunting experience, particularly as most of us have been on the receiving end of speeches in the past. It can be helpful to remember how we might be judged or received by our audience. There are three main areas on which a speaker's competence may be judged:

1. Knowledge: technical competence and practical experience
2. Design and delivery: the "performance", including: voice control; eye contact; body language; audio-visual use and support; facilitating discussion; making learning fun
3. Enthusiasm: interest in the subject; listening skills; ability to answer questions

## How to make lectures and presentations more interactive

Lectures can be the best way to get a lot of factual information over to a large group of people. However, they do not have to involve lengthy periods of monologue from the speaker as there are ways of breaking up the delivery to add variety and interest. Here are some suggestions:

- Interrupt the lecture with questions to the class
- String together a set of mini lectures and class activities
- Buzz groups — set a specific question and ask the learners to discuss it in pairs
- Provide partial handouts to be filled in by the class during the lecture
- Give the class a short piece of relevant reading
- Give the class quiet time (time to think: ask learners to read their notes, think about a problem, or summarise an idea in their heads)

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