The Art of Presentations

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No matter what you do, excellent public speaking skills are essential
An academic job talk
A plenary talk at a top conference
A sales pitch to venture capitalists
But the fact is, good talks are rare to find
What do you mean by “a good talk”? 
In November 2011, I read a book that I adore.
Walter Isaacson’s “Steve Jobs”
“Jobs, exuding confidence, style, and sheer magnetism, was the antithesis of the fumbling Amelio as he strode onstage. ... The crowd jumped to its feet and gave him a raucous ovation for more than a minute.”

This is what we eventually need — confidence, style, and magnetism
But when you attend typical talks —
The talk was not so good.
The talk went over time.
I had no idea what she’s talking about.
I was checking my emails.
I fell asleep.
But why? What are the problems? And how do we fix them?
The talk is not organized well.

Problems in organizing and preparing for a talk

No one can finish reading the slides.

Problems in designing slides

The speaker talks in a boring way.

Problems in delivering a talk
This talk is about how these problems can be solved
It is about exuding confidence, style, and magnetism
It is about the art of presentations
Three General Rules of Thumb
Rule #1: keep it simple
The fact that your talk is simple to understand, doesn’t mean that the work is not good.

If you make your talk complex, your risks are high — it’s hard to understand in a short period of time.
Find a simple way to explain something complex
You will never be able to “dazzle the audience” with complexity
Instead, you push them away from your talk
Rule #2: be enthusiastic
You have been working very hard on the work you wish to talk about
If you want anyone else to be excited about your work, you should be the first
Your body language and tone of voice supply the overall message impact —

Use hand gesture
Use maximum power in voice and a microphone
Avoid a tone that feels boring
Rule #3: practice your talk
It is a performance show — that’s why it needs to be rehearsed
Many, many times
Practicing your talk only makes it better
First in your mind
Then in front of a friendly audience (like a research group)
In front of your advisor
Get feedback and improve your talk
Practicing may help you build your confidence
so that you don’t get nervous before the talk
so that you can take a deep breadth and get started
with something truly sensational
Three Rules of Thumb

Rule #1: keep it simple
Rule #2: be enthusiastic
Rule #3: practice your talk
Organizing and preparing your talk
Tip #1: Have one take away message
This is something for the audience to remember
Your audience can’t just remember anything they like — you control what they do remember.
That is your take away message in the talk
Always assume that the audience is 80 years old with a poor memory
Be explicit about what you wish them to remember

Repeat the take away message

Keep the message simple
Tip #2: Work hard on the flow of ideas
Spend a lot of time to work on the flow of ideas in your talk.
Start with a pen and paper, like working with a “storyline” on a movie.
Your storyline does not have to be traditional, such as background — design — simulation.
It can be anything you want
You can even make it a roller coaster ride with twists and suspense
Your audience will be happy to follow the flow and go for a ride — they may even enjoy the ride!
Just watch out on the time needed for delivering the talk.
Always leave at least 5 – 10 minutes for questions
And how about the outline?
What do you think about the next slide?
Outline of my talk

- Problems in mobile cloud computing
- Related works on computation offloading to the cloud
- The design of our multi-layer scheme with the addition of cloudlets
- Theoretical analysis of our scheme
- Simulation results
- Conclusion
I think it’s boring
Since you now have a great flow of ideas, you can remove the outline, and let the show begin to roll from the start.
Along the way, you can add a roadmap when there’s a need.
The roadmap can even be graphically illustrated with subtle animations.
Like this example —

courtesy of Yuan Feng’s exceptional design on her job talk
Roadmap

1. GestureFlow
2. Reflex
3. Airlift
Roadmap

① GestureFlow

② Reflex

③ Airlift
Organizing and preparing your talk

Deliver one take away message

Spend a lot of time to work on the flow of ideas

Take the audience on a ride that they enjoy and won’t forget!
Designing slides
Tip #1: you are the boss, not your slides
The best speakers attract all the attention from the audience.
Your slides are a visual aid
They are your assistants
You will always be the boss
The audience should never pay more attention to your assistants, no matter how good looking they are!
Some students ask me for “PPT” after my talks
They wanted slides for good reasons
Most speakers include all the information they are going to talk about in their slides.
That makes the assistants the **boss**
Good speakers are not prepared to do this
If you have their slides, you will not reproduce what they talked about
Because the slides contain much less information than the talk!
Tip #2: keep your slides simple
Presentations should be “zen”-like
What do you think about the next slide?
Gender equality in Japan

- According to the latest reports from the Japanese Ministry of Labour, 72% of part-time workers in Japan are women. This is the highest ratio reported yet. The number of part-time workers has been increasing for years. For many women, full-time employment is not available, or their family obligations make it impossible for them to keep full-time hours. Below are some comments from some prominent Japanese politicians:

  - “Japanese work office environment is not yet conducive for promoting gender equality.”
  - “The conservatives ... wanted to keep the Japanese society traditional.”
How about this?
72% of part-time workers in Japan are women
Or even better —
When the slide is simple, there is nothing to distract the attention of the audience.
The attention of the audience is a precious resource that you wish to attract, not distract!
When there is very little to read, they will focus on you, the boss.
Otherwise, they will read the slides until they finish reading.
And if you advance to the next slide before they finish, they will become nervous, and read even more quickly!
So, the simpler, the better — but how?
simply can’t give up on these pretty logos

include a fancy background to distract them from your content, yet faint enough so that they keep thinking what the heck it is

sure, remind them who you are all the time

remind them that they don’t have to endure this for too long

Use lots of bullets, it’s the beauty of PowerPoint

⇒ Click to add text

✓ Click to add text
  ⊗ Click to add text
    ⊘ Click to add text
      ⊙ Click to add text
        ⊘ Click to add text
          ⊘ Click to add text

Click to add title
Don’t be controlled by “templates”
Remove superfluous decor
Have plenty of empty space
Simplicity is your best logo
Don’t use too many bullets
If you must use bullets, show them one at a time
Use huge *sans serif* fonts
Use photos and graphics instead of text
Keep animations and transitions subtle
Simplify your figures and make them easier to understand
Would you wish to see this?
In this paper, we present the design of a collaborative caching mechanism in wireless streaming that coordinates resource auctions among autonomously managed WSPs. We derive incentives and truthfulness are guaranteed in fully decentralized settings of caching mechanisms.

Caching mechanism.

Fig. 8. The streaming quality versus the update Allocation Update Intervals

Fig. 9. The streaming quality of different WSPs in collaborative caching over time. It can be observed that WSP receives the least amount of packets compared to other WSPs. This evidences that the variation of the streaming quality of each WSP shows that the variation of the streaming quality of different WSPs in our simulation. It shows that the fairness of the system when the auction is practically conducted among multiple WSPs. Fig. 9 plots the respective streaming quality of each WSP.

Fig. 10 further plots the cumulative amount of received packets from other WSPs. It can be observed that WSP mutual assistance.

However, the trend of all curves remains similar along the interval of bandwidth allocation, under different settings of caching mechanisms.

REFERENCES


[5] L. Chen, M. Meo, and A. Scicchitano, "Caching Video Content in Wireless Internet, v o l .4 4 ,n o .5 , 2 0 0 6 ."


Or this?
Streaming quality

Time slots

WSP 1

WSP 2
Designing slides

You are the **boss**, not your slides

Keep your slides **simple**
Delivering your talk

Preparing for the big day
Tip #1: open and close your talk well
Like chess, a good opening in your talk is critical — it grabs attention.
Design your opening well

The audience is most alert during the first several minutes of the talk, use it wisely!

Don’t spend the first few minutes talking about lots of background information or an outline.
Get straight to your message as soon as you open
Here is an example opening
courtesy of Hong Xu’s exceptional design in his job talk
Optimizing Datacenter Operations with Practical Complexity
Objective: Very quickly, deliver the message of the talk — tradeoff a bit of optimality to reduce a lot of complexity
Beyond optimality
Mega datacenters

A Google datacenter in Council Bluffs, Iowa
Source: Google
Datacenter scale

3 billion: search queries answered
4 billion: video views served
20 billion: webpages indexed
every single day

Source: New York Times
Datacenter performance

Increase server utilization

Reduce energy consumption
Optimality

Optimization theory is widely used

Publications related to “datacenter optimization.” Source: Google Scholar
But watch out for complexity!

Which trade-off point?
Also, close your talk with a lasting impression
As in gymnastics, a good closing is important — do not rush the closing!
Tip #2: control the pace of your talk well
Slow down — the one-way communication channel from you to the audience is lossy.

Be on time — use a presenter display to know how much time you have left.

Use a remote control — so that you can walk around.
And never revisit past slides!
Tip #3: connect with the audience
Talk to the audience — not to the projector screen

Make eye contact — do not look at your laptop display

Use body language and gestures — very powerful for connecting with people

Move away from the podium — remove physical barriers between you and the audience to make it easy to connect
Tip #4: do not try to memorize
You will forget everything, anyway — there is no need for notes.

Remember the logical flow of ideas — there are a million ways of delivering the same flow.
Delivering your talk

Open and close your talk well
Control your pace well
Connect with the audience
Do not try to memorize
We are almost done —
To go the extra mile, here are a few optional tips that are good to know.
#1: Break out from the tradition

Get out of your comfort zone and think critically — What’s the best way to communicate effectively?
#2: Ask the audience a few questions (and answer them)
#3: A laser pointer is not the best way to emphasize
#3: A laser pointer is not the best way to emphasize.

Use builds and overlays.
#4: Make a few *jokes* to lighten the mood
This is hard —

what's funny to you may not be so funny to someone in a different age group, or with different political, religious, or cultural backgrounds
Don’t make improvised jokes without planning ahead.
Steve Jobs: a few moments in MacWorld 2007
Baochun Li
Google “Baochun”

For more —
presentationzen.com
treesmapsandtheorems.com
ted.com/talks