Further readings and templates

# Chapter 10: Presentation skills

## Showing passion in presentations

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| **Key Learning Point: Passion is a pre-requisite for the good delivery of most non-technical presentations.** |

### A) *Showing passion*

It might be good to begin with an exercise here: have a look at Ex. 9.xxx below.

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| FOR YOU TO DO  Take any movie which includes a speech inspiring others to undertake a course of action that they will probably find difficult – an example of leadership in some way. (If you are struggling for an example, the third film from the Lord of the Rings trilogy – The Return of the King – contains a brief speech by Aragon riding a horse and is not a bad example. The speech comes before a big battle around 2/3 the way through the film.)  What does the speaker say? (Write it down)  Read it out loud to yourself with no emotion. Contrast your reading of it with the way it is delivered in the movie. What is different?  Rewrite the speech in your own words, as if it was a review of the speech. Use a formal academic style.  If you read out loud – as a speech – the review you have just written, would it have the same impact as the original speech? Why or why not? |

When we talk about putting passion into a speech, we talk about a number of different elements coming together to produce something which really works to create a positive reaction in an audience, and it helps to analyse what those elements are and how they work together.

1) The Sentence Structure and Intonation

To make a good point in a passionate manner, think about the structure in the table below:

**Table: Making a point passionately: Structure**

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| **Structure** | **Delivery** | **Passionate Example** | **Less Passionate example** |
| Here’s the comment I want to make | Relatively low key, but short, succinct sentences/phrases | “The next important point to address is this [slight pause]: the importance of critical thinking.” | “The next important point I want to make is about how and why critical thinking can lead to academic success and good grades.” |
| Here is why this comment is important:  Issue 1:  Issue 2:  Issue 3: | Three points to support the argument (people can better remember information delivered in 3’s) – perhaps one set of statistics/facts, one relevant example/story and one personal story. | “There are three reasons for this [pause brief and look straight at audience]: First, when surveyed, it became clear that the only reason why around just 5-10% of students were receiving first class degrees was because of their lack of critical thinking. It was this lack of critical thinking that was directly responsible for their lacking the one thing that we all hope they would receive. Secondly, I know that other tutors recognise the same thing – that in class discussions are not as carefully thought through as they should be.  And I can see this in my own teaching: that the students who do well are those who can think their way through the arguments well.” | “There are three possible reasons for this [pause brief and look straight at audience]: First, when surveyed, it was found that the only reason why around just 5-10% of students were receiving first class degrees was because of their lack of critical thinking. Secondly, I know that other tutors recognise the same thing in their classes.  The third reason is that I come to learn that the students who do well are those who can think their way through the arguments clearly.” |
| Of course, here’s what I have just said. | Quick summary, using intonation: starting at a fairly high pitch and coming down.  Fast paced.  3-5 word final closing phrase. | “It seems difficult to me to believe that this has not been tried or thought about before: [v brief pause for breath only] the importance to the students of us as lecturers getting this right cannot be understated:  We can never be too critical about the importance of critical thinking! Thank you!” | “The argument above has provided evidence to show that critical thinking is important. We need to carefully consider what to do because this is important to the students’ success.” |

Of course it might be very easy to write something inspirational, perhaps, but the delivery of that is more important, and so the question arises ‘How do I remember this?’ Few of us have the luxury of the autocue or someone telling us what to say through an earpiece and so we come back to rehearsal and ensuring that we remember such phrases very clearly.

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| FOR YOU TO DO  Read through the two examples in the table above. You haven’t heard them, so the only differences are in the language and the structure of the phrases and sentences used.  What is different between the passionate example and the less passionate example?  Which would be closer to your own personal style?  Which would be closer to the way you might present factual information to a management board? In a speech trying to inspire others?  Have a go at writing something of a similar length in relation to something about which you are passionate. Can you find some good ways to express yourself succinctly? |

The words used during an inspirational speech (and even if you are not trying to inspire but are simply trying to persuade people of a particular point of view, this is relevant as well) are as important as their delivery. There are some tricks to ensure that your message is memorable:

 Use the same words twice in the final sentence – “You cannot be too critical about the importance of critical thinking” (from above);

 Use similar sounding words twice in the final sentence – “U-turn if you want to: This lady’s not for turning!” (Margaret Thatcher)

 Repeat the same words regularly throughout the speech – “I have a dream… I have a dream…” (Martin Luther)

### B) Emphasis and the impact of contrast

If you think about the TV advert you remember best, the likely answer will involve something about it being different and not what was expected. Similarly, if you think about a photograph which has several components but your eye is drawn to one element in particular, the likely reason why your eye is drawn to one particular item has something to do with that particular item being different in some way. Psychologists call this the ‘Contrast Effect’. Put simply, we pay attention to items which contrast with our expectations or with the broader background.

When it comes to emphasising a particular point in your presentation, the impact of contrast can be emphasised by using our voice and posture or emotion in a way that contrasts with the usual presentation style.

This means that we can create emphasis by suddenly changing what we call ‘paralinguistic cues’ (behaviours which convey meaning):

 Our intonation

 Our speed or pace

 Our posture

 Our volume

We shall look more at these five elements of presentations shortly but it is not what we do normally that is important here: it is how we change what we do in these five areas that conveys importance and significance.