



The following are a few presentation suggestions to help your session run smoothly. This is intended to be a quick, straightforward guide to give you a few points to consider when designing your presentation.

### **Getting to Know Who You Are Teaching**

#### **Adult Learning:**

Teaching adults is different from teaching children because as adults, we bring our prior experiences and knowledge to the session. In order to learn new concepts, adults need to be able to connect new knowledge with what they already know. The use of metaphor, simile, and storytelling helps to establish that connection and adds life to presentations. Remember to use common examples that most participants can grasp such as driving/riding in a car, running, etc.

#### Example:

Trying something new is like crossing your arms the other way. It is uncomfortable at first, but it gets easier with practice.

#### **Learning Styles (David Kolb, 1984):**

Activists – prefer active learning and enjoy being involved in new experiences. They like the limelight.

Reflectors – prefer to assimilate information by watching and analyzing. They like to watch a demonstration and think about what they have learned before trying it. They do not respond well to pressure.

Theorists – prefer to think problems through, using logic and process. They like using models and systems. They tend to be detached and analytical.

Pragmatists – prefer to experiment and find new ideas that they want to try out. They respond to problems as a challenge by acting quickly and confidently. They dislike too much theory.

The following was taken from Nicholas Corder's book *Learning to Teach Adults*:

*An activist, a theorist, a reflector, and a pragmatist all decided to learn golf. The activist gets out on the course and keeps swinging at the ball until he gets a feel for it. The pragmatist books a set of lessons from a golf pro. The theorist reads up on trajectory, wind resistance and anatomy before taking to the course. The*

*reflector ends up caddying for the other three, so he can watch before trying it himself.*

### **Auditory, Visual and Kinesthetic Learning:** (Bandler, Grinder and Grinder)

There are three distinct communications tied to learning styles:

- Visual Learners (approximately 65% of the population): Collect information with their eyes. Prefer pictures, diagrams, demonstrations, reading or watching video.
- Auditory Learners (approximately 30% of the population): Best at collecting information with their ears. Prefer to listen to audiotapes, lectures, debates, discussions and verbal instructions.
- Kinesthetic Learners (approximately 5% of the population): Collect meaning through touch and movement. Prefer direct involvement, physical activities, moving, touching, and experiencing.

### **Brain Dominance:**

Left-brain: Linear learners who prefer a step-by-step build up of information.

Right-brain: Global learners who prefer an overview of the big picture.

### **Generations:**

There is a good chance that there will be several generations of participants in your sessions, all of which have different preferences. The following is an overview of characteristic generalities about the different generations:

Mature (born before 1946)

- Have not embraced technology
- Prefer written communication
- Value “paying your dues”
- Want simple, straightforward summaries
- Prefer lecture format with concise handouts

Boomers (1946-1964)

- Mostly embrace technology
- Respond to both written and electronic communication
- Value individual achievement
- Rely upon personal and professional networking
- Value meetings and exhibits

Gen X (1965-1979)

- Raised with technology
- Prefer multi-media communication with sound bites
- Value topic-focused social and professional events with peers
- Need bottom-line, straightforward factual information

#### Gen Y (1980-2000)

- Most tech-savvy generation
- Conflict avoidant; do not handle discord well
- Low boredom threshold
- Favor multi-media communication, texting, email, etc.
- Gravitate towards group activities, even virtual group learning
- Prefer experiential learning with interactivity

### **Creating Your Learning Environment**

#### Attention Span:

- The adult attention span averages 20 minutes. Telling stories, making analogies and using metaphors allows the attention span to rest and rejuvenate. However, it will not be reset to what it was earlier in the session. Make your main points within the first 20 minutes of the session and use the rest of the time to reinforce learning through activity and discussion.
- Learners retain 70% of what they learn within the first 10 minutes; therefore, highlighting your main points right away is crucial. They retain only 20% of what they learn in the last 10 minutes, so it is a prime place to reinforce or recap main points.
- It has been found that discussion and interaction increases your heart rate, which in turn may increase attention span.

#### Slide Talking Points:

- If you have kept your bullet points short, you will not need to “read” your slides to the audience so they will focus on what you have to say. It is okay to periodically read a point, quote or definition word-for-word from a slide.

#### Potential Hazards:

- You may run into those who ask irrelevant questions or those who want to monopolize the session. Do not get sidetracked. Rather, compliment them on being knowledgeable about the topic and state that you would be happy to have further discussion one-on-one after the session for the sake of time and the other audience members.
- You may encounter questions that you cannot answer. Toss the question back to the group to answer by stating, “Let’s widen the discussion by having the group answer that question.” Then repeat the question to the group.

- ALWAYS repeat questions or statements to the group. Regardless of how loud people “think” they can talk, there will be some who cannot hear. This also makes you seem attentive to your audience’s needs. Additionally, using your provided microphone is crucial.
- If a heated discussion erupts, pull the group back to the point by reminding the group of your timetable and offer to continue the discussion after the session.
- If you try something new and it fails, acknowledge that sometimes when you try something new it works, and other times it does not. Acknowledge what did not work and move on, or ask for feedback for next time.

### **Take Care of Yourself:**

- Remember, you are your own worst critic. Even the most seasoned presenters get butterflies a few minutes before they “go on”. Your audience does not notice when you trip on words or stumble over concepts as you may think they do. Relax.
- Practice your presentation out loud in front of a mirror. It will be more difficult for you to present to yourself than deliver your presentation to a room full of learners.
- Be prepared. Finish your presentation well ahead of time and practice it several times while timing yourself.
- Consider drinking water during your presentation to help your vocal cords.
- Take care of yourself. Sleep. Eat. Hydrate. Prepare.

### **More Tips:**

- Encourage interaction.
- Manage questions.
- Keep the discussion on track.
- Creating a supportive atmosphere.
- Consider that your audience may be at different starting points.
- Say the full name of an organization, not just the acronym.
- Be aware of time management to control the pace of your presentation.
- Locate the midpoint of your lecture and use that to gauge time.
- Plan for the post-lunch “graveyard slot” by including activities in your session.
- Monitor the group for signs that they are lost (time to review) or bored (time to move on).
- Check your objectives at the end to make sure they have been met.
- Highlight where participants can find additional information.
- Conclude by challenging the group to apply their knowledge.

## **Citations:**

This guide is to give you a quick overview of a few points to consider when creating your presentations. If you would like more information with greater depth, please see the following references:

Corder, Nicholas. *Learning to Teach Adults: An Introduction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Routledge: New York. 2008.

Hall, L. Michael Ph.D. *Neurolinguistic Programming: The Beginning*. Retrieved from <http://www.selfleadership.com/neurolinguistic2.htm>. January 13, 2009.

Kolb, David. *David Kolb on Experiential Learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.infed.org/biblio/b-explrn.htm>. January 22, 2009.

Thorne, Kaye and Mackey, David. *Everything You Need to Know About Training*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Kogen-Page: Philadelphia. 2008.