Handout 12: Planning a Presentation

Step 1: Write the goal statement.
Step 2: Research the topic
Step 3: 'Chunk' the material into sections
Step 4: Analyse the audience
Step 5: Structure the presentation

**Step 1: Write the goal statement.**

In this step you decide the purpose of the presentation. The goal should be outcome based, so could begin with the words:

"Following this presentation participants will: (some examples)

- Be able to do a basic internet search."
- Be able to describe five benefits of regular exercise."
- Demonstrate a commitment to making this service run under budget."
- Be able to describe three possible solutions to the problem of having adequate staff at all times"

You can see that these goal statements are outcome based. They do not describe a process (Participants will learn how to....)

These goals are primarily either to inform or persuade. Some presentations are primarily to entertain, and although we won't focus on this it is important to realise that most presentations should be designed with all three in mind.

At some point in designing your presentation you should decide whether you are there to inform, or to persuade. If you are having difficulty deciding, consider the attitude of the audience toward the topic. If they are negative, you will need to persuade; if positive, to inform.

**Step 2: Research the topic**

You will usually be presenting a combination of theory and practical application. You might explain, for example, how a bubble-jet printer works, then show how to change the ink cartridge. You will be expected to know what you're talking about! You might need statistics, examples of how a problem has been approached elsewhere, case-studies, novel or extreme examples (which create interest).

**Step 3: 'Chunk' the material into sections**

This is where you begin to organise the body of the presentation. You order your material so all the 'bones' are in place - you can flesh it out later.
Decide on five things that the audience must know by the end of the presentation.

**Step 4: Analyse the audience**

This is the next 'filter' your material should pass through. Think carefully about their attitude - will they be curious, indifferent, positive, or negative? Are the concepts, language, complexity, and degree of formality appropriate to the occasion and the audience?

Consider now how to establish with your audience:

- credibility ("I have worked here for 3 years and have dealt with many aggressive clients")
- rapport (Connect with audience, get their attention and engage them. Make eye contact as you speak.)
- interest (You can start with a surprise: "The other day I felt like quitting this job forever")
- motivation to stay attentive (Most people do not easily concentrate for more than twenty minutes)
- understanding (Define key terms, build on what the audience already knows, explain and clarify as required)

**Step 5: Structure the presentation**

Think about your material, and your audience and what they would best respond to. To what degree do they need to be persuaded/informed/entertained?

After considering your information, audience, and intent, choose a structure for your presentation. It could be:

- Narrative, or story structure. People love stories, and a basic plot will keep them interested. You can map your presentation onto a plot structure:
  1. Background - We often have only one worker here at closing time.
  2. Disturbance - The other day, as often happens, I got stuck with a family in crisis until 7pm.
  3. Plan - We had a meeting to discuss ways of avoiding this happening again.
  4. Surprise! - There was disagreement among staff about the best way to do this.
  5. Complication/Solution - Some thought we could roster on workers, but any worker is vulnerable to being called away elsewhere.
  6. Complication/Solution - Another idea was to pay somebody to be on-call all evening, but this is costly.
7. Complication/Solution - Volunteers said they could do the job, but they're not supposed to be here unsupervised.
8. Climax - We decided you should decide!

- Topical, where the material is divided into sections by topic. 'Today will we look at the systems of the human body: the digestive, the nervous, the immune...'
- Chronological, or time sequenced structure. 'I will cover the historical development of the Centre, what we do at present, and our plans for the future'.
- Compare & Contrast, in which one state of affairs is compared to another. 'Under the old award, you were paid holiday loading as well as shift penalties. Under the new award you get paid one or the other, but not both'.

Problem solving, which is an approach you should be getting used to by now! This could be used to persuade by showing the process of how a way of doing something was selected. See Handout for a reminder of how to do this.

Whichever way you structure it, divide the time up equally between sections and stick to it. Time will fly by, so make sure you don't run out of it. On the other hand don't make a total meal out of a presentation that should only take five or ten minutes.