

15 TIPS FOR PREPARING AND DELIVERING A GREAT PRESENTATION AT SATURN

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Get Ready for SATURN!

You submitted a proposal to SATURN, and it got accepted. Congratulations! When conference participants step into the room to attend your talk, they will come with the highest of expectations—after all, they chose your talk over the others happening in parallel. The people who click on the YouTube video of your talk in the future will also have high expectations. So we want to help you deliver a great talk.

Not everybody was born a great speaker, but those who weren't can easily apply a few tips that will get them closer to a (conference) rock-star performance. Here are 15 tips for creating and giving a great presentation at SATURN.

Preparation

1. **Provide value.** Prepare a presentation that will allow attendees to successfully apply your ideas and experiences to their organizations.
2. **Avoid bloated slides.** Audiences like illustrated slides better than text-heavy slides. Bulleted points should be no longer than two lines. Break long sentences into two bullets. If a slide has more than 5 or 6 bullets, consider splitting it into two slides.
3. **Enhance your presentation.** Sensibly use pictures, graphs, tables, videos, callouts, animations, diagrams, and quotes to make your presentation more interesting. Imagery will improve attendees' retention and enjoyment.
4. **Create readable slides.** A common complaint from SATURN evaluation forms is that slides were not readable, especially text in diagrams. For a simple way to check that all text is readable, print your presentation in 2 slides-per-page format. If you can easily read the printouts, the slides should be readable when projected.
5. **Manage time.** Participants have also complained that presenters didn't cover all their slides or rushed through the final slides. If your session allows interaction throughout, be careful to cut short lengthy discussions. And above all, follow Tip 6.
6. **Rehearse.** The secret to a great presentation is to practice, practice, practice. Rehearse your presentation at least a few times to train yourself on the flow of ideas. If you practice in front of the mirror, you can see what you look like when talking. You can also present to colleagues and

get their feedback before heading to the conference. Don't forget to time yourself when rehearsing, and fine-tune the amount of material you can cover.

Delivery

7. **Be natural.** Your audience will be made up of your peers, and they will help you do a great job. Relax and be yourself, as in a conversation by the water cooler. Do not switch to “presentation mode” and speak in a monotonic way like the Terminator (it's ok to dress up and look cool like him, though).
8. **Be engaging.** It's your job to keep everyone awake and engaged, and that's not easy, especially after lunch. Be dynamic and energetic. Show that you're passionate about the topic. To establish a rapport with the audience, tell a relevant story or simply smile. Avoid reading notes or your slides. Make eye contact to random people in the room.
9. **In 1 minute, give attendees a reason to stay for the next 30 minutes.** Often people are not sure that they have chosen the right session. The first minute of your talk will help them decide, and you don't want to see them sneaking out to the talk next door. State your goals up front. Tell attendees what they will learn. You should also have an initial slide, a quotation, or a story that grabs their attention.
10. **Pace yourself.** Some people naturally talk fast; others talk fast when nervous. At a conference, especially one with an international audience like SATURN's, you should speak just fast enough to cover all the content, and slow enough to be understood by all. Be sure to enunciate and speak clearly.
11. **Avoid filler words.** *Um, well, if you have, like,* a pre-teen and a teenager at home like I do, then you're *kinda* familiar with, *like,* filler words, sounds, and *whatever.* Filler words make your communication less effective. You only have so many minutes to cover the slides, so train yourself to avoid them. Instead of filler words, you can ... pause.
12. **Pause.** At specific points in your presentation, be silent for a few seconds. Pause right after you make an important remark to let people absorb it or right before making an important point to emphasize it. You can also combine the pause with Tip 13.
13. **Modulate your voice.** Use inflection and vary the pitch of your voice to avoid a monotonic, boring speech. Throughout your presentation you should speak loudly enough to be heard by everybody in the room. You can lower your voice for emphasis—if you whisper a sentence on the microphone, your audience will listen attentively, but you should do it sparingly.
14. **Look at the audience.** Presenters often turn to the screen to look at the slides. Some just talk to the screen. Don't turn sideways or turn your back to the audience. If you need to look at a slide, look at the laptop screen on the podium or table in front of you. You may need to turn to the screen to use a laser pointer, but do it sparingly. People who like the pointer sometimes unintentionally overuse it by pointing it at every sentence and figure on the slides.
15. **Move purposefully.** Standing still behind the podium for your entire presentation is not ideal. Move closer to the audience, for example, to tell a story or answer a question. Move toward the

screen to emphasize the importance of the information on the slide. But don't meander around the stage as if you were thinking about why the sky is blue. Also avoid pacing from side to side--some people do that when nervous, and it is distracting. Mind your posture: stand balanced when you aren't moving, without rocking back and forth, and keep your hands naturally at your sides or use them in meaningful ways in your communication.

By following these 15 tips, you will be prepared to give a great presentation at SATURN. We look forward to seeing you there!

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