

A Vibe Learning Lab insight



vibepresentations

Presentation effectiveness
from bar to boardroom to ballroom



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He has operated globally as a brand manager, lecturer and trainer. He holds a Masters in Strategic International Marketing and a BSc. from Trinity College, Dublin.

Ronan has helped clients like Kingspan, CRH, DPS Engineering, Miele and Emirates develop and deliver impressive, engaging and memorable presentations.

This is his second insight on presentation effectiveness from the Vibe Learning Lab Box set.

If you would like a copy of his first insight which includes an infographic on presentation creation as well as some 'tricks of the trade'; just email us on: **info@vibepresentations.ie** or visit us at: **www.vibepresentations.ie**



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Background

To deliver an effective presentation, you need to stimulate the audience mind as well as spirit and ensure the message is understood, shared and multiplied.

A common myth around the presentation skillset is the view that you are either good at it or you are not. The fact is, you can learn the skills to be just as impressive, engaging and memorable as people like Barack Obama, Bill Gates or even Churchill.

Three questions to consider before you start:

1. Presentation Purpose

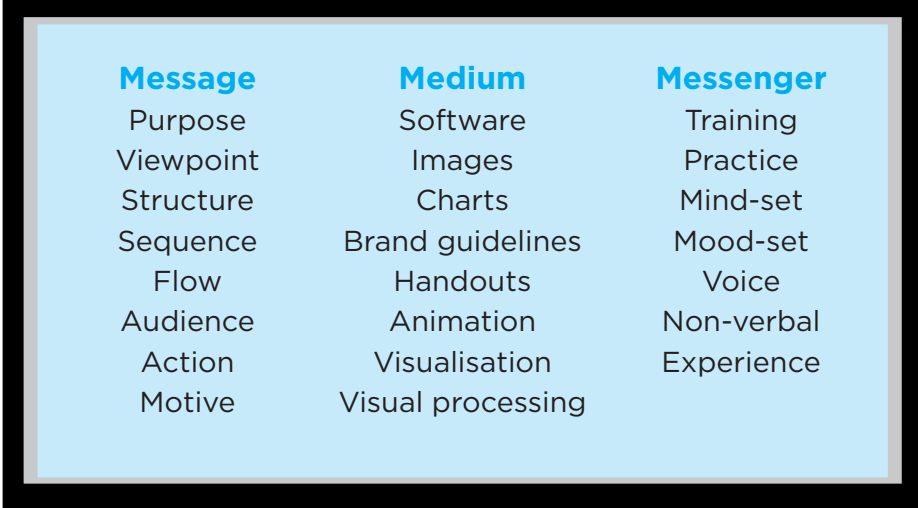
What is the purpose of the presentation. Is it to entertain (world tour photos) motivate (new MD announcement) persuade (sales presentation) or is it educational (seminar)?

2. Presentation Forum

What is the forum for the presentation, is it a bar (up to 2 people in an informal conversation), a boardroom (up to 20 people expecting an interactive presentation) or ballroom (up to 200 people in conference mode)?

3. Audience Expectation

How can I meet audience expectations by blending my message, medium and messenger? (See visual 1).



Message	Medium	Messenger
Purpose	Software	Training
Viewpoint	Images	Practice
Structure	Charts	Mind-set
Sequence	Brand guidelines	Mood-set
Flow	Handouts	Voice
Audience	Animation	Non-verbal
Action	Visualisation	Experience
Motive	Visual processing	

Visual 1: Many presenters spend 90% of their time on the medium. However, all 3 elements are inter-dependent, so if you want an impressive, engaging and memorable presentation, you must ensure an equivalence of standards throughout.



Bar

Audience: Motivated | Detail: Mostly verbal | Application: Conversation

Many meetings or sales conversations are conducted in informal settings, particularly in the USA and Australia. These 'bar' settings can be breakfast bars, salad, juice, alcohol, tea or coffee bars. The golden rule is, **do not present!** Have a conversation instead. The only exception is if visuals will help the prospect understand and recall content better.



>> Ensure 100% of the conversation is about them. <<

There are three great questions
to start the conversation:

1. *What's happening in their world and sector?*
2. *Where are their problems, issues and needs in that world?*
3. *Anything we need to do to be better or different?*

This ensures the conversation is 100% about them which will position you as more genuine. Integrate your value proposition into the conversation wrap within 45 minutes. If business is done in less time, move on.



How to influence more effectively

The 'devil is in the detail', so get to the bar early to control proceedings.

*Always try to sit to the left of the prospect
(right-handed prospect).*

As a result, 'openness' to your pitch is more likely. People defend with their right hand. You don't want your prospect in defensive mode.

*Avoid window / door areas,
as coldness makes you and the prospect uncomfortable.*
Building trust with a warm prospect is easy.

Sit on comfortable, cushioned seating.
Harvard researchers found prospects seated at wooden chairs negotiated harder as against those in cushioned chairs.

No phone, iPad, car keys or laptop in view.
A visible device suggests a higher priority. Premium brand car keys may suggest excessive margins and profitability. It's all about perception.

Don't drink and dribble.
If it's an alcohol bar and your prospect opts in, you could abstain as teetotal. If this might compromise rapport, order a club soda which looks alcoholic so blends in.

Sit up straight, no slouching and avoid a low table.
People with strong posture are more convincing than hunchbacked counterparts.

Order small helpings of the best appetizers.
Menu reading is wasted time and distracts from the purpose.



Boardroom

Audience: Motivated | Detail: Visual & verbal | Application: Reading & Discussion

Formal boardroom settings (up to 20 people probably) is ideal for persuasive presentations. Audience motivation is high, as a decision needs to be made, input to be given or a plan to be agreed. But, do you really need to project your presentation, would a meeting just suffice?



>> Q&A is essential and welcoming input as you progress will maintain engagement. <<

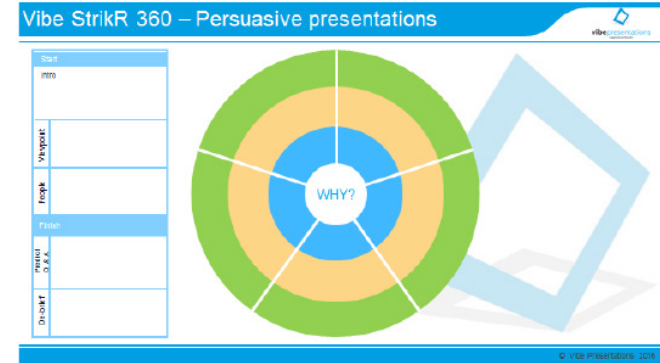
The message:

Use a proven template method to create content and ensure the correct structure, sequence and flow, fit for your audience. When working with clients, we utilise any of our 3 templates. (See visual 2). These are proven to influence communication.

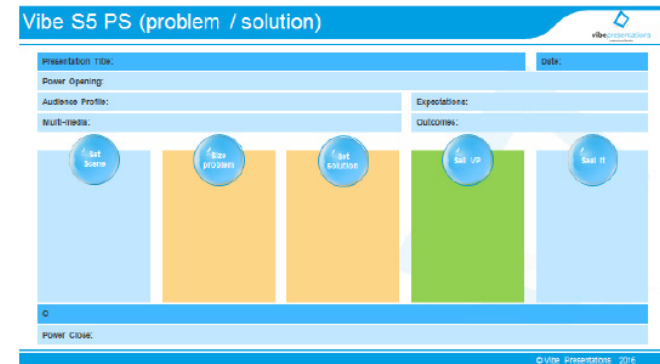
For sales presentations, we recommend the value proposition as core content provided it addresses prospects problems, issues and needs. It should also bridge features to benefits and provide hard evidence as statements of fact.

The medium:

You must be clear on the rationale for using PowerPoint. It is to display information, and to share it in a simplified way. Too often PowerPoint presentations appear too



Vibe StrikR 360



S5 PS



Vibe PresentR

Visual 2: For persuasive presentations, we recommend the Vibe StrikR 360 and S5 PS template methods. For educative presentations the Vibe PresentR is ideal.



complicated and end up giving the audience data overload. Ultimately you want your presentation to be clear, concise, and convincing. (See visual 3).

It is best not to combine extensive text and pictures on slides. Concise sentences in the form of 3-4 bullet points separated by white space will add drama. They should not be supported by sub bullets as the presenter must explain what the points mean. (See visual 4).

There are equally different types of decks that need to be created. Briefing decks have mostly non interactive internal passive audiences where the presenter has full control. A discussion deck on the other hand could be used more for group meetings but may also appear on screen particularly if the forum is remote and the audience has not received a pre-read or handout. Reading decks are often standalone documents and may be research reports sent as email attachments.

The audience is more focussed on message facts, concepts, values than on your slide aesthetics. They may need to question or challenge your assumptions so your visuals need to enlighten rather than bedazzle.

Each slide is a message module and PowerPoint boundary forces, will help, as they require simplified thinking. Audiences may also plan to pass along the visuals so the presenter needs to pay close attention to structuring their argument with more text and data, limited animation and pertinent images.

In summary, boardroom style slides will probably have more in common with a succinct business document than a presentation deck.

The messenger:

The messenger must be impressive, engaging and memorable. The best presenters will assess the audience expectations prior and also consider alternative personalities in the room. This will help them get attention and position the argument and communication more effectively.

Our research suggest the optimal time for boardroom presentations is 20 minutes. An additional 20 minutes for Q&A, conversation and collaboration is ideal.



Activity	2006*	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
No. of objects against which interests were registered	15,569	22,365	21,578	18,855	22,012	24,862
No. of registrations made	32,696	52,819	50,060	46,903	64,829	63,060
No. of registration sessions	10,170	15,607	16,432	12,348	14,625	16,857
No. of new administrators and users approved	7,463	8,822	5,402	4,073	4,340	5,100
No. of licence renewals	n/a	1,221	1,441	1,204	1,135	2,142
Total search sessions	33,480	49,020	46,843	33,553	40,221	45,848



Ultimately, you want your presentation to be clear, concise, and convincing.

Visual 3: The first graph is a classic case of importing a chart straight from Excel. The chart is not about the data but about what the data means so determine the message module then create a slide to visualise the point.

- Reseller incentives
- Reseller training
- Advertising campaign
- Social media marketing campaign
- Back to school promotion
- Direct mail coupons

- **Resellers:** training & incentives
- **Marketing:** Advertising campaign and social media marketing
- **Promotions:** back to school campaign and Direct mail coupons

Visual 4: Text on the left overwhelms working memory whilst text on the right respects it. With six bullet points, you have reduced the readers ability to extract any meaning as it exceeds cognitive overload. The list on the right respects working memory as it contains the same information, but chunked to aid understanding and recall.



Ballroom

Audience: Easily Distracted | **Detail:** Strongly Visual | **Application:** Information Sharing

Ballroom settings include large conference facilities on-site or off-site. Audience types vary in terms of roles, functions and cultures. Generally the speaker speaks and the audience listens. Audience motivation and attention levels are a challenge, making presenter professionalism a true test.



>> Q&A is best reserved till the end. <<

The message:

Consideration must be given to what the audience will capture through the cortex channels. (See visual 5).

Presenters should use a template which is fit for purpose. The Vibe PresentR is ideal as it sets a structure, sequence and flow which aligns with audience attention spans.

The medium:

The purpose of the medium (PowerPoint, Prezi etc.) or multi-media is to help the audience understand and recall the message better and not to showcase the presenter. Therefore it must enlighten and not bedazzle. (See visual 6).



Visual 5: The brain receives messages through the visual and phonetic cortex channels. The two parts of working and long term memory process and retain information differently. If certain content in ballroom presentations is visualised, repeated, uses analogies and is structured differently, it can be retained in long term memory. Presenters should identify the key take-away's and apply them accordingly.



Visual 6: This slide is totally incompatible with how the brain processes and retains information. Although an image should be on every slide, too many, married with numerous messages and fonts promotes dis-engagement.



John Sweller (University of New South Wales) cognitive load theory proves it's best to use icons, images or pictures to maintain engagement as they are easily processed by audiences limited working memory slots. Even better to use a text slide or picture slide with sparse text, which includes a slide title and short 1-4 word phrases aligned to the picture. Use concise sentences, like "Launch should focus on college market" and not "We should focus our launch activities on the college market". Text is the 'thorniest' issue in PowerPoint, so headlines need to be 30+ font with body text no less than 25.

Discover a PowerPoint template from the software suite to maintain a consistent design scheme. Include some basic animation such as 'wipe' and 'fade' to help visual and supporting narrative and reduce cognitive overload. If conference papers are required, be sure to create a document which includes the visual and supporting patter. (See visual 7).

The messenger:

Put simply, delivery style must be 'top drawer'. Close attention to verbal and non verbal communication is key. if the slides are the presentation, then the presenter will come across as insincere and lacking in confidence. (See visual 8).

Voice must be highly tuned and utilise variances in pitch, pace, power and pertinent pauses. Barrack Obama is a particularly good example of maximising the vocal asset.

The best presenters use a power opening to stimulate the audience, then marry it with a power close for real impact. An opening /close can be a question, comment or quote.

Conclusion

Bar, Board and Ballroom presentations require bespoke approaches to developing content, creating visuals and speaking the message. An equivalence of standards between form and function is key to being impressive, engaging and memorable.

Plan on paper before creating visuals. Stay away from muddled half-baked messages delivered as bullet points. For each slide, think about the key message and make sure everything on screen is complementing that. Remember its not all about the slides. (See visual 9).



Presentation Duration



Many presentations are not aligned with audience attention span capabilities. We have found that most successful sale presentations last no longer than 20 minutes, with another 20 minutes for conversation.

Visual 7: One page example from a ballroom handout. It needs to look different to the slide deck as it is 'read and not shown'. The presenter is not present to provide supporting narrative so best to include the patter.



- The speaker read the slides to us 69.2%
- Text so small I couldn't read it 48.2%
- Full sentences instead of bullet points 48%
- Slides hard to see because of colour choice 33%
- Overly complex diagrams or charts 27.9%

Visual 8 : Negative feedback from FMCG Annual conference
David Paradis research 2010.

Key Takeaways

All presenters must differentiate on their approach and philosophy depending on the venue. Is it a bar, ballroom or boardroom?

Subtle agitation amongst the audience members will compromise message impact. Use a template method aligned to the purpose.

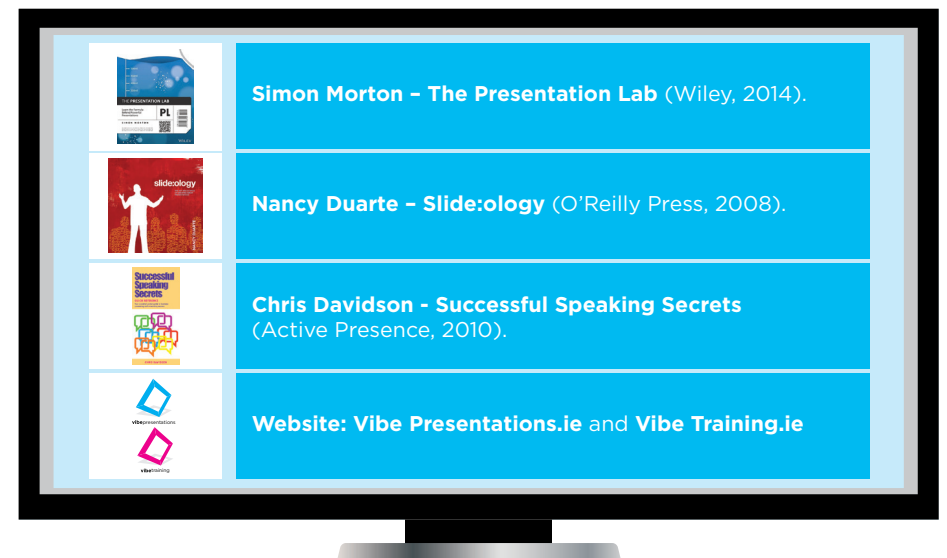
Power Pointless is a worldwide problem. Visualised slides make your points explicit and provide structure. There is no value in over-engineering the visuals. Boardroom visuals as distinct from ballroom require a different 'look and feel'. A 'one-size-fits-all' deck will fail on all counts.

The messenger must practice the 'perfect' and seek constructive feedback. Presenters must also cultivate the mind by referencing thought leaders. (See visual 10).

In the words of Garr Reynolds, author of Presentation Zen; "To be heard, you must say something different, simple and visual".



Visual 9: These slides are simply visual and help support attention span theory. Most are professionally designed except 'Smart Art' on top right.



Visual 10: Cultivate the mind. It's what professionals do.



If you would like a one hour presentation on this subject matter,
please visit us at: www.vibepresentations.ie

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“100% of audiences, know
how to read, yet it astonishes me
how many presenters read to their
audience through bulletpoint
and barchart bonanza’s.
This lack of respect for the
audience questions their sincerity
and confidence.”

Ronan Kinahan

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