

# 10 Common Presentation Mistakes



- 1 Making it about you, the presenter**

Ouch. Whether you get frozen in fear or savor the spotlight, remember, it's not about you. It's about your audience. Serve them with thoughtful, relevant, clear information.
- 2 Being in a hurry**

Presenters often fail at delivering confidently simply because they're in a hurry. They have too much to say in too short amount of time. Great speakers are unhurried: slower eye contact, slower pace, and casual (ie slower) gestures. Plan less content and deliver more confidently.
- 3 Not practicing out loud**

One way to know if you've planned too much content is by saying it out loud. Practice a slide or two and notice how long it takes. While you're at it, hone your delivery skills: talk to objects for 3-4 seconds each, use gestures, and listen for your pace and filler-words (umms).
- 4 Not scaling content**

Scale stories from the 5-minute version to the 2-minute version to keep them sharp. If you have a non-technical audience, perhaps your deep dive of content should be 3 minutes, not 7 minutes. Scale your content or lose your audience.
- 5 Talking faster when running out of time**

When the clock is counting down, resist the temptation to race to the finish line. Audience's can't absorb information blitzed at them. Have a plan B (what to cut at the end) if you run long.
- 6 Using slides as handouts, pre-reads, or scripts**

Slides are meant to be idea billboards for a live presentation. Once you use them outside of this purpose, you'll be tempted to put too many words or data on your slides. Copy and paste all your text in the Notes section as post-meeting materials but keep the slides simple.
- 7 Poor transitions (or none at all)**

Craft one-sentence transitions that connect ideas together to create a clear flow. If they're long winded, they're no good. For example, from market conditions to key strategies: "Now that we understand the conditions of the market, let's talk about our Q2 strategy."
- 8 Relying on either charisma or data**

Audience's need relevant, well-organized information from charismatic speakers. They also need energy and passion in data-heavy presentations. Avoid extreme ends of the spectrum. Energy and expertise. Both.
- 9 Letting emotions evaluate success**

Don't trust your feelings as your feedback mechanism. Some presenters feel great, but it comes off poorly, and vice versa. Which is why you should avoid the next mistake.
- 10 Not preemptively asking for feedback**

You should solicit feedback before a meeting. Be specific. For example, "I'm trying to slow down. Can you give me feedback?" or "I'm working on smooth transitions between my main ideas. Can you listen for clarity?" The feedback will be more honest and more helpful.