

Communication Tools for Providing Effective CE Presentations

Very few people are born with a natural talent to deliver outstanding presentations. In fact, the majority of us need ample practice to simply present mediocre presentations. The good news is that with preparation, hard work, and practice, you can bring a mediocre presentation to a “wow” presentation. Overall, the standards for public speaking are somewhat low, presenting you with an opportunity to make yours the most memorable.

Quest CE has compiled a list of skills needed to ensure that when presenting continuing education, or any professional presentation for that matter, you keep your audience attentive and excited about what you have to tell them.

Making the Presentation:

1. Greet the audience and tell them who you are, as well as the company you represent.

Effective presentations follow the provided format:

- **Tell** the audience what you are going to talk about
- **Deliver** the information
- **Summarize** what you told them

2. Make sure to stay on the presentation timeline.

If you say you are presenting from Noon to 1:00 p.m., you must start, as well as end, on that time. When audiences present you with an allotted time window, they tend to become inattentive when you extend over that time limit. As a rule of thumb, allow two minutes for each slide you use, and factor in a longer time allotment for slides you want to elaborate on, in order to develop specific points. Use your best judgment and tune into the responsiveness of your audience.

3. Stick to the plan (i.e. the course outline) for the presentation.

Do not give into temptation to digress – stay on topic. This will not only eat up your time, but it could be a dead-end for your presentation.

4. At the end of your presentation, be sure to ask if there are any questions.

Questions can help you gauge the perceptiveness of the audience and how they received you as a speaker. If questions are coming in slow, you can start things off by asking an open ended questions to the audience (be sure to have questions prepared ahead of time in case this happens to you).

Delivering the Message:

- Speak clearly. Do not shout or whisper – aim towards adjusting your voice to the size of the room, the audience, and other situational considerations.
- Don't rush or talk deliberately slowly. To keep your audience engaged you must be natural, although not conversational.
- Deliberately pause at key points. This provides an emphasis on the importance of a particular point you are making, and cues the audience to pay closer attention.

- Avoid making jokes. These always seem to end disastrously, unless you are a natural expert on the use of humor.
- Change your delivery, including the speed and pitch of your voice to promote active, audience listening.
- Use your hands and body language to emphasize points, but do not indulge in too much of any one gesture (i.e. constantly waving your arms during a presentation will distract participants).
- Over time, people can develop irritating habits, and the same goes for making presentations. Ask a colleague to critique your delivery style to catch those unnoticed “ums” or lack of eye contact. Every presenter is in need of some work of their delivery style.
- Look at the audience as much as possible, but do not fixate on one individual, because it can become intimidating. Instead, pitch your presentation towards the back of the audience, especially in larger venues.
- Do not face the display screen behind you and talk to it. This habit makes attendees think you are disengaged with the presentation, and they will follow suit.
- Avoiding excessive moving around. Although you may be presented with a large space for your presentation delivery, it does not mean you need to use it all. Some animation/movement is desirable when appropriate, but pacing back and forth can unnerve your audience members.

By following these simple tips, you can present yourself as a true professional and deliver a presentation that students will not only successfully learn from, but also one that you can be truly proud of.