



## Management Development Program

### **Module 6 Communicating Effectively**

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**ARE YOU LONELY?**  
**TIRED OF WORKING ON YOUR OWN?**  
**DO YOU HATE MAKING DECISIONS?**  
**HOLD A MEETING**

*YOU CAN....*

- ✓ SEE people
- ✓ DRAW org-charts
- ✓ FEEL important
- ✓ IMPRESS your colleagues
- ✓ EAT donuts



**ALL ON COMPANY TIME !!!**

**MEETINGS**  
...the practical alternative to work

## 6.1 Communicating

We are a social species, and our ability to communicate is one of the things which defines us. We're not the only animals that can communicate, but we do seem to have the highest level of complexity in our ability to communicate.

Every muscle in your body is a communication channel. Every thought that you have is visible, to some degree, in the movements of your body.

Your communication machinery is so sophisticated that you are capable of communicating multiple messages at the same time.

Therefore, in order to communicate effectively, we must first take a step back from the methods of communication, and take a look at the thought processes behind it.

In particular, we must step back and ask, "What exactly am I trying to communicate?"

## 6.2 Communication problems

The first problem that you will often encounter in communicating effectively is that you don't actually know what you want. This is a common problem when people complain in shops, hotels restaurants and the like. All the best consumer advice says that instead of talking about what's wrong, talk about what you want them to do about it.

What does this tell us about effective communication?

### 6.2.1 Communication channels

How many different communication channels or methods do you use at work?

List as many as you can. There's no prize, simply the satisfaction of a job well done.

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## 6.3 Email

Email is probably the most used, and the most over-used method of communication in business. Email can be the most effective communication method, and it can be the worst. The simple reason for this is that email has replaced more than one form of communication, and those different forms of communication had different characteristics, and were used for different reasons.

### 6.3.1 Email substitution

What different forms of communication have been, or can be replaced by email?


**6.3.2 Characteristics of common communication methods**

Letter	Phone/Video Call	Meeting/Presentation
Non-real time interaction	Real time interaction	Real time interaction

## 6.4 Direct and Indirect

In life, we often have to compromise because of limited resources. In the last module, we looked at some of the ways that people handle such conflict.

One common communication problem is that some people don't say what they want. Out of fear that they won't get what they want, they avoid a direct request. Consequently, they don't get exactly what they want.

### 6.4.1 Indirect communication

What do people do instead of saying what they want?

Let's first clarify what you want with a simple goal setting tool.

### 6.4.2 PURE goals

<b>Positive</b>	What you do want, versus what you're trying to avoid	
<b>Under your control</b>	Not dependent on anyone else	
<b>Real</b>	You can see, hear and feel the result	
<b>Ecological</b>	"If I gave it to you now, would you take it?"	

## 6.5 Yes and No

Do you ever say yes when you mean no?

Do you ever say no when you mean yes?

Which is more likely?

Why is that?

As a social species, we are strongly driven by a need for social acceptance and inclusion. We seek out people with similar interests, behaviours, languages, preferences and appearances. And yet, within the safety of our social groups, we also seek to express our individuality. We want to be valued and recognised for our individual contribution, our skills, our capabilities, our uniqueness.

This essential human conflict means that we want to be different, and we want to be the same, both at the same time. This gives rise to the common experience of being caught between a desire to meet the needs of the others, and a desire to express our own needs.

In the workplace, this often reduces down to the simple conflict between doing your own work and doing what other people are asking you to do.

The problem is that we can represent that conflict as a binary choice, and losing all of the possibilities that exist between yes and no forces us to compromise.

The good news is that no compromise is necessary.



### 6.5.1 The Power of If

The most powerful word in any negotiation is “if”.

Work in pairs. Think of an unreasonable request, for example, “Create a detailed finance report for outstanding invoices by lunchtime today”. Present the same request three times to your partner, and your partner will try out three different responses. Together, compare the difference.

Repeat the exercise so that both of you try each role.

Person 1:	Unreasonable request	
Person 2:	No	How does that feel?
Person 1:	Unreasonable request	
Person 2:	Yes	How does that feel?
Person 1:	Unreasonable request	
Person 2:	Yes, if... (add a condition)	How does that feel?

For example, “Yes, if you provide the data to me by 11:00, give me until 2:00 to finish the report and fetch me a coffee.”

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## 6.6 Presenting

Public speaking is one of the most important professional skills that you can master. Communicating and sharing your ideas and research is fundamental to your work, and the ability to communicate with and influence groups is something that many people find daunting yet can easily be both enjoyable and mutually rewarding.

Almost everyone in a business has, at some point, the need to present – customer meetings, team meetings, project updates, interviews, conferences or even at social events. The difference between doing this with difficulty and doing it easily is immediate and obvious.

If we break presenting down into its basic behavioural elements, we need two skills; the ability to speak, and the ability to stand up. If you can do both of those at the same time, you're already making a good start.

Of course, you can stand up and talk at the same time – you do it every day. The difference must be in doing it in front of an audience and the good news is that this affects your perception, not your behaviour, and perception is much easier for you to change.

What can people who are already confident and accomplished speakers learn from this workshop? The first thing is group influence. When you present, you are using a highly specialised form of communication that allows you to communicate the same information to a number of people so that they then take specific action as a result. If you are using presentations to inform or update people then send them an email instead. A presentation is a very powerful group influence tool, so use it wisely.

As with everything, the key to success is planning. How do you plan a presentation? Do you start with what you want to say, or with what you want the audience to do? Do you start by designing slides or by designing feelings, responses and outcomes?

Narrative communication is one of the most powerful group communication and influence tools that you can master. The good news is that you are already very good at it, because your whole life story involves this special form of communication. By refining and practising your essential skills, you will be able to engage an audience and influence their state so that they act in the way you want them to – perhaps by making a decision or committing to a course of action.

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## 6.7 What is a Presentation?

First of all, let's define what a presentation is. For the purposes of this workshop, a presentation is a specialised form of communication that you would use when you want to impart information to a number of people at the same time so that they consistently do something for you as a result.

So, the focus of today is going to be on planning, designing and delivering presentations in a way that communicates effectively, motivates consistently and gets the people in your audience to do something as a result of the presentation.

What might the audience do for you? They might pass an exam for you, decide to buy something, make a decision, agree to a proposal or even give you a job!

Whatever the situation, you are presenting because you want to, and because there is something that you want to achieve. Otherwise, why are you devoting your time and effort to it?

If you're not clear on why you are presenting for your own outcome, what hope have you got of achieving anything? Firstly you have no idea what the audience wants, and secondly they will each want something different. Trying to give the audience what they want as your only outcome is a recipe for... well... what do you think?

What value does the presenter bring over the slides or notes? Again, if the presentation is just about facts and figures, send the audience an email. Don't waste their time sitting through a presentation if you're not going to add anything to it. They are there because they want to see you present the information, interact, ask questions. If all they wanted was the data, they would look it up on a website.

Of course, by presenting the information, you can't not influence the meaning the audience takes from it. Every change in voice tone, every facial expression, every movement will communicate how you feel about the information you're presenting, and that in turn creates the audience's perception of what the information means and how they respond to it.

People might often ask you to send them your presentation when what they really mean is that they want you to send them your slides or notes. The slides are not the presentation – you are.

The slides are the information, you are the means by which it is presented, you are the presenter, you are the presentation and you bring meaning to those words.

You bring the presentation to life.

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## 6.8 Excellent Presenters

### 6.8.1 Great presenters

What are the qualities of a great presenter?

The qualities of a great presenter might include:

- Personable – can talk to people
- Gets everyone involved – interactive
- Makes you feel comfortable
- Enthusiasm
- Relaxed, informal
- Interested in what they're talking about
- Good eye contact
- Confident
- Relaxed manner
- Not following the text book
- Had a clear journey
- Uses humour
- Talks about things I could relate to
- Knows a lot about the subject
- Encourages ideas
- Tells stories
- Simple - just stands up and talks
- Asks questions

Everything you needed to know about being an outstanding presenter was already in your head, disguised as someone else. You are able to recognise a great presenter because you already have that model, that frame of reference, in your mind. In order to be able to read these words, you have to know what words are, how to read them and how to turn them into meaning.

Similarly, in order to know what a great presenter is like, you already have that model in your brain. You already have all the software that you need to be exactly the kind of presenter that you aspire to be. All you need to do is access that software more easily.

## 6.9 How do you Design a Presentation?

### 6.9.1 Where to start?

Write down where you would naturally start when you design a presentation, the first thing that you would think about or do:

- Do you start with what you want to say?
- Do you start with the profile of the audience?
- Do you start with the action you want the audience to take?
- Do you start with the slides you want to show?
- Do you start with how you want the audience to feel about you?

It seems that most people start by thinking about what they need to say.

It's more important to think carefully about what you want to get out of the presentation; what you want to achieve for yourself.

Forget what the audience wants, at least for now. They're not here, reading this, learning about how to be an outstanding presenter. You are. So until you know what you want out of the presentation, you're in no position to give the audience whatever they want.

### 6.9.2 Claiming the space

Step into the presentation space at the front of the room and allow the audience to hand control of the room over to you. Just take a moment to notice how it feels and what thoughts are in your mind. Notice how the audience really looks, rather than only seeing what you had expected to see.

When you get back to your chair, make a note here of how you felt and what you noticed.

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## 6.10 Your Outcome

Interview a partner rather than reading through the questions yourself.

### 6.10.1 Your Outcome

<b>1 What do you want from today?</b>
2 How will you know when you have it?
3 What will having it do for you?
4 What will having it do for BACP?
5 What do you need in order to get it?
<b>6 What can the rest of us do today to help you get this?</b>
7 What stops you from achieving this now?
8 What can you see yourself doing differently as a result of today?

## 6.10.2 Share your Outcome

Share your outcome with the group, using the following format:

### **Introduce yourself**

**“What I want is” ... (Q1)**

**“What I need you to do is” ... (Q6)**

**“How do you feel about that?”**

Aside from all the influencing tricks you could learn, the simplest way to get people to do what you want is to tell them what you want. It's important to get into the habit of telling people clearly what you want and what you need from them. The final question, a 'tag question' just pushes the outcome home as it tends to elicit an agreeable response in the majority of helpful, reasonable people. The important thing is that it elicits a response – because you do want a responsive audience, don't you?

If you ask for something that people can't give you, they will tell you – either by saying “no” or by saying “erm...OK” whilst looking like they mean ‘no’.

Imagine for a moment that the world is full of people who are reasonably happy, well intentioned, kind and helpful. They want to help you, as long as what you're asking for doesn't specifically disadvantage them. They want to help you, but they don't know how. So by telling them what you want, you are helping them to help you, which is good for everyone.

“What I want is for you to think about how BACP's role is important for you, so what I need you to do is pay attention and ask any questions that help you to understand how we can work together, how do you feel about that?

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## 6.11 When Does the Presentation Start?

### 6.11.1 When does your presentation start?

When do you think the performance begins for a stage show? When the first actor addresses the audience? In the music that is playing before the show starts? Upon entering the theatre, even? The answer is that it starts the moment you buy your ticket.

When does a night out with friends start? As you walk into the bar or restaurant? As you're getting ready? As you're getting ready to leave work?

When does your holiday start? When you step off the plane? Or when you book it?

Why is this? Because as soon as you start to think about something like a night out, or a holiday, or a presentation, you are building a simulation of it in your mind. As soon as you make the decision, your mind begins preparing you for it. That preparation might include wondering who will be there, thinking about what might happen, feeling excited, thinking about what you want to learn, thinking about how to get there.

We survive by predicting the future. Our ability to catch balls and trains requires the future to be much the same as the past, so we create generalised rules that apply over time. The problem is that we predict the future based on past events, and as the people who manage your investments are fond of reminding you, that is a very risky approach.

It's a completely natural, human process, and by being aware of it, you gain greater control.

You will be communicating with your audience long before you stand up to speak to them, so it's very important that you start shaping their expectations to support your outcome.

Most people think that the presentation starts when they stand up to speak. This is unhelpful for two reasons:

- It puts even more focus on the act of standing up, which is the bit most people avoid
  - You lose a vital opportunity to influence the audience and set their expectations
-



What communication do you have with the audience before the presentation that you can use to reinforce your presentation?

Do you send out an agenda? A joining pack? An email? Each is an opportunity to prepare the audience for your presentation, giving you a much greater chance of achieving what you want.

If you tell the audience what to expect, they will adjust their ability to pay attention accordingly.

If you don't they will pay attention to whatever fits their preconceived expectations, which means you will get random results at best.

**Set the audience's expectations as soon as you begin communicating with them.**

As you stand up, you step into an imaginary space at the front of the room, created by the audience. The existence of an audience presupposes the existence of a presenter – and so you are stepping into a role that is waiting for you to claim it.

As you step into that space, you take control of the room, and you do not under any circumstances give control back to the audience until you are ready to.

### **6.11.2 When to start?**

Work out when your presentation starts and how you can influence the audience as early as possible. Write your ideas here and then share them with your group.

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## 6.12 Getting Ready

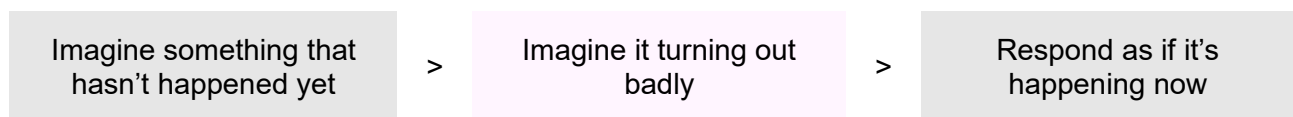
If you ever worry or are nervous about a presentation, here are some very simple tools you can use to change that.

The first, and most important thing to remember is that the majority of people inadvertently make all kinds of everyday activities difficult, and these same people could make those same activities incredibly easy with just one simple, small adjustment.

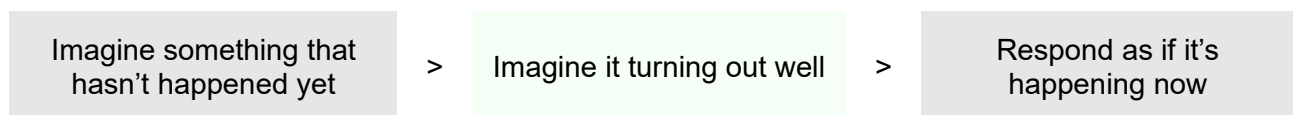
### Most people plan for the start of things, not the end

Public speaking, cold calling, going to the dentist and flying can be difficult for some people. How many times have you felt nervous about doing any of these? How many times have you felt nervous at the end? What many people experience is worry leading up to the event, nervousness at the start and relief at the end. Which of those three states would you like to feel, all the way through? Do you want to worry about it or look forward to it?

Let's look at the process of worry:



The processes of worry and excitement are the same, with just a tiny change in content:



So, here's the simple way that you can overcome doubt, worry, anxiety, nerves or fear:

### Plan for the end

So, when you imagine the presentation, imagine it from the point where you're saying thank you, the audience is nodding approvingly and you feel good about having done your best.

### 6.12.1 Planning Outcomes for the Audience

If you don't want your audience to do anything as a result of your presentation then you are wasting your time and theirs. An email could replace your presentation if all you want to do is transmit information. A presentation is a specialised communication tool, so use it to achieve the right outcome for you. Think carefully about what the presentation adds, over and above any other form of communication.

Even a decision or an opinion is an action because it requires the audience to process information and then do something. Forming an opinion is an active process, just as much as buying a product or service.

What do I want?

How will the people in this room help me to get it?

What do I need them to do for me?

What do I need to do in order to achieve that?

You're probably wondering what you're going to get out of this presentation, and by the end of it you may already be thinking about what next step to take. I could tell you about all the benefits to you of what I'm going to propose, but instead I'm just going to give you the information you need to make up your own minds.

You present because you want to achieve something, but in order to get it you need the audience to take action. You don't control the audience, but you have more influence over them than you had imagined. So once you're focused on what you want, you can think about what the audience needs to do, and then about what you need to do to get the audience to give you what you want.

## 6.13 Elements of communication

You may already know that words are not our only means of communication. The non-verbal elements of communication can reinforce or add emphasis to language. Sometimes, if you don't believe what you are saying, or if there is some conflict or doubt within you, the non-verbal elements will contradict your words. Other people might detect this and describe it as 'nervous', 'uncertain' or even 'lying', depending on the context, content and their beliefs.

There's no point trying to force your 'body language' – it's far better, and easier, for it to be natural and effortless. Therefore, we have to start from a position of confidence in yourself and your subject.

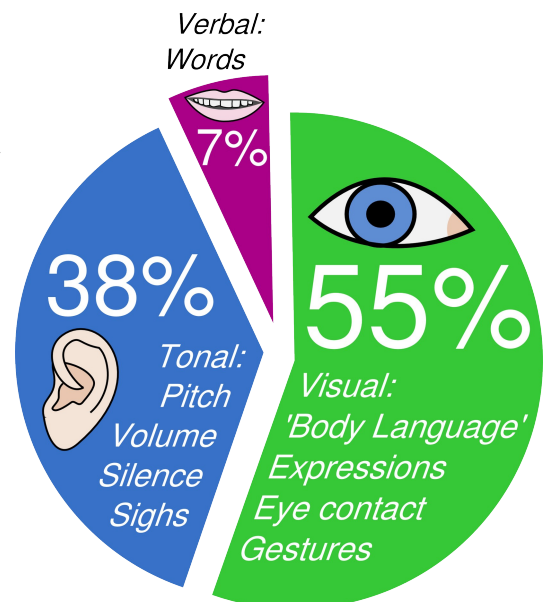
You may or may not be an expert in the subject you are going to speak about. There may or may not be someone else in the world who knows one thing more than you do. What you must realise is that at the moment you stand up to present, you know more than anyone else in that room about what you're going to say.

As you stand up, you step into an imaginary space at the front of the room, created by the audience. The existence of an audience presupposes the existence of a presenter – and so you are stepping into a role that is waiting for you to claim it.

As you step into that space, you take control of the room, and you do not under any circumstances give control back to the audience until you are ready to.

The verbal and non verbal elements of your communication combine to create a unique meaning which includes both the raw 'data' and also your own emotional response to that. Therefore, no matter what you do, your true feelings on the subject are transmitted unconsciously to the audience.

You may have heard that in 1969, a social psychologist named Albert Mehrabian conducted a famous study into communication channels. His experiment is well known for demonstrating the influence of non verbal communication on meaning, and from it he came up with these results which you might have seen in many places including TV adverts for credit cards.



Not everyone agrees with the findings or the figures. The important thing is that we can easily demonstrate how, by changing these elements of communication, we can change the implied meaning. Therefore we can deduce that words are not the only means of communication which are at your disposal as a presenter.

You can experiment with this by discovering how many different ways of saying “hello” you can come up with, and noticing how each combination of visual and tonal qualities changes the meaning. Even when you think you’re communicating plain facts, the same process is taking place.

What this relates to is that the meaning of the word is not only contained within the word itself, it is mainly contained within the non verbal parts of the communication of that word, and since it’s the meaning that people respond to, that’s what we have to think carefully about.

With telephone or email you can see that some of the information above will be missing. What happens in these cases? Well, you fill in the gaps using your past experience or your expectations. So you are more likely to make the person’s words fit the meaning you expect by distorting the non verbal elements.

You can see why having a human presenter is much better than sending out written information – it puts you more in control of how the information is communicated, what meaning the receiver takes from it and what action they take as a result.

## 6.14 Credibility

To be credible is, literally, to be believable. What makes a presenter believable?

It's not their qualifications or experience – it's their non verbal communication. When you establish communication with anyone for the first time, you have some unspoken, unconscious questions that you need to answer before you can really start paying attention.

These unspoken questions include:

- Do we have anything in common?
- Do I like you?
- Do I believe you?
- Do I trust you?
- Do you believe yourself?
- Do you know what you're talking about?
- Is this relevant to me?
- Do I respect you?

There may be other questions too, depending on the situation.

How do you know that you like someone? Is it because they say "You can like me" or is it something else?

It might be useful to think about the high level message that runs through your presentations, and to consider that first when you are planning a presentation. If you get that in place, everything else you do has a strong foundation to build on.

By giving the audience the opportunity to find the answers to these questions first of all, you will ensure their full attention later on.

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### 6.14.1 Answering the unspoken questions

Practice opening your presentation, addressing these unspoken questions. You can do this however you want to.

The audience will give specific feedback on how they have picked up this information from you.

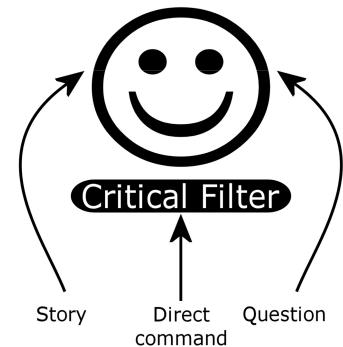
## 6.15 Questions

Can you think of an easy way to engage the audience and make the presentation interactive?

We each have a critical filter which evaluates incoming information to judge it against our own beliefs and perception of the world.

The filter is useful because it protects us from other people's beliefs. Unfortunately, it also prevents us from accepting new information too.

This means that if you present by talking facts at your audience, it doesn't matter how true or well researched you think those facts are, some people in the audience will find them contentious, simply as a result of the way you have presented them.



Fortunately, there are a few things that we can do to overcome this potential obstacle to getting your message across. How do you think we can achieve that?

Well, there are a number of ways. Firstly, you can make sure that the people you're presenting to are in as receptive a state as possible before you begin presenting. How? Come on – you can remember!

- Using every opportunity to communicate with the audience prior to the presentation
- Framing the presentation so that the audience know what to do
- Answering the audience's unspoken questions

Secondly, you can use the two forms of communication which will bypass the critical filter. The first we'll explore is the question.

Why do questions bypass the critical filter? How do questions bypass the critical filter?

Questions don't convey any information, do they?

Questions don't carry instructions, do they?

A structure of language which you hear as a question puts you into a certain frame of mind, ready to search for and give an answer. Over time, the right balance of questions will guide your audience into a receptive, open minded and interactive state which is ideal for a presentation.

We hear questions when:

- The speaker's voice pitch rises towards the end of a sentence
- A sentence starts with a word such as why, when, where, how, what, which, who, if, is, could, would, might, may, can etc.
- A statement ends with a tag question, such as couldn't it, don't they, do we, can it

After all, it's rarely wise to position yourself as a the absolute expert who is going to give the audience all the answers. It's generally useful to think of your role as being to help the audience to explore the questions, and for them to formulate their answers.



## 6.16 Narrative Communication

Human beings communicate with each other in a narrative. We don't communicate using factual statements; they are linked by a narrative, which includes characters – who did what to who – and a sequence in time, so that we can recreate the situation mentally.

As one person is talking, anyone listening is translating their words back into the original sensory experience. Of course, they can't translate it into exactly the original, so they are substituting their own experiences and references in order to make sense of it.

What does this mean for you as a presenter?

For a start, it means that the more narrative you use, the easier you are to listen to.

Secondly, it means that the richer your narrative, the more accurate are the pictures you create in your audience's mind.

And thirdly, when we ask people on workshops what qualities they associate with excellent presenters, one which always comes out is that the presenter knew a lot about their subject. And when we ask how they knew that the presenter knew a lot – they told stories.

So narrative communication – storytelling is vital, it's natural, you already do it and to be an excellent presenter you can do more of it, purposefully.

Right now, you communicate in many ways that already fit this form, including:

- Anecdotes
  - Case studies
  - Reports
  - Any description of an event
-

## 6.17 Framing your Communication

Effective communicators use a technique called ‘framing’, in which they direct your attention before they tell you the important bit, so you don’t miss it. For example,

- I’m going to present some data after which I’d like you to give me your opinion.
- I’m going to present a project update after which I’d like you to give me feedback.
- I’m going to present a proposal to you after which I’d like you to make a decision.

By telling people what you want them to do, you are helping them to filter the information so that they pay attention to what is important for them. If you don’t tell people what to do until the end, they will be completely unprepared for it and will not do what you ask.

Begin each presentation with a framing statement, such as:

“Here is an update on my project, I don’t need any advice or feedback at this stage, it’s for your information only”

Beginning with a statement like this tells people exactly what is expected of them. Conversely, presenting a huge volume of facts and figures and only then asking people to make a decision is simply asking for trouble. If you tell people up front what you expect, they will pay attention in the right places and be able to make a decision when you need them to, instead of saying they need more time to think or asking difficult questions just to divert attention away from the fact that they weren’t listening.

An even more powerful way to frame your presentations is with a question.

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## 6.18 Question-Story-Question

Instead of starting your presentation with a grand opening statement, why not start with a simple question?

Imagine you're at a conference. You meet with someone who you would dearly love to work with. You say, "What one thing could we show you today that would make the whole conference worthwhile?" Whatever they say, that's what you talk about. The entire presentation, centred around the one idea that will make the biggest difference to them.

Ask someone a **question** and, even for a moment, they are hooked. They are instantly put into a receptive frame of mind. After that, it's up to you to put their attention to good use.

Your **story** contains all of the facts and emotional content that provides a context for the question.

Asking your opening **question** again now causes the audience to formulate a new answer which is set in the context of your story.

The two **Questions** are hooked together by a **Story**:



The idea is very simple. Begin by posing the question. After leaving it to hang in the air for a few moments, move straight into your presentation. Do not obviously refer back to your opening question. At the end of your presentation, repeat the question. The content of your presentation has provided the answer, and the audience now knows what to do.

Here are some examples with the subject of their presentation:

Question	Subject
“What would you give to be able to correct one mistake in your life?”	A project to support disadvantaged teenagers
“How would you feel if you could save one more life today?”	A safety program
“What would you do with an extra £10,000 in your business budget?”	An IT project that would lead to a cost saving of £10,000
“How would you feel, knowing that you had changed the world today?”	A workplace recycling scheme

Here’s an example script.

“What would you give to be able to correct one mistake in your life?”

I run a project for teenagers who have been in trouble with the police. Typically, they struggled at school, dropped out and got into the wrong company. Through peer pressure, which I know we’ve all felt in one way or another, they end up making a mistake that they regret for the rest of their lives. Through our project, that I’m seeking your support with, we help these teenagers to put right that mistake and to make sure it doesn’t take away their chance of a normal life, the kind of life that it’s easy for people like us to take for granted.

I’m asking for your sponsorship, your time, your brand or just your funding. Which you give is up to you, all are invaluable to us and to the teenagers who are going to benefit so much from your help.

After all, what would *you* give to be able to correct one mistake in your life?”

The question takes on a different meaning as a result of what you say in the main body of the presentation, because the second question is now set in a new context.

## 6.19 Structuring the Presentation

There are a number of formats that you can use to establish a powerful communication with the audience. Here are a few ideas for you to practice.

### **Framing**

By telling people what you want them to do, you are helping them to filter the information so that they pay attention to what is important for them. If you don't tell people what to do until the end, they will be completely unprepared for it. This process is called labelling, signposting or framing.

- I'm going to present a project update after which I'd like you to give me feedback.
- What would it take for you to change your mind about something important?

### **Outcome focus**

Start with the end in mind. Keep everything focused on what you want to achieve with the presentation and work back from that, so everything you say becomes a means to achieve the outcome.

### **Frame/Story/Question**

Frame the communication to direct the audience's attention, tell a short story and then ask a question to shift the audience's state and refocus their attention.

### **STAR**

Based on an interview technique, it's quite useful for presenting case studies and project updates:

Situation, Task, Action, Result

### **Reflecting current experience**

The first thing you need to achieve in your presentation is to get the audience's attention.

You already know that for the first couple of minutes, the audience is deciding whether to listen to you rather than actually listening to you, so at first you can concentrate only on building rapport and leave any important content until later.

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Right now, you're reading these words and you might think about your next presentation. Perhaps you've presented in the past, or experienced other people presenting to you. In either case, you may be the kind of person who really wants to achieve the best you can and refine the skills you're already developing. It's good that you're taking such an active interest in yourself because you know the results that it will bring you.

As you begin with very general facts that are true for the audience, you will see them nodding in agreement. As your presentation becomes more specific, or less factual, they will be more likely to agree with you than to disagree.

It's important to remember that you are not manipulating or tricking the audience, you are actually creating a shared frame of reference which simply makes your communication more effective. When people communicate openly and easily, you often find that their opinions aren't that far apart.

Once again, clear and open communication means that the audience is more receptive to your presentation, which means that they have more information on which to base their decisions.

If you listen to excellent presenters, you will often hear them saying things that the audience already knows. If they are such good presenter, why would they waste the audience's time by telling them what they already know?

Here is something that you might hear at almost any sales conference:

- It's been a tough year
- Competition has been intense
- You've worked hard
- Your targets are doubling next year

What about this example?

- Excellent presentations are key to business success
  - Effective presenters inspire their audience
  - A good presenter shares their ideas and insights effectively
  - This workshop will make a big difference to your presentation skills
-

Or this one:

- The counselling market is changing
- Counsellor numbers are increasing
- Counsellors are facing increasing challenges
- BACP is here to support you

It's always useful to have your audience in an agreeable state before you start transmitting information at them. This simple technique is a very powerful way to lead the audience into an agreeable state by telling them things that are true – either in their experience or in the present moment, for example:

- You have all travelled to be here today
- We are all together
- You can hear me
- You can take a moment to be comfortable
- Some of you may already know
- I know you each have a reason for being here
- I imagine there's something that you want to get from this presentation
- You might be thinking about how this applies to you
- You might be wondering, "how do I use this?"

### **6.19.1 Pacing**

Tell the audience three things that are true now or are shared experience

Tell the audience one thing that may be true - a suggestion

Ask the audience for their agreement

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## 6.20 Getting the Timing Right

It's more important to stick to time than to say everything you want to say. The audience will be left with a far better impression if they feel the presentation is complete than if there is any sense of something being left out.

As a rule of thumb, when you plan your presentation content, create enough content to fill about three quarters of your allocated time. The rest of that time will most certainly be taken up by late starts, questions, conversations and all the other unexpected things that happen whenever you work with children or animals

It is very easy to fill in time during a presentation, and by finishing early you give the impression of being very much in control - something that the audience will appreciate.

If you have any activities or interactive sessions planned for your presentation, build in even more contingency, so that you create content for only half of the allocated time.

Many people take the approach that they have a lot to say about themselves and their companies, and it's very hard to pack all that into a short time. Certainly, if you believe that the function of a presentation is for you to tell the audience something, or give them information, then you will certainly find it difficult to pack in everything you have to say.

Let's take a different approach - one that takes a lot of pressure off you and makes the whole experience far more enjoyable. Simply ask yourself this question:

**What question can I ask that will get the audience to do what I want them to do?**

Here are some examples:

- What one thing can I tell you about that will help you make the right decision?
- What information will be most useful to you right now?
- What can we do in this next hour that will make this whole conference worthwhile?

Starting from the point of cramming in everything there is to say is difficult. Starting from the point of what your audience needs to hear in order to take the next step is easy.

Always start your presentations with a question. By concentrating on the answer to that question, timing will never be a problem for you.

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### 6.20.1 Your opening question

Practice opening your presentation with a timing question. Write it here:

## 6.21 Using Presentation Aids

You've probably seen a presentation where the presenter read out the words on the screen verbatim, and you probably thought "I could read that myself..."

The more words you put on the screen, the less the audience will pay attention to you. When you put words on a slide, the first thing the audience will do is read the words. While they're doing that, they're not listening to you.

If you want to include a presentation script or detailed notes, put them into notes pages, not the main slides. Think of slides as signposts rather than guidebooks.

What other presentation aids can you use to enhance the overall experience?

### Computer projected slides

Easy and quick to create, easy to share a common layout or style, easy to change when you find out new information five minutes before your presentation! Not so easy to adapt mid presentation where it's obvious that you're skipping past slides. You can of course learn how to use the in-show navigation menu so that you can skip slides more covertly.

A presentation aid such as Powerpoint is actually a hindrance here because it ties you to a script which makes it much harder to adapt to changing timescales. This is why we're not using any of these tools today; if you can stand up and present on anything, any time, any place to anyone, then tools such as Powerpoint are unnecessary and you can use them instead to add value where they are needed, for example to show diagrams or videos. Certainly we would advise against using Powerpoint as the core of your presentation.

This means that you design your presentation as a human interaction first, and then add Powerpoint on later if you need it. This is different to what many people do, which is to start with the Powerpoint slides first.

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## Whiteboards

Good for keeping track of meetings or informal “chalk and talk” sessions, not so good for presentations as you have to turn your back to the audience to use them, and you can’t prepare your presentation beforehand. It’s worth practising the use of a whiteboard so that you can use it gracefully without it ending up a mess!

## Flipcharts

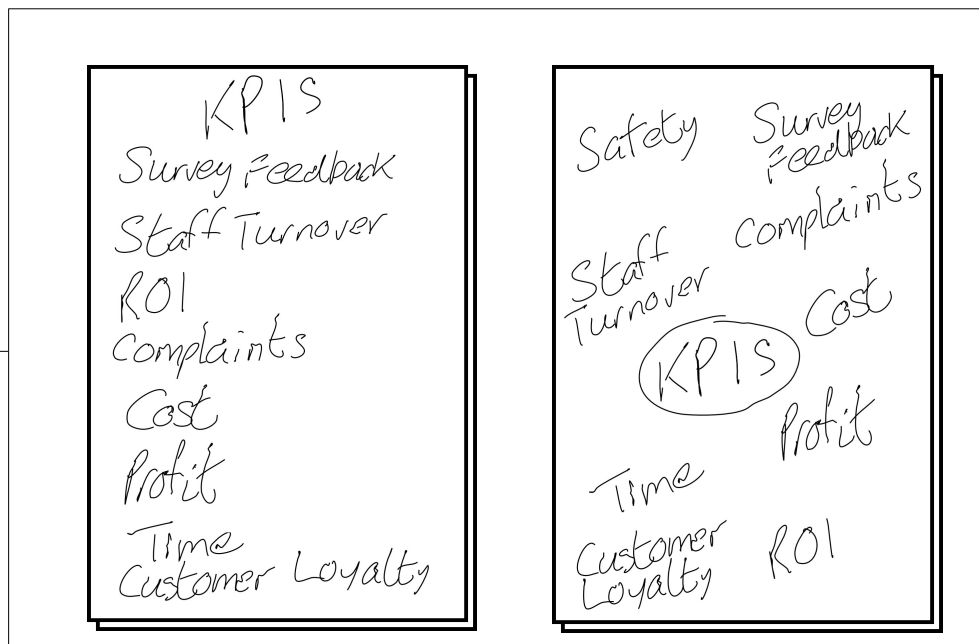
Good for presentations as you can write them beforehand, use different colours, draw pictures etc, and you can face the audience while using it. You can also easily refer back to previous pages. Not so easy to change or update, but that’s not a problem if you’re thinking as you go.

If you’re using a flipchart to take notes, here’s a very simple idea for you that will influence your audience’s interactivity.

If you put the heading at the top and write down comments in a list, when the list reaches the bottom of the page, it’s an unconscious cue for the audience to stop contributing, so they tend to clam up. If you carry on eliciting contributions, you end up having to squeeze them on, and it ends up as a mess.

Instead, write your heading in the middle and add contributions randomly around the page. This achieves several things for you:

- It takes away any implication of importance of the contributions at the top
- It allows you to keep on adding contributions without getting squashed
- It encourages more interactivity because the page doesn’t get to the ‘end’



## 6.22 Handling Questions and Answers

Questions and objections are a wonderful source of feedback for you - they tell you that people are paying attention!

Questions demand a direct answer. Objections often provoke argument. Unfortunately, people ask questions for lots of different reasons, only one of which is “to find out an answer”, so it’s not always useful for you to answer questions.

Why do people ask questions?

- To demonstrate knowledge
- To demonstrate superiority over the presenter
- To disguise an objection
- To provoke a response from someone else
- To demonstrate that they were listening
- To waste time
- To set up for an attack
- To gain control of the presentation
- To learn something

Leading questions, or at least questions that are not motivated by an interest in the answer, can lead you away from your intended direction. The solution to this is very simple:

- Pause
  - Repeat the question
  - Clarify the question
  - Answer the question (if you want to)
-

## 6.23 Err...

What do you think might be a word that most presenters will say most often while they're presenting? Well it's not a word as such, but we'll pretend that it is.

The word is, "Err...."

Let's make ERR a mnemonic. It's a bit of a squeeze but let's see.

Someone asks you a question.

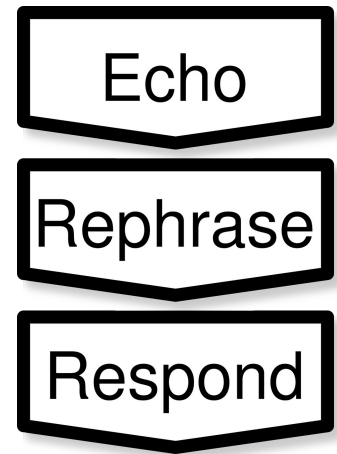
You say, "Err..."

Remember that ERR means that you:

**Echo** back their question, then

**Rephrase** it to show you understand, then

**Reply** if appropriate.



Why is this important? Why not just answer the question?

Firstly, it is genuinely useful to make sure you're answering the question you think you're answering, so you can check this by Echoing it back. When you Echo back the question, the questioner can decide if that's what they really meant to ask you.

When you **Echo** the question, use the questioner's words exactly.

Secondly, when you **Rephrase** the question, you give the questioner another chance to check that what you understand is what they meant. It also gives you a chance to check that the questioner's motives are genuine.

For example, someone might ask, "Is this analysis reliable?" Of course, you're going to say yes. Why would anyone expect you to say, "Actually, no, it's not very reliable but I was in a hurry to put my report together". What are they really saying? Maybe they don't understand the data and they're hoping that your answer will give them some more clues.

So you might Rephrase the question with, "Are you asking for statistical reliability data, or would you find case studies more useful?"

In Rephrasing the question, you have appealed to their need either for reassurance or for raw data from which to draw their own conclusions.

Finally, you can **Reply**, but only if you want to. You may choose to defer the question until later, if it breaks the flow of your presentation, or you may ask the questioner to ask it again when you get to the Q&A section. During your Q&A section itself, you generally would Reply unless the question led to a group discussion and you felt it wasn't necessary to join in. This would usually be the case when the questioner's colleagues do a better job of answering than you could have done yourself!

### 6.23.1 ERR...

You can present on any subject for one minute. The rest of the group will ask relevant questions which you will handle using the above approach.

Echo

Rephrase

Reply

## 6.24 When Should you Take Questions?

Whether you're going to take questions throughout the presentation or at the end, you need to do these things:

- Allow time in your schedule – as a rule of thumb, plan your presentation to last about three-quarters of your allocated time.
- Handle questions using the format above, otherwise you will get sidetracked, which dilutes your key message and eats up time
- Preferably have someone else manage the Q&A process for you
- Make a note of the questions so that you can incorporate your answers into the end of your presentation

Whether you take questions in the middle or at the end, you handle them in the same way, otherwise you lose control of the presentation back to the audience, and that is a very bad thing.

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What many people will do is to announce that their presentation has ended when they have finished talking, then they invite questions. This is how that structure looks:

Invitation setup	Room setup	Presentation	Close	Q&A
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With this common format:

- You hand control of the room back to the audience before you have finished
- You allow the audience to dictate the pace of the questions
- You allow the audience to decide when there are no more questions
- You allow the audience to decide when the presentation ends
- You miss the golden opportunity to incorporate the questions into your summary

If you close the presentation and then invite questions, you are telling the audience that you failed to cover everything they needed. Their perception will be that they got what they needed by asking you questions. The presentation fizzles out when there are no more questions.

If you invite questions and then close the presentation, you are telling the audience that you are flexible and authoritative, and that you are adapting to their needs. Their perception will be that the presentation was interactive and that it gave them everything they needed. The presentation ends cleanly when you close it.

Compare it to a film. Does a film end, or does it just fizzle out when the characters have nothing left to say?

Here's a better format:

Invitation setup	Room setup	Presentation	Q&A	Close
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## 6.25 Conference and Panel Presentations

When you have a number of people presenting and you have a panel Q&A session at the end, the approach is a little different.

In this situation, one person will have the role of managing the questions. Here's what they do:

1. Invite questions from the audience
2. Select someone to ask a question
3. Repeat the question so that the whole audience can hear it, and clarifies it if necessary
4. Asks which speaker will respond, or selects one if the choice is clear
5. Checks that the answer is satisfactory
6. Moves to the next person with a question or closes the Q&A

You can see how steps 3 and 4 are partly designed to give the speaker time to think of a good answer! When you're presenting by yourself, pausing and clarifying also gives you valuable time to think.

## 6.26 Closing the Presentation

It's very important that you give yourself time to close the presentation properly. Human nature makes us remember the start and end of things, which is why it's so important that your key message – what you want the audience to do for you – comes at the beginning and the end.

You've no doubt heard the old adage that you should tell them what you're going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them.

This is rather an old fashioned idea, and it gives you a big clue to the way presentations used to be. You sit there whilst someone tells at you. Is that the kind of presentation you find enjoyable, useful and memorable?

So here's a more up to date version that you can use:

- Tell the audience what you want them to do
- Do whatever you need to do to get them to do what you want
- Tell the audience what you want them to do

In closing you might also want to make sure the audience knows what to do next, how to contact you, what is happening next, or anything that is relevant to your presentation.

At the end of the presentation, tell the audience what will happen next. It's a common mental rehearsal technique, and it simply prepares the audience for what is going to happen as a result of your presentation and of course reminds them that they need to take action.

For example, "So you came here today, and now you've heard all about presenting, and we've told you about some of the ways that you can be even more effective when presenting, and as you read through this, you may have thought of some questions, and as this workshop begins to draw to a close you might think of more ways to put this into practice, tomorrow, next week, next month and as you use more and more of these techniques with every presentation you deliver, you can find yourself becoming more and more effective and elegant with each new experience".



### **6.26.1 The final minute**

Practice the final minute of your presentation.

Tell the audience what you now want them to do, and anything else that you need to remind them of.

Start just before your presentation started, move through it and out into the future, creating a flow through time that achieves your outcomes

And remember to thank them... for what?

- For listening?
- For their questions?
- For sharing their experiences?

Remember – people will do more of what you give them recognition for. What do you want your audiences to do more of?

### 6.26.2 Putting it all together

You can present on any subject for five minutes, briefing the group in any way that you choose to suit what you want to present. At the end of the presentation, the audience will give specific feedback on:

What most attracted their attention

How the presentation made them feel

What they really loved about your presentation style

Your outcome
Framing Questions
The body of your presentation – including questions and narrative
Q&A (How you want to handle questions)
What's going to happen next
Close – what do you want your audience to do more of?

## 6.27 Summary

### 6.27.1 Conclusions

We'll split the group into two teams.

You have 20 minutes to put together a 10 minute (maximum) presentation, which will be in two parts.

Part 1: Think about how you communicate within BACP and also externally. What, if anything, will you change as a result of today?

Part 2: Each team member to take it in turns to wrap up the day as follows:

"What I wanted was:

How I've achieved that is:

How you have helped me is:

Thankyou!"

Then introduce the next presenter, with eager anticipation...

Your team will be scored out of a possible 100 points, as follows:

Maximum 25 points - Understanding of key learning points

Maximum 25 points - Demonstration of how to apply the theories discussed

Maximum 25 points - Understanding of financial and business impact

Maximum 25 points – Connection with the audience

Your team's score will add to your individual assessment score.

## 6.28 Assignment

Practice doesn't make perfect – practice makes permanent.

Practising the right things makes perfect.

You might admire presenters who can stand up anywhere, in front of anyone and talk about anything. That kind of 'natural' ability actually takes a great deal of preparation. The only thing you see is the final result of that. The best presenters are not the best at speaking in front of people – they're the best at planning. Putting that plan into action is then the easy part.

Your assignment is simply to put together your presentation plan for the project presentation day on November 28<sup>th</sup>. You can either work in your project team or individually for this assignment.

Remember that you have 30 minutes for the presentation itself, and 15 minutes for Q&A.

Email your assignment any time before November 28th to [peter@genius.coach](mailto:peter@genius.coach)