

TOP 10 MISTAKES Made by Presenters

Are you guilty of any of these?

1. Walk in the light of the projector - a colleague of mine always said this is the professional equivalent of wearing white socks with a dark suit. It makes us look foolish and unprofessional.

2. Dance a jig - presenters always seem to want to move around rather than planting their feet. Use your upper body for movement don't walk around unless it has a purpose, movement distracts audiences and reduces your impact. Imagine your legs have roots growing into the floor; now use your upper body to create emphasis and impact with powerful gestures.

3. Hiding behind PowerPoint - not physically (although that is known to have happened!) but emotionally. We often emotionally 'hide' behind the slides expecting them to do the presenting for us. This is visible by presenters standing to one side and reading out the content of the slides. Remember your slides summarise and visualise point they do not present!

4. Lack of eye contact - the classic failing of public speaking is to not look your audience in the eye, but it's uncomfortable isn't it? Actually yes it is, but this is our problem not the audience's! When presenting you need to look at individual people for slightly longer than feels comfortable (normally counting to three works) you can use people's names if that helps but just speak to one person at a time - NEVER do this in order of where they are say, you are not a security camera.

5. Lack of enthusiasm - do you care about your subject? Do you want your audience to care? So is our enthusiasm visible? Hint: You can't answer this last question yourself!!

6. Forget to interact and engage with the audience - we get so caught up with our role in presenting we forget how bad we all are at listening for long periods of time! Typically audiences can listen for about 10-15 minutes before drifting, even with a great speaker. Remember to place conversation, thought or interaction regularly in your presentation - usefully this takes the pressure off us as the presenter also.

7. Standing to one side of the room - OK, so the problem here is that PowerPoint is in the middle and we don't want to violate mistake number one, correct? Well firstly this room layout; bad news, PowerPoint should sit to one side of the presenter; the presenter must be the focus for the audience not the slideshow. Unfortunately this is often not possible as room layouts and technology can be fixed, in these cases learn to use the 'b' key on your keyboard it blanks the screen so you can stand in the centre and command the audience's attention.

8. Talking too quick or too quietly - I bet you wish it would be over fast or perhaps we don't want to forget what we want to say! We need to recognise that confident speaker look in control and sound self-assured. Simple tip here is just SLOW DOWN and SPEAK UP these two gestures will give you time to think and give you more gravitas.

9. Holding things in our hands - what do you do with things in your hands when you are nervous? Yes, so do most people and having something in our hands puts on show our emotional state, when you start to get uncomfortable or under pressure the audience will see. Even if we fiddle unconsciously for any reason audiences interpret it as nerves - empty those hands!

10. Animating bullets one line at a time - unless you have a reason for keeping your next point 'secret' then don't do it. It damages our fluency and leads to reading out slides point by point. The simple act of turning off animation totally transforms many speakers into fluent engaging presenters - try it.



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About the Expert:

Chris is an accredited Master Trainer with Carnegie University who has worked in training and development since 2001 and is proud to be amongst the highest rated trainers working in the UK ranked by participant feedback scores. He has become internationally known for having a dynamic and positive approach to delivery. Chris has worked with the leadership of organisations such as First Direct, General Motors, Lifetime, HBOS Group, Orange Plc, Kuwait Oil Company, LloydsTSB, HSBC, Crest Nicholson, Thales Group, Virgin Mobile, Saudi Telecom, Avon & Somerset Constabulary and The University of Wales.

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