POWER
SPEAKING
INFLUENCE. IMPACT. INSPIRE.

ConferenceSpeaking
Best Practices

TRANSFORMING IDEAS INTO RESULTS

Everything
starts with
the content
and your
audience!

KNOW

THE TYPE AND EXPECTATIONS

OF YOUR SESSION

BREAKOUT

How long?
Individual or
team?

TECHNICAL SESSION

What are team member roles and responsibilities? Who is the leader? What is the order and flow? How will transitions and intros be handled?

CASE STUDY

Is there a customer guest? Has there been coordination? Roles?

Know as much about your audience as possible before developing content. Ask previous speakers, managers, and colleagues.

Deliver on the abstract and content expectations.

Make sure the level is correct for your audience, i.e., beginning, intermediate, advanced or mixed—and maintain that level of content throughout the session.

Plan a creative or engaging opening. You are likely to link your opening to your close.

Develop a Main Message (*theme*) that will be repeated in your presentation.

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Create
content that sticks!

Clarify the agenda and goals at the beginning:

- Don't make assumptions about the audience and their background knowledge.
- Be clear about what will be covered in this session. State your key points you will cover in your talk.
- Abstract of session: don't read it—just reference it.

State your key points in the body of the talk and then provide examples (*narrative or data-driven*).

- Use examples that are based on the real world. Relevant case studies help involve the audience.
- Consider demos or relevant case studies when possible.

Consider fewer topics in more depth rather than promise too much.

Focus on the business benefits and business justification of the technology, but avoid a "sales pitch."

Make sure there is a smooth flow to your presentation. Build bridges — transitions — between main parts of your structure so there is a logical flow.

Link Breakouts with other sessions. See if you can reference another appropriate session so the conference demonstrates coordination.

Plan the ending. (*"Before I summarize, let me take five minutes of questions"*).

Summarize, state your Main Message, and Action Step.
Go full circle by returning to the opening.

Captivate
with style

An audience judges the integrity of content and delivery through Style!

Project personal confidence and credibility. *Use space!* When your arms get close to your torso, you look nervous. When you open up, there is a sense of authority.

Stand solid and grounded. Plant your feet, balance weight evenly, and be centered (*Posture and Stance*).

Walk with purpose. Transition at changes in the content to help the audience delineate concepts (*Movement*).

Be descriptive (*show the meaning*), open up and use more space with confidence. For larger audiences (*over 100*) keep gestures "up and out" so people in the back of the room can see (*Gestures*).

Create credibility and interest while decreasing nervousness through eye contact (*Eye Interaction*).

Pause for content flow, to decrease nervousness, and increase audience retention. (*Pause*) Try combining movement with pause to re-engage

Use vocal variety to demonstrate commitment, conviction, and engagement (Voice).

COMMAND THE STAGE
Visual aids

Avoid "death by powerpoint!"

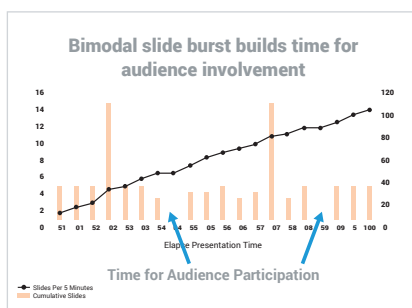PowerPoint recommendations and quotes from past Cisco Live attendees:

- "Less is more!"
- "Use pictures, not just text slides."
- "Audience members will appreciate speaker notes because they can explain the material when they return to work."
- "The best session I went to only had 40-45 slides…"
- "95% of the breakout sessions use PowerPoint slides — but that's not learning!"
- "Liven it up in the presentation…half were very wordy, factual and busy slides that could be changed to make them more interactive – thru animations or something."

Incorporate visual aids strategically, remembering that the speaker is always more important than the visuals.

Use the "B" key (*Check with the conference organizer if you can use the "B" key*) to blank the screen to take questions, provide analogies, and give customer examples.

Information only slides: You can use the appendix section of your handout to add slides that are not absolutely necessary for your presentation. People who want more info will have the slides and you can refer to them on the spot if you need to.

Bimodal slide burst builds time for audience involvement

Elapsed Presentation Time

Time for Audience Participation

Slides Per 5 Minutes
Cumulative Slides

Have a summary of 5-6 key slides.

Use sentence headline assertions to provide a snapshot of the main point of the slide.

Use builds and animation for complex diagrams to control the amount of information revealed at one time and maintain the focus on the speaker.

Slidebursts can help you move through a number of slides that do not need individual viewing. This technique allows you to highlight the Key Point of a series of slides, but not take the time to present each one.

- Not all slides are created equal. Cluster or batch slides into groups that can be covered quickly to make a point.
- Use phrases like: "The main idea of this next series is…" or "The next few slides demonstrate variations of…"

COMMAND THE STAGE
Logistics

little things WILL MAKE A DRAMATIC IMPACT!

The Room. The room is an essential part of your presentation because the audience will blame you for anything that goes wrong.

- If possible, do a live rehearsal in the actual room.
- Observe other speakers in that room to see if there are problems.
- Check the lighting. Can the audience see you even when the slides are on?
- Check the temperature. If the audience members are too hot or cold, you get blamed. Know how to control it and how long it takes to reset.

Test the microphones. Know what kind of microphone you will have. Is it part of a stationary lectern? If you have a wireless, be aware of the clothing and jewelry you wear. Where will it be attached? How will the cord wind through your clothing?

Check the room set up. In some cases the slides are set off to one side of the room. This allows the speaker to be center stage and to move over to the screen to point to an image. (*This positioning is preferable to having the screen in the middle of the room*).
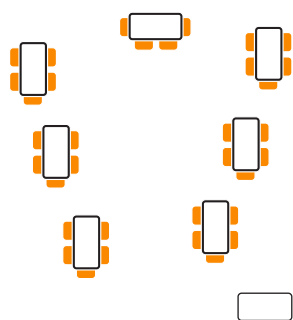
Check the height of the screen. Even with a large screen, the bottom of the slides may not be visible from the back of the room. Move the slides as high as possible.

Tape off the back few rows. Ask the room monitors to tape off the last rows and put a "reserved" sign on them. Also ask them to encourage the early participants to move to the front and closer to the middle seats. Monitors can take the tape off the back rows once the session starts so latecomers can take those seats and not cause a distraction.

Place a table in front. Ask for a table in front of the room for water, notes, props, and a place to put down the pointer or remote.

Turn laptop to the side. By turning the laptop sideways for reference, the speaker doesn't have to stay behind the table to see the images.

Don't use laser pointers. Laser pointers are hard to see against a white background. Instead of just pointing to a spot, *drag* the pointer to the specific area, hold it briefly, then turn and talk to the audience. You also may verbally direct the audience where to look.

Confidence monitors. In a large room, there are often confidence monitors below the stage, which will have your slides displayed, which you can use instead of your laptop. You must find time rehearsal time if you haven't used them before.
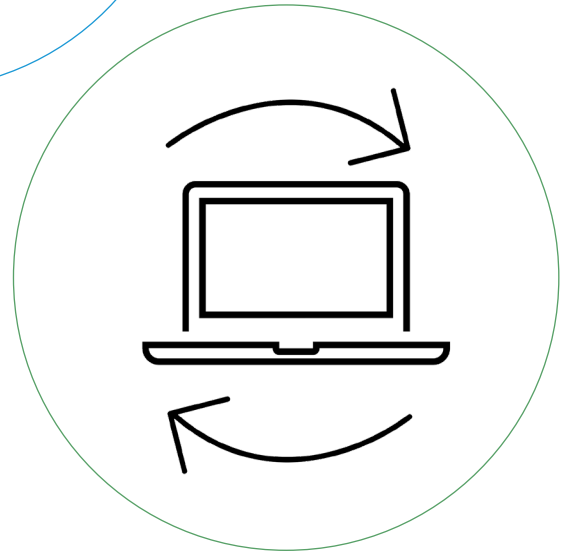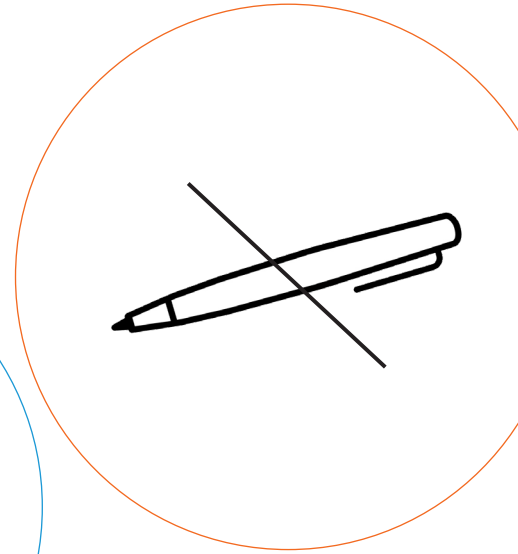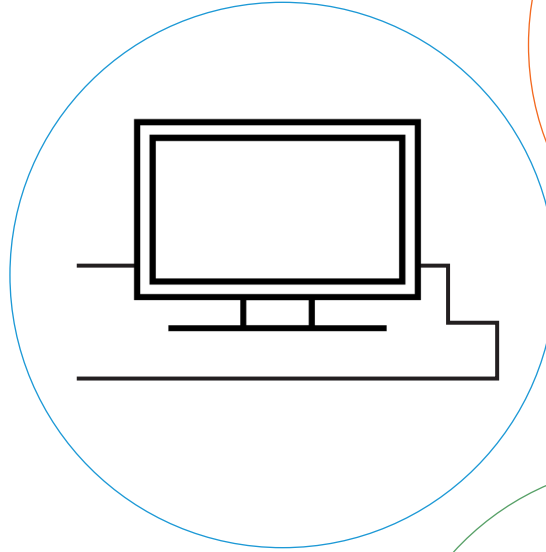
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AUDIENCE MANAGEMENT

Questions & answers

SKILLFULLY ANSWERING AUDIENCE QUESTIONS IS CRITICAL TO SPEAKER SUCCESS!

Two kinds of questions. 1) Those you can answer quickly and move on; **2)** Those you defer until later after the session or in another session. (*Have a colleague record these so you don't have to remember*).

Set up Q & A ground rules. Tell them at the beginning how you will handle questions during your session.

Style. Maintain solid delivery style during your answer. Stand with confidence and try putting one hand in your pocket. It will make you look and feel relaxed.

Keep answers short. Short answers allow more people to participate, and keep you from going down a "rat hole" or getting lost in the details.

Anticipate questions. Think about your audience in advance. What are they likely to ask?

Repeat or paraphrase the question. It allows everyone to hear the question and allows you time to think.

What if you don't know the answer? Admit it. Volunteer to research the answer and get back to them. You may also ask if anyone else in the audience knows the answer.

Timing. Include Q & A time in the total time you have. That means you have less time for your content.

AUDIENCE MANAGEMENT
Questions & answers

continued...

How should you end your presentation? As soon as you put up a final Q & A slide, people head for the door. Take a few questions, then end with a memorable close that either ties back to your opening or your Main Message and gives them something to think or do as they leave your session.

How do you ask for questions? Don't ask, "Are there any questions?" Instead ask, "What questions do you have?" (*It's more positive*). If there are none, ask and answer one yourself. Say something like, "A question that often comes up is this..." Then answer it yourself. Then say, "What other questions do you have?" If you still get nothing, move on!

Too few questions. Plan some bonus material. If you end too early they feel cheated. You can end a little early and invite people with questions to come up to ask them personally. Remember, there might be language considerations so some

COMMAND THE STAGE
Timing

Stay on time! As a benchmark, our recommendation is if you have 60 minutes, plan to spend 5 minutes for your Opening, 35 minutes for your Key Points and Evidence, 5 minutes for your Closing, and 13 minutes for Questions and Answers, leaving 2 minutes for your Wrap Up.

Working Agenda. Control the timing for each section of your presentation.

- Take 5 minutes off the front end to allow for latecomers and logistics.
- Plan 5 minutes on the back end for required slides:
    - Evaluations
    - Other breakout sessions
    - Suggested readings or web sites
    - Memorable Close

Stay on time!

Divide the talk into "chapters" and time each one. Be sure the total time allows for questions and interactions both during the talk and at the end.

Develop a working agenda to manage time.

Practice individual chapters to be sure you can do them in the time you plan. If not, trade time with other sections. Going overtime or rushing at the end is "death" for a speaker.
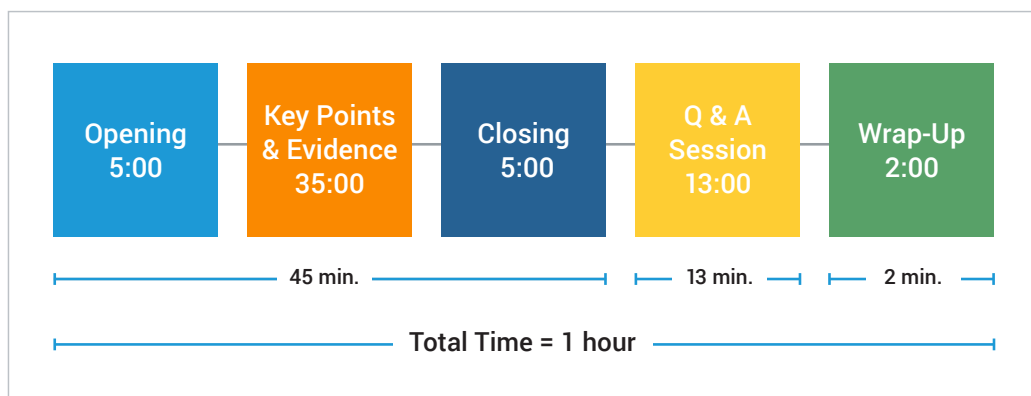
Have a time monitor for tracking or have a clock that is visible on your slides but not to your audience.

COMMAND THE STAGE

Timing

Have a timeline for each section that you can see during your presentation so you always know where you are.

Manage Your Time

| Opening 5:00 | Key Points & Evidence 35:00 | Closing 5:00 | Q & A Session 13:00 | Wrap-Up 2:00 |

45 min. · 13 min. · 2 min.

Total Time = 1 hour

Presentation Flow: Create Your Own

Bottom-Line Best Practices for
Conference Speaking

In summary, this PowerSpeaking, Inc. "Speaker Best Practices" document is a guide for successful conference presentation delivery. Your understanding and implementation of these concepts and strategies will ensure the audience rating your session highly.

Remember...

- Everything starts with the content and your audience
- The little things will make a dramatic impact
- Avoid "Death by PowerPoint"
- Dealing with Q & A is critical to speaker success
- Stay on time
- An audience judges the integrity of content and delivery through style

WITH THAT IN MIND, OUR TEAM WISHES YOU THE BEST OF LUCK AT YOUR UPCOMING CONFERENCE, AND WE HOPE YOU WILL SHARE YOUR RESULTS WITH US!

Here's to a standing ovation!

thank you!

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