High-Stakes Technical Presenting: 3 Top Strategies

POWER SPEAKING
INFLUENCE. IMPACT. INSPIRE.

> *"Every executive we have interviewed has told us, 'Get to the point quicker. It's not a murder mystery.'"— PowerSpeaking Master Facilitator and Coach John Warren*

Making a technical presentation to your peers is one thing. Pitching an idea or request to senior executives, a product review to clients, or a speech to non-technical decision makers requires a different skill set.

When the stakes are high, your technical presentation or talk needs to be super-relevant and clear to your audience, tailored to their needs, and engaging.

Here are three of our top strategies to help you do just that.

Knowing Your Audience

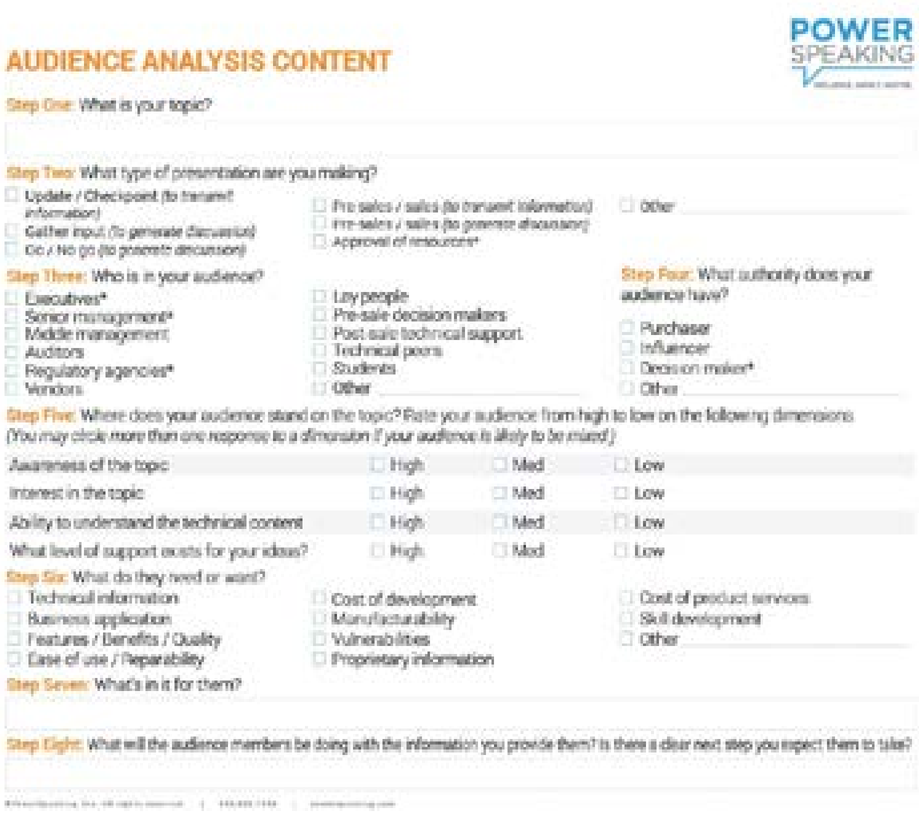
Whether you're making an internal technical presentation or speaking at a conference, knowing who is in your audience is critical.

In a recent PowerSpeaking Live! conversation, panelist Sarah Polan, Field CTO at Hashicorp, talked with PowerSpeaking CEO Carrie Beckstrom about several key things you can do to know your audience, and to create a common understanding.

- If you're presenting to stakeholders, research their backgrounds, how long they've been in the industry, and what their perspectives are likely to be on the topic
- Devote a few minutes at the beginning of any technical presentation to establishing a "baseline" of vocabulary, terms, and perspectives to make sure everyone is on the same page
- If you're speaking at a conference, consider the overall focus and theme when crafting your talk, as well as the other speakers (especially the ones presenting just before and after you)

Hear more from Sarah . . .

Additionally, we've developed a valuable audience analysis tool you can use to do your research:



AUDIENCE ANALYSIS CONTENT

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Step One: What is your topic?

Step Two: What type of presentation are you making?

- ☐ Update / Checkpoint *(to transmit information)*
- ☐ Gather input *(to generate discussion)*
- ☐ Go / No go *(to generate discussion)*
- ☐ Pre-sales / sales *(to transmit information)*
- ☐ Pre-sales / sales *(to generate discussion)*
- ☐ Approval of resources*
- ☐ Other

Step Three: Who is in your audience?

- ☐ Executives*
- ☐ Senior management*
- ☐ Middle management
- ☐ Auditors
- ☐ Regulatory agencies*
- ☐ Vendors
- ☐ Lay people
- ☐ Pre-sale decision makers
- ☐ Post sale technical support
- ☐ Technical peers
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Other

Step Four: What authority does your audience have?

- ☐ Purchaser
- ☐ Influencer
- ☐ Decision maker*
- ☐ Other

Step Five: Where does your audience stand on the topic? Rate your audience from high to low on the following dimensions *(You may circle more than one response to a dimension if your audience is likely to be mixed.)*

Awareness of the topic	☐ High	☐ Med	☐ Low
Interest in the topic	☐ High	☐ Med	☐ Low
Ability to understand the technical content	☐ High	☐ Med	☐ Low
What level of support exists for your ideas?	☐ High	☐ Med	☐ Low

Step Six: What do they need or want?

- ☐ Technical information
- ☐ Business application
- ☐ Features / Benefits / Quality
- ☐ Ease of use / Reparability
- ☐ Cost of development
- ☐ Manufacturability
- ☐ Vulnerabilities
- ☐ Proprietary information
- ☐ Cost of product services
- ☐ Skill development
- ☐ Other

Step Seven: What's in it for them?

Step Eight: What will the audience members be doing with the information you provide them? Is there a clear next step you expect them to take?

Once you understand your audience, it's time to make sure you are concise and on point with your content.

Scale Your Content to the Time Allotted—and the Intended Outcome

In that same Live! discussion about technical presenting, Microsoft Technology Specialist Emilio Reyes Le Blanc shared tips for keeping your content focused and to the point—especially with decision makers.

His top advice:

- Focus on what decision(s) need to be made in the meeting, then tailor your content accordingly
- Manage discussions so you don't veer off into detail that can't be covered in the time allotted
- Use the 10/30 rule to narrow the scope of your content and allow for much more discussion time

Listen to more of Emilio's insights . . .

Emilio mentioned the 10/30 Rule for presenting to executives. With this kind of audience, your role is often to facilitate a conversation, not just deliver a presentation. For example, if you have 30 minutes with executives or clients, plan to present 10 minutes of material and devote 20 minutes for discussion and interaction—and not necessarily in sequence.

Last but not least . . .

Start With Your Bottom Line and Be Prepared for a Discussion

Getting to the point and responding well to questions and challenges are important in most presentations, but more so with executive or mixed audiences (technical and non-technical).

PowerSpeaking Master Facilitator and Coach John Warren added to the Live! panel discussion by sharing insights about focusing on your bottom line and employing the “PREP” framework to respond to questions.

John outlined three top tips for successful technical presentations to decision makers:

- Start with the “what,” a clear, concise statement of what you’re proposing or presenting
- Quickly state the “so what?,” which is how it will benefit the business
- Use a framework tool, like the “PREP” model, to answer questions or challenges:

My **P**OSITION is . . .

My **R**EASON is . . .

The **E**VIDENCE for this is . . .

So again, my **P**OSITION is . . .

Hear more detail on his tips . . .

Finally . . .

Here's to Your Success!

Use these strategies and the additional resources below to take your technical presentation and speaking skills to the next level, allowing you to make a greater impact on your organization—and your career!

Want to learn more?

Take advantage of these resources:

🌟 **Gain more valuable insights** and practical tools for crafting and delivering technical presentations that engage your audience and drive business, in our blog: [Deliver More Powerful Technical Presentations: 8 Techniques.]

You'll learn how to:

- develop a clear main message
- create a meaningful action step for your audience
- embrace the power of an engaging delivery style—and much more.

⚡ **Bonus video (*1:40 mins*):** Presenting to executives? Listen to five senior business leaders talk about why it's critical that you level up your facilitation skills when presenting in the C-suite.

😍 **In-depth Training:** Get expert help in our HighTechSpeaking® in-person or virtual workshop, where you'll benefit from a research-backed program with plenty of opportunities to practice.