Group Presentations

Most fields, whether in academia or industry, will expect you to work in a team or group. Often, presentations for that work will be done as a group. Group presentations may seem easier than individual ones; however, too many cooks spoil the broth, as they say.

There are three main ways that group presentations differ from individual presentations. There are no hard rules about group presentations (much like individual presentations), and the complexity of group presentations is even higher because you can have any number of presenters. Some of these suggestions will work for certain presentations, and others won't. But, they will give you a strong toolbox upon which to improve group talks.

i) Introduction

We need to introduce our topic/team. But, there's many ways to do that:

- One speaker could introduce the entire team
- Each speaker could introduce themselves at the beginning
- Each speaker could introduce themselves when they speak
- Each speaker could introduce the next speaker before they transition

The first speaker should introduce the goals of the presentation so that the audience knows the overarching theme across the different speakers.

Examples:

1) *"Hello, my name is Taylor, and I'm here today with my team, John and Alice".*
2) *"Current research into ____ has long been popular, but it's lacked the financial viability to be successful in practice. Today, we'll show you how we've changed that."*

ii) Transitions

It is critical to direct the audience's attention through the transition. The goal here is to make the transition smooth from both a verbal perspective and a content perspective. Here are some more verbal methods:

- Introduce the next person (call them by name if already introduced)
- Just have the next person come in and capture audience attention.
- Finish the previous person's thought/sentence/antecedent

It is important that each speaker bring something *new* to the table. Otherwise, they seem superfluous (plus it helps the audience signpost). Typically, each speaker should only speak once and for about the same

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amount of time, for balance. It's important that speakers clearly state the topic of their part.

Transitions can also be done physically using gestures and/or space. Here are some examples:

- Hand the clicker to the next person
- Leave the center area and have the next speaker come in
- Gesture to the next speaker as you introduce them

Examples:

1) *–"I'm going to hand it over to Tom, our lead developer"* ****hands clicker to Tom****
2) *– Person 1 - "All of these findings have one important thing in common...."*
   - Person 2 - "They all lower overhead cost."

iii) Conclusion/Q&A

The conclusion of a group presentation needs to tie the ideas of the talk, the speakers, and the overall goal of the talk together. The concluding speaker might:

- Thank appropriate collaborators (if necessary)
- Summarize the goals and the contributions of the talk

Then, there might be a Q&A section, which can be tricky in a group. There's a few ways to handle questions:

- Let the team member who handled that area answer
- If you have an leader, let them field it and pass it off if necessary
- If you know you can answer the question, physically step forward to let your team know you want to answer

iv) Other Notes/Suggestions

- Choose an MC
  - This person is usually responsible for the introduction. They can also be in charge of the transitions and the conclusion.
- Your presentation team depends on the type of talk
  - If it's a research talk, you might just want the heads of each area.
  - For a product pitch, you might need people who don't speak but are in charge of the demo.
- Each speaker should be attentive when they are not speaking. You are always "on". Focus your attention on the current speaker.
- Don't interject unless it is planned, you don't want to confuse the audience by muddling which speaker should have their attention.

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Your Turn

Get into groups of 4 or 3 and create your own, short, group presentation. This should be a persuasive presentation about a topic of your choosing. You will have 15 minutes to put together a 4-minute presentation.

Things that are up to you:

- Topic (e.g. MIT student life, EECS class, current events)
- Positions in the group
- Whether you have an MC
- Introduction, transition, and conclusion style

Things that **must** be included in your talk:

1) An effective way of dividing your content. (e.g. Does each speaker bring something new to the table? Does the content flow make sense?)
2) Effective transitions that use space as well as verbal connection (e.g. Do you help transition the audience's attention? Do you do so in multiple ways?)

Get creative! The best group presentations are ones that are unique and grab audience's attention with their novelty.

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