

Success at round-table presentations

Small groups are a very special environment in which to present. Interaction is key. The participants want to input more, and you as the presenter have the chance and should both respect and respond to their wishes. Here are three techniques that will help you to interactively direct events – regardless of whether your aim is to inform, convince or “just” to discuss an issue: **modular structure – providing orientation – directing the discussion.**



Ensure flexibility – use a modular structure

95 A standard presentation has an agenda – and you stick to it! Presentations to small groups also need to be structured – but not rigidly!

Working with small groups should be, and is, more dynamic, but that doesn't mean that you leave everything to chance. That's a recipe for chaos and disaster. What you need are:

- **Clearly defined information blocks** that you can present in a different order if necessary (e.g. market – competition – status – procedure)
- **A guiding line to follow**, e.g. a problem → solution structure: Start by outlining the current situation, then present the solution and the positive benefits and finish with the next steps. This is your guideline, but you can still change the order of the elements if you need to.
- **A technical “gear lever” for your modules**, for example, by using hyperlinks built into your presentation or using a target-group oriented presentation as a means of “switching gears.”

Flexostrukt is an HPS tool used during the Selling to Groups seminar as a way of familiarizing participants with the concept of a modular structure.

You are still responsible, however, for ensuring that the most important issues are covered within the allotted time limit.



96 Providing orientation: packaging and recapping

Your role as the presenter is much like that of a mountain guide in difficult terrain – it is **YOUR** responsibility to ensure that the summit is reached!

Orientation begins with an **agenda to define the route**, and this agenda needs to be accepted by the group (and perhaps modified). But that is not enough:

- **Take a short break after every stage** (i.e. after every item on the agenda) and don't push straight on to the next subject: What was the most important point covered?
- **Get approval before moving on:** Does anyone need any further information?
- Before “attacking the summit” (i.e. ask or call for agreement) **summarize** and concisely recap on the main points.

Understanding as a basis for agreement is also a key issue for HPS. Orientation by providing structure is also one of the four so-called *Verständlichmacher* (tools to understanding) defined by Prof. Schulz von Thun.

In the U.S., this technique is called **signposting**, i.e. signaling which way to go. Use it in your presentations!



Targeted interaction: relating, opening, checking

Sometimes even small groups are passive. How can you motivate them to get involved?

Practice makes perfect: our Selling to Groups seminar is the perfect opportunity to practice these dialogue-based techniques intensively in small groups.

- **“Relating” activates partners and strengthens relationships:** address individuals directly, quote statements and demonstrate understanding, e.g. “This will interest you, Mr. Green, and you, Mrs. Brown, in particular because...” or “As Mrs. Black mentioned earlier, the delivery times are too long,” or “I know that this is important for you as Quality Control Manager”
- **“Opening” is a way of creating space and time for genuine dialogue with the audience.** Use open questions (Who? Where? What? etc.) to get important information, e.g. “What do we need to concentrate on to make use of your time most effectively?”
- **“Checking” is how to review the status quo, anchor progress made and drive the situation forward.** This technique relies on closed questions aimed at getting a “Yes”. “Is that agenda OK for you?” or “Can I move on to the next point?” or “Is this information relevant for you?”

These techniques are great in any situation, in small groups and even in private contexts.



English Tips

When working with a small group, you need to have some good phrases to make the dialog sound more natural.

Our international English seminars focus on the non-native speaker of English. The goal is to forget the grammar and concentrate on the message, while giving you the tools to make you fluent.

Here’s some vocabulary and phrases to help you structure your presentation:

- Okay, Let’s start with the first point, which is...
- Right, that’s all I want to say about... Any questions so far?
- Moving on to my next point...
- I’ll come back to this later.
- Going back for a moment to what I said earlier...
- Before going on, I’d just like to say a little about...shows our sales...
- That’s an interesting question. I’ll come back to that in just a minute.
- Right, just before I finish, let me summarize the main points again...

By using these phrases, you’ll increase the understanding and sound more professional.

Today’s tip:

Kick off with the key message

It doesn’t matter if it’s a large presentation, a project meeting or a one-2-one: what is the key message that you have to get across, what “takeaway” must the audience get? Formulate a single sentence in normal, spoken English, say it a number of times and adapt it until you feel comfortable with it. You will need it at the close of the presentation. For optimal results, however, **only start on the preparation for the rest of the presentation after you have decided on this final sentence. Start at the finish!**

New!

Questions, Ideas & Tips ...

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