Presenting at your Best
Discussion Notes

What kind of work situations do you need to use public speaking and/or effective communication skills?
– presentations
– info sessions/webcasts
– leading/facilitating meetings
– media releases
– telephone problem solving

What are the inherent challenges in these assignments?
– distracted/disinterested/hostile/bored audiences
– experts in the audience who can undermine the presenter’s confidence and credibility
– clearly articulating a message in the moment
– emotions such as excitement, fear
– language/cultural differences
– how to use body language effectively including eye contact

What strategies can you suggest to deal with the inherent challenges in these assignments?

Regarding distracted/disinterested/hostile/ bored audiences:
– know your audience – their background knowledge, interest in the topic, whether they are required to attend the session, etc.
– engage the audience with questions
– reward and recognize their contribution to discussions
– ensure that it is clear how the message is applied
– use a hook to generate interest
– use humour
– deal with distractions directly
– take breaks
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Regarding expert audiences
– ensure you are well prepared
– practice and/or review your messages with known experts in the field
– thank members of the audience for their questions
– be humble and open to the learning opportunity
– acknowledge the contribution that the audience can make to everyone's expanded
learning on the topic
– if there's something that you don't know in the moment, offer to get back to the
audience member
– put items on a parking lot and return to them when more information is available
– restate questions from the audience to ensure that you understand the point

Clearly articulating a message in the moment
– practice using a confident voice
– minimize distracting words like um, ah; pause instead
– have jot notes with key points
– be okay with saying “I don't know”
– engage with the audience
– structure your information to help your own flow as well as demonstrate the
organizational structure to the audience, for example, “three things come to mind on
this......”
– stop negative self-talk
– deal with environmental issues, e.g., hot or cold room

Dealing with emotions
– prepare and practice and prepare
– stay calm
– have a plan
– stop negative self-talk
– breathe
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-- recognize that we are all human

Language/cultural barriers
– speak clearly
– monitor your pacing
– know your audience
– look for body language
– stay in the present
– cultural differences can lead to misunderstanding; work at understanding; don’t assume
– invite questions of the audience
– take courses to expand your knowledge of cultural contexts

Body language
– practice
– watch good speakers on TV, on the internet, etc.
– practice through video chatting
– take it slow while you are learning
– focus on connecting
– know your content
– focus your eye contact around the room