

# Guidelines for Great Large Group Presentations

*By Judith Filek—President  
Impact Communications, Inc.*

What is the difference between your audience and an elephant? An elephant never forgets; an audience occasionally remembers.

You go to a lot of trouble to prepare for a large group presentation. You want it to be a success and people to feel their time was well spent. If you can put a check in front of the following guidelines, you will likely score a win.

1. **Know your audience.** Learn what they are expecting and what they care about. Talk to others who have spoken to this group. Find out titles and functions and make sure you are delivering a listener-focused message.
2. **Keep your message simple.** The more complicated your ideas seem, the more difficult it is for your listeners to agree. Ahead, know what you want to accomplish. Start strong with a compelling opening statement. Develop a limited number of key points. Resist the temptation to tell them all the interesting factoids about your topic. Remember, listeners rarely remember more than five main ideas. Three are ideal. End with a bang. Have a strong call to action.
3. **Incorporate stories, examples, analogies, and quotations to increase retention and connect with the audience.** To keep people's attention, be sure to add plenty of examples and stories. Remember people are moved by their heads and their hearts. If your topic is technical, analogies will help those people with limited knowledge. Think of the well known visionaries in your field and quote them. For example, if you are speaking about computers, include a pithy comment from Bill Gates or Steve Jobs.
4. **Add humor.** In a large group presentation, it is expected. That doesn't mean you have to be Jay Leno. A quick barb or irreverent aside work wonders to wake up your audience. It also builds rapport. The best speakers always lead with a humorous story before they jump into the content.
5. **Practice, practice, practice.** Rehearse with your slides, as well as the equipment. Use your own remote and laser pointer. Don't try to memorize, but rather, digest key points; then, stick to your script. It is dangerous to ad-lib. Practice out loud and on your feet at least six times. The best speaker's have notes, but they never depend on them, nor do they read from their slides.
6. **Create slides that aid comprehension and engage the audience.** While you don't want it to be gimmicky, your slides should have some "Hollywood" when it is a large group presentation. Pictures are important; so are titles.
7. **Keep your eyes on your listeners.** Watch their body language. It will help you to see how well they are paying attention. If they are walking out the door, you are not doing enough to engage them. At the beginning, look for a person in the back of the room to talk to first. Your head will be up, and you will look confident. If you look down, you will look unsure.
8. **Show you are a leader.** Don't hide behind a podium. It puts a wall between you and your audience. Purposely move towards various sections of the audience. Avoid meandering.
9. **Watch your speed.** Take your time. Don't rush. Give people a chance to digest your ideas. Spend at least 10 seconds on each slide, but no more than a 100. If it takes you 2-3 minutes to explain your slide, break it up into two slides.
10. **Be dynamic.** Show passion in your body and voice. Make sure your voice sounds energetic. Utilize big gestures. Small gestures won't be

*Continued on page 2*

seen in the back of the room. Don't forget to smile. A tense face will send the wrong message.

11. **Dress up.** Regardless of how the audience is dressed, you need to show you are in charge of the room. This is typically an occasion for a suit and tie or a dress and heels.
12. **Stick around afterwards.** Large group presentations are rarely a good venue for taking questions from the audience. People won't be able to hear them. Too much time will be lost if people queue at a microphone station. Let people know you welcome questions and will be available afterwards or will respond to any unanswered questions via email. Any hand-outs should have your contact information on each page.

While large group presentations can be daunting, these tips should serve as good reminders of what needs to be done so that you get rave reviews.

**Question:** *We're interested in your reaction to this article. What else have you found helpful when you have prepared for a large group presentation? [Click here](#) – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

*Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their presentation and telephone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, [www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com](http://www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com).*