

A Useful Guide for Making the Delivery of Training and Presentations Easier

Abstract: Nick Davies delivered two lively sessions at the BIALL Conference 2011 concerning, “How to make your training engaging? Presenting so People Learn”. This article summaries those practical notions relating to effective delivery of training sessions and provides tips relating to the art of successful presenting.

Keywords: skills training; professional development

Introduction

It is not the responsibility of your audience to be engaged in your training; instead it is your job to make it engaging and that cannot be managed by reading out loud from a series of PowerPoint slides! Should you ask people to convey their thoughts about the standard of presentations that they have witnessed, they will tend to be vocal about their complete lack of interest: ‘boring’, ‘dull’, ‘long winded’, ‘too much detail’ and ‘too many slides’.

Oddly, if asked to rate their own presentations, they’ll reply ‘not bad’!

We are all very busy with numerous calls on our time and distractions in the form of emails (work and personal), texts, social media chats, not to mention the every day business of work and home life. So, when we are invited to attend a training seminar or conference speech we want to feel as though the speaker has not wasted our time.

Yet, regularly, librarians and those in the knowledge management sector are allowing delegates attending their courses to leave in the belief that their time has been wasted. In reality, legal information professionals play a vital role within their organisations and need to be able to share their knowledge and experience more effectively. So, what’s the solution?

Perhaps it might be handy to think about training, or presentations, in terms of the following three entities:

- **THEM** (the audience)
- **YOU** (the presenter)
- **IT** (the presentation)



Nick Davies

THEM

The “one size does not fill all” consideration is vital in respect of any form of public speaking. While a presentation might be fine to deliver to one audience, it might be unsuitable for another; instead it would need adapting to suit the listeners in front of you.

The key, preliminary considerations prior to writing a presentation are:

Who: to whom will you be delivering the presentation? What is their age, sex, level of knowledge, expectation

(although note; what they expect and what you deliver may be two different things).

What: what are you talking to them about and, more importantly, what do they need to know before the end of the session. This is probably just two or three key points.

When: it is important to note that delivering a training session at 9.30 on a Friday morning is likely to be a vastly different experience from giving the identical session to the same people in the same room, if done later, at 3.00 pm on a Friday.

Equally, if you are one of a succession of speakers, adapt your style to take account of where your audience will be mentally at the time you commence with your presentation. It’s your responsibility to make allowance for the familiar scenario whereby the audience is sitting down after lunch, awaiting the next speaker, following three sessions in the morning, all of which have been PowerPoint heavy and which have overrun by ten minutes each!

Where: taking the physical space into account is important? Are you situated at a lectern? Is there a microphone and, if so, is it attachable to a lapel, is it a fixed mic or a handheld device? What is your proximity to the audience?

A useful parallel can be drawn where comedy clubs are concerned! These can often be described as a dark, cramped, low-ceilinged, windowless room at the front of which is a barely raised platform on which the performer stands, only one or two feet away from the nearest members of the audience. There is a reason for these conditions: it helps create energy between the performer and their audience. It is the responsibility of the performer to work with the physical conditions on offer when delivering training so as to ensure that the energy that is so essential to facilitate learning is generated.

For various reasons it is not always possible to address all of the above but it is important to have a stab at taking into account the surroundings and the environment; after all, if it wasn't for your audience you would not be there!

Once you have the 'Who, What, When and Where', you'll be an awful lot closer to figuring out 'how?' How are you going to deliver what you want and need to? With these elements (ie. the 'who, what, when and where') taken into consideration, it is possible to figure out the 'how'. How are you going to deliver the message you want and need to convey?

YOU

As a presenter, trainer and speaker, I am my own harshest critic. My own philosophy is that I attach a great deal of weight and responsibility to the role I play whether I'm standing up in front of many hundreds or just a handful of people. Their time is precious, they have kindly set some of it aside to listen to me, so I better not abuse the trust and confidence they have placed in me.

Consider any great speaker and there have been many; David Cameron, Tony Blair, Barack Obama, Neil Kinnock, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela to name a very few. They share certain qualities and attributes, amongst which are passion, conviction, energy, full use of their voice and the ability to be spontaneous.

Passion

Put simply, if you cannot get enthusiastic over the subject about which you are speaking, why should your audience?! This passion does not have to turn you in to a maniacal, desk-thumping proselytizer, neither does it require you to scream and shout! Indeed, some very impassioned speeches have had such power because they were softly, but deliberately, spoken.

Your audience will detect a lack of passion emanating from the presenter and quickly 'switch off', so it is important to make sure you, as the presenter, start your training sessions in the right frame of mind. That's easier said than done though. Speaking from experience, generating the enthusiasm necessary to make a good beginning to a presentation or training session is sometimes a bit of an effort. My own approach is personal and the following anecdote works for me: when my youngest son was eight

years old, I took him swimming. We were in the changing room, he quickly got out of his clothes, into his swimming costume, wrestled the unfeasibly tight elastic on his goggles round his head, walked towards the door that led to the pool and uttered the following:

"Showtime!"

Beautiful! Simply wonderful. And right there I learned a lesson about attitude prior to public speaking. Every time I am feeling a bit lack-lustre and about to speak, present or train, I utter that exact, same phrase "SHOWTIME" and it puts me in the right frame of mind almost immediately.

Energy

Energy is infectious. If you are energetic, whether that be through movement of your body or full use of your voice, your audience will detect it and give positive feedback to you. Not literally. The 'feedback' comes in the form of that 'buzz'; that intangible feeling you experience when the session is going well, when things are flowing naturally and the time is just flying by. Everyone who presents is likely to have experienced that and perhaps wondered 'why'. Well, take credit, because it was 'you' and the energy that you radiated was, in turn, fed back from the audience!

Voice

I've touched on using your voice already so I'll just give this tip: *practise*. Always practise using your voice. Read out loud when you are alone at home. Read anything. The back of a cereal packet, the instruction manuals you have stuffed in that draw, the labels on tins of food. It doesn't matter what it is, just as long as you really push yourself, hearing yourself speaking softly, loudly, angrily, happily, sternly etc. Your voice is a tool: it is important to use it.

Spontaneity

PowerPoint means that spontaneity is lost. There is predictability about using slides and, if a handout is given prior to the session any effect of using this resource will be sacrificed instantly. The ability to be spontaneous re-assures your audience that the presenter knows his/her subject. Answering questions, or dealing with issues that you had not planned to cover, shows tremendous self-confidence and lets them know that they are in safe hands.

However, spontaneity also keeps things fresh. Slides can be so monotonous. Going 'off piste' maintains the attention of the audience and keeps them engaged. Of course, the irony is that in order to be spontaneous you need to plan for it! Again, from personal experience, I once delivered an award ceremony from a script that lasted ninety minutes. Prior to the event, I sat and read it, making careful little notes in the margin. The organiser spotted me doing this and enquired as to what I was doing; "Putting in the adlibs" I replied!

The most assured way to add spontaneity to your presentation, however, is to make sure you know your subject matter completely. Always know your material

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and the order in which you intend to deliver it. Also, it is most important to have notes with you even if they are just bullet points on a card at which you can glance now and again during the course of your presentation. They'll keep you on track if you find yourself wondering too far off the main body of your talk.

IT

'It' refers to the presentation, the training course, the departmental update, or whatever else it is that forms the body of your talk. This is the element that needs to be creative if an emotional connection with your audience is to be achieved. The ability to make that connection is, I would suggest, the single most important skill that good speakers possess. Their words, no matter how they are spoken, touch their audience on an emotional level.

Perhaps the first question you should ask yourself when addressing this part of the process is 'how do I want my audience to feel?' It is the speaker who brings their knowledge to life. Certain questions arise. How do you want the audience to feel once they leave; motivated, thoughtful, contemplative, or elated? Is the purpose of your talk a call to arms? Do you want them to take action, to put new procedures in to place, to pass on what they have learned?

As stated previously, what and how you deliver your presentation will vary depending on the audience in front of you. One style might cause to motivate a certain type of person but fail miserably with another, which is why knowing your audience is so important. The following two brief extracts were taken from two different speeches given by General George Patton¹. Both were aimed at motivating the soldiers about to liberate Europe in 1944. However, one was delivered to officers, whilst the other to enlisted, regular soldiers.²

To the officers of the 3rd Army:

"You are here to fight. This is an active theater of war. Ahead of you lies battle. That means just one thing. You can't afford to be a goddamned fool, because, in battle, fools mean dead men. It is inevitable for men to be killed and wounded in battle. But there is no reason why such losses should be increased because of the incompetence and carelessness of some stupid son-of-a-bitch. I don't tolerate such men on my staff.

*There are three reasons why we are fighting this war. The first is because we are determined to preserve our traditional liberties. Some crazy German ***** decided they were supermen and that it was their holy mission to rule the world. They've been pushing people around all over the world, looting, killing, and abusing millions of innocent men, women and children. They were getting set to do the same thing to us. We had to fight to prevent being subjugated.*

The second reason we are fighting is to defeat and wipe out the Nazis who started all this goddamned

son-of-bitchery. They didn't think we could or would fight, and they weren't the only ones who thought that, either. There are certain people back home who had the same idea. Both were wrong.

The third reason we are fighting is because men like to fight. They always have and they always will. Some sophists and other crackpots deny that. They don't know what they're talking about. They are either goddamned fools or cowards, or both. Men like to fight, and if they don't they're not real men.

If you don't like to fight, I don't want you around. You'd better get out before I kick you out. But there is one thing to remember. In war, it takes more than the desire to fight to win. You've got to have more than guts to lick the enemy. You must also have brains. It takes brains and guts to win wars. A man with guts but no brains is only half a soldier. We licked the Germans in Africa and Sicily because we had brains as well as guts. We're going to lick them in Europe for the same reason.

That's all and good luck".

Contrast this with the following which he delivered to the regular soldiers:

Men, this stuff we hear about America wanting to stay out of the war, not wanting to fight, is a lot of bullxxx. Americans love to fight – traditionally. All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle. When you were kids, you all admired the champion marble player; the fastest runner; the big league ball players; the toughest boxers. Americans love a winner and will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowards. Americans play to win – all the time. I wouldn't give a hoot in hell for a man who lost and laughed. That's why Americans have never lost, not ever will lose a war, for the very thought of losing is hateful to an American.

You are not all going to die. Only two percent of you here today would die in a major battle. Death must not be feared. Every man is frightened at first in battle. If he says he isn't, he's a goddamn liar. Some men are cowards, yes! But they fight just the same, or get the hell shamed out of them watching men who do fight who are just as scared. The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared. Some get over their fright in a minute under fire, some take an hour. For some it takes days. But the real man never lets fear of death overpower his honor, his sense of duty to this country and his innate manhood.

*Sure, we all want to be home. We want this thing over with. The quickest way to get it over is to get the *****. The quicker they are whipped, the quicker we go home. The shortest way home is through Berlin. When a man is lying in a shell hole, if he just stays there all day, a Boche will get him eventually, and the hell with that idea. The hell with taking it. My men don't dig foxholes. I don't want them to. Foxholes only slow up an offensive. Keep moving. And don't give the*

enemy time to dig one. We'll win this war but we'll win it only by fighting and by showing the Germans we've got more guts than they have.

*There is one great thing you men will all be able to say when you go home. You may thank God for it. Thank God, that at least, thirty years from now, when you are sitting around the fireside with your grandson on your knees, and he asks you what you did in the Great War, you won't have to cough and say, "I shovelled **** in Louisiana."*

The language, even by today's more liberal standards, is pretty strident. It's a superb example of tailoring the key message to fit with the moment, to resonate with the audience. Above all, it certainly makes an emotional connection.

Imagine if it were on Power Point....!

How to make an emotional connection

Whilst none of us are likely to ever lead a group of men in to war, we will nevertheless have to 'take' colleagues with us. Sell new ideas, convince others to adopt a different way of working and, in other words, have influence over and persuade those with whom we work. That can only be achieved successfully if one appeals to their emotions. There are countless ways to connect emotionally with your audience but here are the principal methods.

Humour, stories (personal or otherwise), anecdotes, analogy, metaphor, props, quotes, music, and pictures

Space only permits me to illuminate a couple of these, so I've opted for what I believe to be the easiest and most useful and effective.

Humour

Most people I meet believe that they are not funny. I don't agree. Sure, there are natural comedians but the vast majority of us, when we are in daily life with friends and family will occasionally arrive at some amusing remark at which those around us laugh. That is the sort of humour to consider using in the context of training and other forms of public speaking. Not jokes. In fact, NEVER jokes. Jokes are too risky and anyway, that skill is 'all in the delivery'.

The sort of humour to consider is not that which causes people to cry laughing, doubled up in a fit of hysterics. Instead it is those little comments, and throw-away remarks, which raise a smile or generate a giggle. In endeavouring to appear knowledgeable and

professional, a great number of people simply come across as terribly earnest. My message is, "Lighten up; it's only training!"

Stories and Anecdotes

Every one of us has personal stories with experiences, unusual occurrences, close scrapes, embarrassing moments, amusing encounters, and so on. Such tales can really help to bring a presentation to life and allow your audience to relate to the point you are seeking to make. However, they don't just have to be your stories and anecdotes. They could be occurrences that have happened to friends, or friends of friends, or simply ones that you've heard from in the 'news'. The secret is to write these stories down at the time you hear them or they happen. In this way I once heard a creative director of an ad agency say that he 'harvested' all sorts of material and kept notes, written or audio, that he could come back to when he was ever in need of inspiration for a new campaign.

Many people do not regard themselves as creative enough. That 'creative' ability, which is so much more obvious as children, becomes lost as people get older, move into the academic world and then into their working lives. Careers require more of the logical reasoning to be applied (ie. the left part of our brains). However, the creativity remains but is simply dormant through lack of use. This attribute can become stronger and therefore becomes easier to use.

Practise

Practise is the key to becoming more accomplished and, therefore, more confident at speaking in public; no matter what form that might take. Take small steps. Push yourself each time and never be frightened to try new things, keeping them if they are successfully, ditching them if they do not work.

Whilst I'm not a big fan of PowerPoint, I have nevertheless been witness to a handful of cracking presentations that have been made using that medium. Although, in every case the presenter had only three or four slides (which is sufficient) but it remained the presenter who made the session successful.

I had a career in sales for many years and we had a saying that went like this:

'Telling is not selling'

I don't know if there is a similar saying for delivering training or a presentation, but if there was, perhaps it should run like this:

'Teaching/speaking is not reading from slides!'

Footnote

¹From: Brian MacArthur (ed). Penguin Book of Twentieth Century Speeches. Longman, 2000

Biography

As a trainer and coach in a range of communication skills, Nick Davies travels across the U.K. and Europe teaching and coaching groups and individuals from many different sectors. He also performs stand-up, delivers after-dinner speeches and hosts award ceremonies. Over the past few years he has worked and shared stages with a buffet of reasonably well-known people including: The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, Sir Digby Jones, Jenny Bond, Kate Adie, Roger Black MBE, Max Clifford, Alan Hansen and Alastair Campbell.

Nick Davies, LL.B (hons), Barrister, was the LETG (Legal Education & Training Group) ‘Trainer of the Year, ‘07/‘08’ and KMUK ‘Conference Speaker of the Year’ in 2010 and 2011. His first book, ‘How to be Great at the Things You Hate: The Straight Talking Guide to Persuading, Networking and Selling’, will be published by J.Wiley in November 2011.

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Occasional Series

“The Cambridge Way”: Conversations with Emeritus Professor John Anthony “Tony” Jolowicz for the Squire Law Library Eminent Scholars Archive

Abstract: Lesley Dingle, founder of the Eminent Scholars Archive, provides a further contribution based on interviews with Emeritus Professor John Anthony “Tony” Jolowicz, one of the great legal scholars at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Trinity College since 1952.

Keywords: civil procedure; tort; academic lawyers; biography

Introduction

Professor Tony Jolowicz has been associated with the University of Cambridge and Trinity College for over sixty years, while his memory of various legal scholars that he met as a boy through his father’s academic career

at University College London and Oxford University extends to the pre-War era. His reminiscences are thus a further precious contribution to the Cambridge Law Faculty Eminent Scholars Archive (ESA), where he joins the select band of academics whose recollections capture, *inter alia*, the turbulent years when the university and country recovered from a major war.