Simple tips for great presentations

Giving presentations is an inevitable part of any project. This guide provides a few simple tips in five key areas, which will ensure your presentation is a success. It concludes with an example of how you can use technology to create a virtual tour for your website.

Planning your presentation

- Make sure you know how much time you will have for your presentation.
- Your audience may have many questions, so make sure you allow ample time for these.
- Write a brief abstract which sums up your presentation in no more than 2-3 sentences. This will help you to focus on the most important points.
- Think about your audience, their background knowledge of your project and what their interests are. If you have been invited to speak to a group you don't know, ask the organiser to tell you something about them and why your topic will be of interest. This information will help you to pitch your presentation at an appropriate level.
- If you want to supply handouts, find out how many people are likely to be there.
- Make sure you know what technology will be available at the venue.

Using images

- A good presentation should be a visual as well as an auditory experience. Carefully selected images will help your audience to understand and remember what you are telling them.
- Photographs you have taken yourself are your own copyright, and you may use them freely.
- Photographs taken by someone else can only be used if the copyright owner has given permission, and you acknowledge them and abide by the terms of that permission.
- You can use photographs from the internet if they have been licensed for use by others under the terms of a Creative Commons licence. There are different types of licence and you need to make sure that the images can be copied in the way that you want to use them. See the Creative Commons website http://creativecommons.org/ for more details.
- You can search for licensed images on a site such as Flickr (http://www.flickr.com/), or on Google Images (http://www.google.co.uk/imghp). Use the advanced search function to

search only within Creative Commons Licensed Content. Ensure you abide by the terms of the licence chosen by the photographer, and that you attribute the image correctly.

- More information about copyright can be found in our 'Final Steps' Guide for Community History and Heritage Groups.

Format of presentation

- Decide the main points you will cover in your presentation.
- Start with a slide that sets out in bullet points the structure and content of your talk. This will give you an opportunity to request and receive feedback about whether that is what the audience is expecting. You can then make adjustments as you go along, if you have misjudged what they want. The audience will also know the direction your talk will take, which will help them to absorb your material.
- Simple presentations often look the best.
- Have no more than one slide for every minute of your presentation.
- Consider using a template, so all your slides are in the same style.
- Do you need to conform to any corporate image requirements, or use any logos (e.g. your organisation, or your sponsors, funders or donors)?
- Microsoft PowerPoint contains built in templates, which you just open and type in your information. If you use one of these, think about personalising it in some way, as many people will have seen that style used before. There are also many different free templates available online for PowerPoint.
- PowerPoint allows you to make your own template. Use the 'Master Slide' facility (in the 'View' tab), which will apply the style to every slide. This minimises the overall file size. One attractive method is to use a photograph as background, at 95% transparency. If you are doing this, use a plain background for your text boxes, so the words can be read easily without the darkest parts of the photograph intruding.

A personalised template. Note also the Creative Commons licensing box on the image.

- Try to avoid the temptation to use one of the many clever animations within PowerPoint. Some people in the audience will have seen them all before, and may start to get impatient if they have to wait for each slide to emerge through some fancy technology.
- Use a font that is easy to read (not overly cursive), and ideally not less than font size 24.
- Don't type your text in block capitals. People read partly by recognising the shape of words, and that shape is lost if you only use capital letters.
- Don't produce slides with long passages of text, unless they are quotations and essential to your presentation. If you want to use slides which just have words, use bullet points, and restrict yourself to 3-4 points per slide.

Venue and delivery

- Ensure you know where the venue is, and where you can park if you will be driving.
- Consider taking your own laptop (if you have one), especially if you have embedded audio or video into your slides, or are using animations.
- Arrive early, so you have time to try out the technology and ensure it all works.
- Give extra – don't just read what it says on the slide. Explain the pictures and expand on any bullet points.
- Consider using SlideShare to make your slides available to those who could not be present (http://www.slideshare.net/)

Reducing technology risks

- Technology doesn't always work, and the software on the computer you will be presenting on may be different from that on the computer you used to create your presentation. Always have a contingency plan.
- If you have been told a computer with PowerPoint will be available and you have created your presentation in any post-2003 version of PowerPoint (file extension .pptx), make sure you also save your file on your memory stick in the pre-2007 format (use the 'save as' command and scroll down to find 'Powerpoint 97-2003 presentation', with the file ending .ppt). Later files ending .pptx will not work on an earlier version of the software.
- Take your presentation on two memory sticks, in case the computer at the venue refuses to accept your first USB stick.
- If you want to show something on the internet, also include screen shots within your slides, so you have something to show people if you can't get a wireless (Wi-Fi) connection. Screen shots can be captured easily using the 'Print Screen' (Prt Scr) key on the top line of your keyboard. Use other software to trim this image before creating your slide (or use the 'Screen clipping' tool in post-2007 versions of Powerpoint, found within the 'insert – screen shot' menu).
- Video and audio clips can bring a presentation to life, but check that the computer at the venue will play sound, and be aware that clips do not always work on a different computer.
- To minimise the possibility of it not working, start by creating a folder on your PC for your presentation. Add the audio and/or video clip to that folder. Create your PowerPoint presentation within the folder, add the clip(s) and save. **Copy the whole folder** to your memory stick and not just the PowerPoint presentation.

- It is possible to buy small plug-in speakers that you can take with you and that don't require a driver to have been installed on the computer.
- Prezi is a free alternative to Powerpoint, and is more sophisticated, but can only be run from the internet. It is therefore a high-risk option for many venues. To see what Prezi can do, take a look at http://prezi.com/6ovkw0utnlzj/frog-island-tour-comparison-2002-and-2012/ and see http://tinyurl.com/puz559k and the instructions which follow.
- You can also insert sound into a Prezi presentation. This can be used to create a background presentation to run at an open event. See http://tinyurl.com/n9p63fv