

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

This material has been copied and communicated to you by or on behalf of Victoria University of Technology pursuant to Part VB of the *Copyright Act* 1968 (the Act).

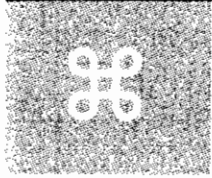
The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

Please note –

*If you do not require this page to be included in any print out of this document, in the print options box select **page range** and specify **page 2** onwards.*

This material has been made available with the permission of the copyright owner.



Final Steps

In addition, there are other last-minute steps you can take to ensure that your work has the best possible chance of getting the marks you believe you deserve. See chapter 7 for a final checklist.

CHAPTER

5

ORAL REPORTS

In a number of the subjects in your Business degree you will be asked to present information verbally to a group. The purpose of this activity is both to inform the audience (just as you will be informed by listening to your classmates' presentations) and to develop valuable skills of public speaking.

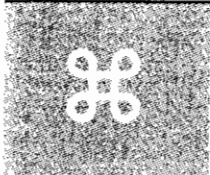
Employer representatives on the committees which have developed the subjects in the Business degree have often stressed that they regard public speaking ability as one of the most valuable attributes which graduates can bring to the workplace. It's probably valuable because it's relatively rare, and it's probably rare because many people don't feel very confident about getting up to speak in front of a group.

The aims of this chapter are to outline the general standards against which your performance will be evaluated and to demonstrate some of the ways in which you can quickly and easily improve that performance, and thereby boost your confidence.

STANDARDS

1. Speak to a pre-arranged time limit.

You will be expected to speak for a specific time, usually 10 or 15 minutes. Make sure you have enough to say to reach this limit, and make sure that you wind up when, or soon after, you reach the limit. This is not easy at first, and the ability to achieve it can only be acquired by practice.



2. Present an organised talk.

Like any other piece of formal communication (letter, report, essay etc.) a talk is much more effective if the members of the audience feel that they are receiving a structured body of information. In particular, a talk should have a clear introduction in which you let the audience know, in general terms, what they are going to hear.

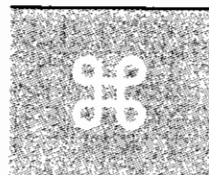
This should be followed by the body of the talk, comprising a number of clearly identified points which are linked together and whose particular contribution to the whole presentation can be readily identified. Finally, the talk should be wound up by a neat conclusion. All of this can be achieved only by careful preparation.

3. Talk to the audience.

Look at the audience as much as possible and talk to them. Don't look at your notes all the time, and don't gaze at a spot on the back wall. Speak loudly and clearly enough so that everyone in the room can hear and understand you. Training yourself to maintain maximum eye contact with your listeners, rather than your notes, is not easy. The only way to become better at it is to practise.

4. Keep your audience interested.

Any presentation is effective if the listeners' interest is gained and maintained. Your major task is to make sure from the outset that the members of your audience are focusing their attention on you and your words. In practice, this means two things: first, minimise the number of

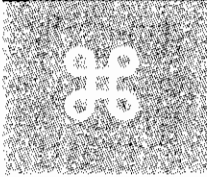


distractions (mannerisms, movement, gestures, poorly used visual aids etc) that can divert their attention from the content of your talk; and secondly, show them that you are vitally interested in what you are saying. This latter point cannot be too highly stressed. If you demonstrate enthusiasm about your topic, an audience cannot stop themselves from becoming interested. But if you sound as if you are not interested in it, then most audiences quickly become bored, and you fail in your task.

No doubt the above list could be made much, much longer. However, I believe that it contains the key elements which you should be concentrating on. If you are successful in all of the above, you will be performing at a highly creditable level.

You will have noticed that I have stressed the role of preparation and practice in achieving each of the above standards. For most people, that is the only way to improve public speaking.

Public speaking is largely a matter of confidence. A very small number of people possess such deep wells of self-confidence that they can "carry it off" simply with the force of their personality. But for most of us, the confidence to speak in public can only come from the actual knowledge that we have done it before and can do it again. And that knowledge, in turn, only arises from thorough preparation and rehearsal. The following guidelines are designed to foster and promote such confidence.



GUIDELINES

1. Preparing notes

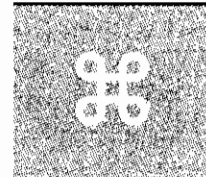
Having organised the structure of your talk, prepare notes to guide you through it. Use small pieces of card, and don't write much on any of them. Use as many cards as you like, but make sure that each one allows you to look up, look at your audience and actually speak a couple of sentences before your eyes are drawn back to the next card. As explained above, the Introduction and Conclusion are crucial to the success of your talk, so it's perhaps a good idea to memorise them.

2. Rehearsing the talk

Genuine rehearsal means actually delivering the presentation in exactly the same way you will in front of an audience. If the talk is to last 10 minutes, so should your rehearsal. Do it in front of a mirror, into a tape recorder, to your parents or to the family dog. Stand or sit, depending on how you will be presenting to the audience, and practise several times until you feel comfortable and familiar with the material. Identify the points at which you falter and lose your way, and make sure you smooth them over. As you prove to yourself that you can actually do it, you are in effect imprinting on your subconscious mind the knowledge that breeds confidence in front of an audience.

3. Preparing visual aids and planning your use of them

Visual aids can support an oral presentation wonderfully, but they can destroy one too, if they are not effectively



used. They do not work if they are diverting your audience's attention from you and what you are saying, which must always be the prime focus.

Pictures: Use pictures only if they are big enough for everyone to see clearly. If necessary, use technical devices like photocopy enlarging or an overhead projector to make them big enough.

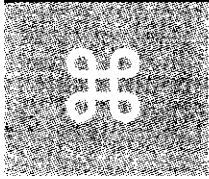
Handouts: Beware of handouts. They encourage audiences to switch off from you, and even to chat amongst themselves

Overheads: Only show key points. You don't want your audience reading when they should be listening to you.

Uncover each point as you explain it. Face your audience, not the screen; that's the whole point of the overhead projector.

4. Beginning your presentation

Walk to the front of the room. Stand or sit, as you prefer, and get yourself in a comfortable, relaxed position. Make sure your notes are in order and that any visual aids you may be using are conveniently placed within easy reach. Don't feel you have to begin speaking immediately. Pause, take one or two relaxing breaths and then look up at the audience and begin to speak. If you have memorised your introductory sentences, deliver them slowly and carefully, and you will find that your listeners are poised and attentive, waiting to hear your next words.



5. Monitoring your actual delivery

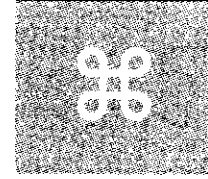
It's a good idea to sit or stand erect, consciously holding your chin high and looking slightly upwards. This will help you to project your voice to the back of the room. Think about the pace of your delivery. Listen to yourself and decide whether you need to speed up or slow down. If you think you are mumbling, consciously try to speak more precisely. Deliberately varying the tone of your voice will help to convey the enthusiasm I discussed earlier. Speaking in a flat monotone comes across as (predictably) monotonous and boring. Imagine that you are simply having a conversation with your listeners and try to inject the warmth of normal conversation into your voice.

6. Thinking about eye contact

Don't read your talk. It will make your delivery stilted and lacking in spontaneity, and it will mean that you are not looking at your audience. Try to look, if only briefly, at a few of the listeners first, and then widen your gaze to take in others. Some speakers like to engage eye contact with one member of the audience at a time, for up to 45 seconds, before moving on to speak to someone else. See what works for you.

7. Concluding your presentation

Briefly sum up the information you have provided and remind your audience of how it relates back to your original aims. Try to finish with some point of interest, which has them thinking. Invite questions, and be prepared to answer them!



8. Speaking in groups

If you have completed a group assignment and you are expected to present it as a team, think carefully about the changes this forces upon you. The presentation should come across as a cohesive whole, which places extra responsibilities on each participating speaker. The first speaker should initially indicate what each member of the group is going to cover, deliver his/her section of the overall subject and conclude by handing over to the second speaker. The second speaker should acknowledge the handover, deliver his/her section of the overall subject and conclude by handing over to the next speaker, and so on. The final speaker, having completed his/her section, should summarise for the whole group.

CHAPTER

6

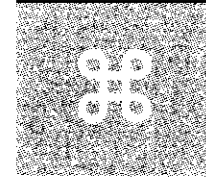
CASE STUDIES AND LITERATURE REVIEWS**CASE STUDIES**

Another common type of assignment is the case study, which asks you to read a comprehensive set of information about a real or imagined situation, usually some sort of problem situation, and usually in an organisational context. You are expected to analyse the information provided and to suggest practical courses of action which would resolve or improve the situation.

In many ways the case study is similar to a standard report-writing task. The major difference is that the latter asks you to actually carry out research and find information to enable you to come up with a solution. With a case study, the information is largely provided, and what you have to do is to apply your existing knowledge and expertise to it and come up with a solution. For example, you might be asked to consider a case study about a manager who is not delegating tasks effectively, but only after you had already been given information and tuition about the basic principles of effective delegation. You should then be able to correctly identify exactly what the manager is doing wrong and make relatively specific and informed suggestions about what he/ she should do now, or should have done in the first place.

A case study should nominally be approached via the following sequence of steps:

- Description and analysis of situation
- Description of alternative solutions
- Analysis of alternative solutions



- Nomination of best solution
- Suggestions for implementation
- Suggestions for monitoring/evaluation of implementation

1. Description and analysis of situation

Select and define the main problem(s) for analysis. There may be a number of problems evident, and there may be a number of symptoms of the same problem. Be aware of the difference, and try to identify the deepest or most basic elements of the problem. This is a crucial stage, because if it is not carried out clearly your subsequent answers may get right off the main track.

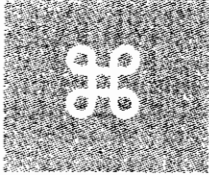
Your statement of the problem(s) can legitimately be based both on the facts that are given and on any reasonable conclusions or inferences that can be drawn from them.

2. Description of alternative solutions

As a general rule, those assessing your case study responses are not simply looking for evidence that you "know" the correct, or the most appropriate, solution. Rather, they want you to demonstrate that you can think of a number of possible solutions and compare their relative effectiveness. A number of potential solutions should be clearly outlined. Leaving things as they are is often a viable option, which should be considered along with the other alternatives.

3. Analysis of alternative solutions

Each of your potential solutions should now be carefully



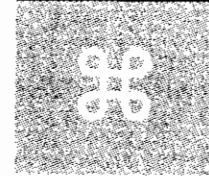
evaluated. Be as objective as you can, and list the advantages and disadvantages of each. Try to estimate the time and financial cost implications of each alternative.

4 Nomination of best solution

Once again, it is not just the nomination of the best solution which is important here, but the reasoning you are able to provide to justify your recommendations. Your task is essentially one of persuasion, as you have to demonstrate convincingly why your chosen course of action is to be preferred over each of the other potential solutions. Also, specify clearly how your solution is to be implemented, identify potential problems which should be foreseen and minimised, and stress the key actions which will govern the success of the project.

5 Suggestions for monitoring/evaluation of implementation

The best case-study answers will provide specific procedures for measuring the success of the proposed actions. These procedures will probably be similar to the ones you have used to measure the extent of the present problem. Again, try to suggest means of measuring the financial benefits of your recommendations. Ideally these can eventually be compared with the projected costs and therefore used to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of your proposals.



Literature Reviews

In a Literature Review, you are expected to demonstrate that you have read and understood what a number of writers have had to say on a given topic. There are different ways of structuring your written review, but the key thing to remember is that it should be clearly organised, in terms of distinct paragraphs, and perhaps with sub-headings. The following outline is a guide:

Introduction

An indication of the general topic area, and a statement of the purpose and structure of your review. You should aim to answer some question or questions in your review.

Body

A series of separate sections (or paragraphs), where you present summaries or paraphrases of what you have discovered in your wide reading on the topic. Broadly speaking, this information can be presented in one of the following ways:

- Break up the topic into sections. As you go through each section, you report (and compare) what each writer had to say;

OR

- Treat each writer separately and discuss what each had to say, before moving on to summarise and comment on the next writer.

Conclusion

A final section, in which you draw the strands together. In