



## 5 Things Presenters Can Do

(to make their presentations look more credible, more professional and less distracting)

Over the years of running audio visual (A/V) systems for conferences across the country, I've seen speakers do many things that unknowingly hurt their credibility and distract the audience from their message. Here are a few simple things you can do to dramatically enhance your presentation.

1. PowerPoint is a powerful communication tool. It can really help you get your message across, or it can distract the audience from hearing anything you say. When preparing a PowerPoint presentation, consider these points:
  - Is the text readable? *(avoid the use of fancy or unusual fonts)*
  - Is the font large enough? *(anything less than 20 pt is probably too small!)*
  - Is there enough of a contrast between the text color and the background to make it readable on a big screen? *(dark on dark, or light on light are usually not the best choices)*
  - Are your backgrounds consistent from slide to slide, or does your presentation look like a patchwork quilt? *(simple, consistent and appropriate are the key themes here)*
  - Is the number of slides appropriate for the time allotted? *(often the best presentations have the fewest slides)*
  - Do you have a long quote or a list of sources? *(re-insert that slide at the end of your presentation; and let the audience know, so they won't be as distracted scrambling to write everything down while you talk)*
  - Did you proofread your presentation? *(typos can really damage your credibility!)*
2. Don't move your lapel microphone. When the A/V technician gives you your microphone they will tell you where to clip it. Follow their instructions and don't move it! For example, if you clip it on your left lapel, every time you turn your head the volume will change drastically. This can be very distracting as your voice goes from loud to soft and back again, so attendees constantly have to adjust to a new audio level.

3. Communicate with the A/V staff. Let them know when you plan to start. This is often done by the person introducing you, but if you are going to be the first one up, saying “Good Afternoon” into a mic that is off is not the best way to start your presentation. And if you happen to start with a mic that is off, don’t hit the mic until the tech turns it on. Discreetly get the A/V staff’s attention and let them know you are ready to start.
4. If you like to move around when you talk, notify the A/V staff and follow any instructions they give you. There may be poorly lighted spots on the stage. Moving three feet can really make the audience feel further removed from you as you go from good lighting to blending in with the back curtain. Also, moving too close to speakers can create feedback which will wake up the audience, but if you are a speaker who likes to move around, I bet you won’t put them to sleep.
5. Arrive in advance. Give yourself time to get set up and go over any of your needs with the A/V staff. Technology doesn’t always work perfectly the first time, so --- especially if you have a computer to hook into the system --- arrive with time for them to adjust the necessary settings to add your equipment to their system. Doing this in advance is much better than having hundreds of people waiting and watching as you get set up.

The A/V staff is there to make your presentation as good as it can be, so don’t hesitate to ask questions so that you can all be on the same page. Let them know when you are going to play a video clip, or if you want the room lights dimmed, etc. Good communication will help them do their job better, which will help you look better.

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