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Winning Presentations 101: A White Paper

WINNING NEW WORK IS TOUGH BUSINESS.

We all know it's our business' life blood, but sometimes it's so challenging to differentiate ourselves from the competition. This challenge is never more evident than when we are called upon to make a presentation.

So it's our team vs 4 other teams in a 45 minute winner take all showdown. What do we say? How do we look unique and creative? How do we prepare? How do we get our message to resonate? Do we even have a message that is any different from all the others? For many, this is a stressful time. But for a few, it's when they shine.

While we can't go through all the tricks of the trade with regard to presenting well in this short article, I am sharing a simple step by step approach I created called the "10 Steps to a Brain Friendly Presentation."

The "10 steps" represent a means to get organized, to focus on your message, and to coach up the team. These 10 steps were my process for 20 years and assisted me in converting over \$3 Billion in wins at over a 50% win rate. It works!

Step One.

CREATE A TIMELINE FROM NOW TO DELIVERY.

Timing working backwards:

- **Presentation Day**
1 final run-through the morning of
- **1 or 2 Days Prior to Presentation**
Full practices with all participants
- **1 or 2 Days Prior to Practices**
Communicate slides, timing, messaging to participants
- **1 Week Prior to Presentation**
Have final slide deck, messaging and timing completed
- **2 Weeks Prior to Presentation**
Start working the steps to a brain-friendly presentation

RULE #1

You usually know when a presentation is coming - don't wait until you get the official email, letter or call to start prepping. That is a losing behavior.

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Prior to forming his own AEC consulting firm, Hal Routh's career included executive tenures at two large regional firms, at one of the largest global construction firms in the world, and as a member of the executive leadership team of a large national construction company. Mr. Routh's career has been hallmarked by his unique ability to spur revenue and profitability growth wherever his career took him, and in any economic environment. He has led the pursuits to wins totaling over \$4 Billion in negotiated construction projects in his career. He is a noted expert in creating sustained growth strategies in the AEC industry. Mr. Routh is a graduate of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and holds an MBA from The University of North Carolina Wilmington.

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Step Two.

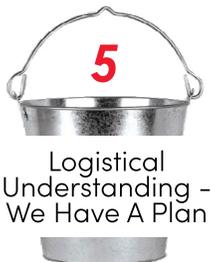
COMPLETE THE EQUALIZER9 MESSAGING PLAN.

Identify client’s key issues:

- What are their challenges, their purposes, and what would comfort them?
- How will we solve their challenges and fulfill their purpose - be very specific, not general.
- How can we comfort them, make them rest easy knowing we have their back?
- Identify ghosting opportunities.

Step Three.

IDENTIFY 5-10 MAJOR THEMES AND CREATE SUBJECT MATTER “BUCKETS”.



RULE #2

Don’t spend much time talking about “how great we are,” but jump quickly into addressing their concerns. Do address the relevance of our specific team to their project as it lends comfort.

RULE #3

Notice all buckets are themed as a benefit or comfort to the client.



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Step Four.

DEVELOP SUB-THEMES UNDER EACH BUCKET.

These become your slides within each bucket.



SLIDE 1 THEME

Major Milestone
Schedule

SLIDE 2 THEME

Virtual 4D Model
Validates Schedule

SLIDE 3 THEME

Long Lead Items and
Timelines

SLIDE 4 THEME

Early Package
Opportunities - Sitework
and Structural



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Step Five.

DEVELOP STRUCTURE OF EACH SLIDE IDENTIFIED - MAKE IT "BRAIN-FRIENDLY".

- Structure Item 1 - The Title
- Structure Item 2 - Content & Proof
- Structure Item 3 - Imagery
- Structure Item 4 - Benefit Or "Parking Space"

EXAMPLE OF A BRAIN-FRIENDLY SLIDE

APPLYING MUSEUM EXPERIENCE TO YOUR PROJECT

- Advanced coordination of many consultants
- Experiential exhibits coordination + flexibility
- Close relationships with curators + staff
- Artifact protection

ITEM 1 - The Title

ITEM 2 - Content/Proof

ITEM 3 - Imagery

ITEM 4 - "Parking Space"

BRINGING SOLUTIONS FROM DAY ONE.

RULE #4

Remember, people can't read and listen at the same time. You want them to listen so content must be few words but powerful imagery: Brain-friendly!

RULE #5

Content must be very specific, very relevant, and very tailored to their project. Limit boilerplate.

RULE #6

Get the experts involved (hopefully those presenting) on ideas to make content very specific and tailored.

RULE #7

A "parking space" for each slide is the one "must get," highly resonating point from the slide. If you don't have one, the slide is not needed.



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Step Six.

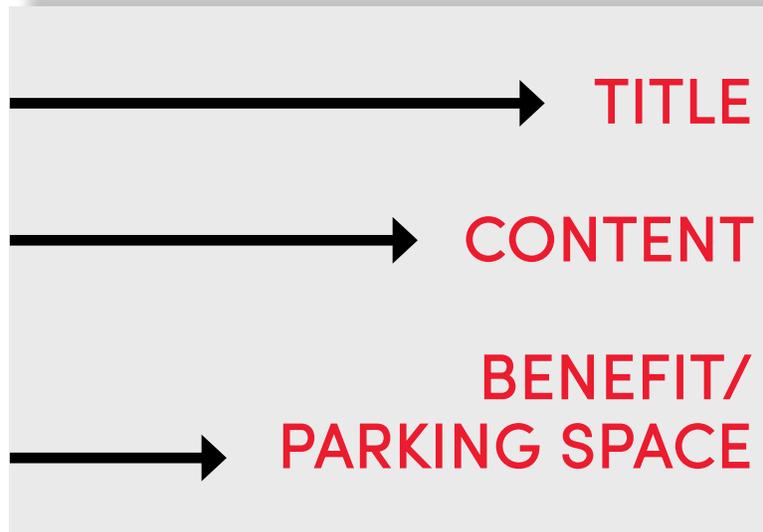
CREATE SCRIPTING FOR EACH SLIDE AND MAKE IT AUTHENTIC.

■ THE WHAT?

State what you will be addressing--what we will be solving for them.

■ **THE HOW?** Address how we will specifically tackle, or have already started tackling, their challenges and fulfilling their purpose.

■ **THE WHY?** Why should they care about this? Express exactly what this will do for them.



RULE #8

Make the scripts “outlines,” not verbatim, written-out speeches. It needs to be delivered in the presenter’s own style and the words should be authentic.

RULE #9

Hammer the parking space. If you don’t, the whole slide is pointless.



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Step Seven.

GO BACK AND EMBED GHOSTING INTO THE PRESENTATION.

- From the Equalizer9 Messaging Plan, identify the ghosting opportunities.
- Put the ghosting within the appropriate buckets. Could simply be a dropped in phrase, or another sub theme slide.

GHOSTING ISSUE: Competition is from out of town.

GHOSTING SLIDE EXAMPLE: See below.

LOCAL PRECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS MATTER

Local buying power

Local context

Local response time

Local passion

BECAUSE YOU CAN'T AFFORD
FOR LEARNING ON YOUR DIME.

RULE #10

Ghosting can be overt or more subtle. It is important to know your client well when deciding how to ghost, but always ghost!



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Step Eight.

LAY FOUNDATIONS FOR COACHING THE TEAM.

COMMUNICATE AT LEAST 1-2 DAYS PRIOR TO PRACTICES:

1. The specified slide(s) they will deliver.
2. The time allocated for each slide.
3. The content, “the how,” to make it specific to the project (ask them for ways to improve or make more project-specific).
4. The parking spaces to “HAMMER” home.
5. Assist each presenter in developing an outline for each of their slides.
6. Review their personal introduction and outline it as such:
 - Name
 - Role on project
 - Why I was picked for this team?

RULE #11

Personal introductions should never be a resume (they can and have read those). Rather, this is where you relay how your experience ties directly to what they will be building. Seek out relevance.

RULE #12

Encourage them to go home and practice their parts. Note: most, and especially introverts, need this time to get their thoughts together before the big practice.



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Step Nine.

DAY PRIOR - IT'S TIME TO PRACTICE. (IF IT'S A BIG, MUST-WIN, YOU MAY CONSIDER 2 DAYS OF PRACTICE).

Divide the team into 3-4 presentation sub-teams, by "the buckets," into separate rooms. This allows more practice runs as sub-teams are practicing concurrently.

The coach or coaches will be assigned a room or rooms to give pointers on specific wording or emphasis. Emphasizing: **be specific*, **be brief*, **don't talk fast*, and **hammer the parking space*.

RULE #13

Try to get in 2-3 practices, timed, with each presentation sub-team before bringing everyone in the room together. Then 2 full practice runs with the full team together - make sure it's timed and everyone is on time.

RULE #15

Allow for a 1-2 minute cushion in your presentation timing.

RULE #14

Most inexperienced presenters have trouble wrapping up or stopping each slide and tend to drag on. Teach them to "put a bow on it" by saying "this is what it means to you," or "this is the bottom line," or "this benefits you because..." or "the reason you should care about this is..."

RULE #16

Many times you will win or lose during Q&A, so practice this area. Allocate at least 1-2 hours to go over anticipated questions. Know how you will answer and who will answer each.



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Step Ten.

IT'S PRESENTATION DAY - ONE FINAL RUN-THROUGH IN THE MORNING.

Don't tweak the presenters much at all on this run. This run is about building confidence. Coaches should tell them how great they sound and build them up before they leave as conquering heroes.

SOME ADDED TIPS.

TIP #1 Your delivery model, whether by boards, PowerPoint, Prezi, handouts, or a combination of these, is not nearly as important as the message, the imagery that makes that message resonate, and the connection and chemistry of the people.

TIP #2 Take no more than 20% of your presentation to highlight the relevance and experience of your team. Then focus solely on how you will solve their challenges and fulfill their purpose. Don't sit there and thump your chest about how great your company is for 30 minutes—it's a death nail in your coffin! BUT also don't go so far as to not talk about the relevance of your people at all—after all, it's the people they are buying.

TIP #3 Don't go into depth about your long processes. Process discussions do not win presentations. No one wants to see you talk through a long flow chart on your steps from day one to day done. In other words, I don't need to know how you make the sausage; I just want to know that I'll get great sausage! Focus on their challenges, how you will solve them, and why they should care. It's simple.

TIP #4 If you can't summarize a slide, or a board, or a handout with a benefit like "This is what this means to you...", then eliminate that from your presentation as it's a waste of time and energy.

TIP #5 Anticipate and practice for Q/A. I can't tell you how many times I have seen firms win or lose presentations during the Q/A. Your team should spend a minimum of one hour brainstorming the hard questions, crafting the answer, and deciding who answers. When done right, it's a time to hammer home your win messaging. Ignoring this is a losing behavior.

GO WIN SOME WORK!

RULE #17

Always have a backup to your technology because stuff happens.

In summary, presentations are integral to a firm's success because "If you can't win it, you don't get to build it!". Please join me and Susannah Barringer on Tuesday, July 28, 2020, 2-3 pm EST as we go deeper into the art of winning presentations, but also explore best practices in delivering winning proposals. We look forward to seeing you on the AGC of America webinar: Basics of Proposals and Presentations for the Busy General Contractor.