

The following are some lessons learned based on experience presenting and listening to (and in some cases enduring through) many presentations.

- The audience is very broad based. Keep presentations "critical capability" based. Only a small part of the audience will understand your detailed technical discussions, so concentrate on what this research data, test results, etc. means, what is revolutionary, how is the State of the Art changed?
- Eliminate Eye Charts: The room is far too big for small type.
- Use more pictures and video; people pay more attention to them.
- Be dynamic, not static. If you choose to anchor yourself behind the podium, vary the tone and intensity of your voice. Get out from behind the podium or use a laser pointer to be more animated.
- Avoid charts with many similar bullets; if it is not critical to your presentation get it off the charts.
- Avoid speaking in a monotone. Speaking in a monotone for 20 minutes will cause even the most interesting topic to become an excruciating experience in boredom for the audience.
- Any test data / results presented should not be presented in a vacuum; nobody but you knows what this means. Present only highly relevant results that illustrate your critical technical innovation or primary goal.
- There is nothing wrong with noting that there are additional backup charts and data available in the proceedings. Those who are interested in the details can go find them, those who are not will not be tortured to death with technical details they don't have the background to understand.
- **Be brief, be brilliant, and be gone.** 10 minutes of golden nuggets have far more value and impact than 30 minutes of technical drivel no matter how earth shattering the result.

Dos and Don'ts of Presentations:

- Don't use complex equations, chemical formulas or highly detailed, exhaustive data. (God forbid that the two brilliant mathematicians who might be at the conference are outside getting coffee during your presentation, because then **nobody** will relate to what you say.)
- Don't be too highly technical.
- Don't run over time.
- Don't speak from a prepared speech. (Unless you want to look very impersonal and stiff, and put the audience to sleep.)
- Don't speak in a monotone. Those in the audience who do manage to stay awake for your entire presentation will have trouble hearing over the snoring of their fellow attendees.
- Don't read your own charts. Believe it or not, the audience can read faster than you can talk. If you can't add anything to what the chart says, you don't need to be there.
- Do use large type.
- Do use illustrative pictures & videos. These do keep people's interest; everyone likes to see something blow up.
- Do answer the "So what?" question, namely **What is the Point of your Paper**. Sounds simple, right? Most people somehow forget that the test results, progress reports, etc. should actually be **doing something**. Remember to say what it is.
- Do know the audience; be prepared to explain basic concepts, as the expertise is very broad. Nobody can be an expert on everything, and many levels of technical and management expertise are present at every conference. The high-level manager who just gave the keynote address, and stayed to hear some papers in the afternoon and the guy with 30 years of experience have different view points. Neither will understand the details of your presentation without you relating why it's important.
- Do concentrate on a few key, critical points. Presentations in general should "tell a good story" about a significant effort or accomplishment. They can also issue technical challenges and goals. They are **not** good forums to present exhaustive technical details.