Presentation & Other Verbal Communication Skills

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About Amanda

Education
• PhD. University of Rochester
• BS. Houghton College

Career
• Bloomberg 2016-
• Yahoo Labs 2013-16
• AT&T Labs Research 2007-2013
• Stony Brook University 2002-2009

Research
• Natural language processing

Outreach
• ACL Rolling Review
• ABET
• CRA-WP board

Hobbies
• EMS, walks, music
Yuqin Melanie Wu

Education
• PhD. University of Michigan
• BS, MS. Peking University, China

Career
• Pomona College 2015 – Department chair 2017-2020
• Indiana University, 2004-2015

Research
• Database, data representation and management, query language, optimization, …

Outreach
• ACM-W council
• CRA-WP board

Hobbies
• Traveling, cooking, gardening, …
What This is About

This session will focus on building your **oral communication skills**. Where does oral communication happen?

- Scientific/technical talks
- Poster presentations
- Lecturing and mentoring
- Discussion with your advisor, classmates, ...
- Chat in the hallway, around the water cooler, ...
- ...
Exercise

• Do you think you are a good presenter? Why, or why not?
• What are the things you are anxious about when you prepare/give a presentation?

• Now, think about your last, or upcoming, presentation
• What’s the goal of the presentation?
• Who are the audience?
• What are the three take-away messages you hope they remember?
Giving Scientific/Technical Talks

Stages:

- Preparation
- Delivery
- Follow Up
Scientific Talks – Preparation

Questions:
- Who are the audience?
- How much time do I have?
- Why should they be interested in what I am talking about?
- What is the 3-sentence take-away message?
- At what details do I want to convey my ideas and support my claim?
- What questions may I get?

Preparation:
- Tailor your talk to the level of your audience
- Make your presentation focused and compact
- Keep your audience engaged
- Focus on the take-away message
- Balance the level of details
- Anticipate questions
Scientific Talks – Preparation

- Tailor your talk to the level of your audience
  - Define a concept or not, how much preliminary to provide, …
  - How much details should you get into
- Make your presentation focused and compact
  - 1-2 minutes for 1 slide
  - Avoid clutter - less text, more visual aids
  - Use animation to pace information dissemination
- Keep your audience engaged
  - The hook - motivating examples
  - Story telling
Scientific Talks – Preparation

• Focus on the takeaway message
  • Embed it throughout the presentation
  • Repeat it frequently
• Balance the level of details
  • Tailor to your audience, time limitation...
  • Prepare backup slides with more details
• Anticipate questions
  • Build the explanations into your slides
  • Prepare backup slides to answer the questions
Now, your slides are ready.... What is a good delivery

- Your message is delivered and well received
- Your audiences are engaged throughout your talk
- Understanding your talk does not feel like the labors of Hercules
- Their questions are answered to their satisfaction

Delivery

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Check the reaction of your audience and adjust
- Address their questions directly and tactfully

Practice, practice, practice.....
Scientific Talks – Follow-up

Now the presentation is over…

- Reflect
  - Any good questions asked?
  - Did I do a good job preparing/delivering the talk?
- Follow up
  - Topics/questions
  - People
Posters

Questions:

• Who are the audience?
• How much time/space do I have?
• Why they should be interested in what I am talking about?
• What are the 3-sentence take-away message?
• At what details I want to convey to support my claim?
• What questions I may get?
Posters vs. Talks

At a poster session

• Some audiences will (only) read
  • provide more text
  • invite questions/conversation

The audiences start at different time, progress at different pace and are interested in different aspects of your work

• intentionally form small groups and give a mini-presentation/demo

More casual

• invite questions, comments, opinions
• start a conversation
Audience: students who are learning (or are still confused about) the materials

- Preparation and delivery
  - articulate the concepts
  - design good examples for incremental learning
  - pay **CLOSE** attention to the reaction of the audience and adjust
- Be aware of the power dynamics
  - Be welcoming, patient, kind, encouraging, ...
- Do follow up
Exercise

Including team meetings, one on one meetings, talks, posters...

- How many presentations have you made in the past two weeks?
- How many have you observed?
- What one presentation told the best story?
Team / One on One Presentations

Questions:
• Who are the audience?
• How much time do I have?
• What is the story I am telling?
• What is my pitch?
• What questions may I get?

Preparation:
• Make your presentation focused
• Observe your audience
• Anticipate questions
• Plan your ask
Team / One on One Presentations

Observing:
• What is the story they are telling?
• What is their pitch?
• Why am I in the audience?
• What questions do I have?

General:
• Every meeting is a presentation
• Plan to speak and to observe
• Know your agenda
Handling Questions

Questions to shape your response:
• Who is the questioner?
• Why are they asking this question?
• Is this a question I should answer (now)?
• Is this a question I can answer?

Responding and answering are different things
• I’m not sure I understand...
• That’s a great question, let’s take it offline
• You sound like someone we should hire!
• I’ll get back to you by tonight
• That will take two weeks
Low Level Tips

If you want people to be convinced, be convincing

- Pose
- Pause
- Plan
- Speak

If you want people to be excited, be exciting

- Smile
- Act
- Observe
- React
Continuous Improvement

You get better at presenting through:

- Preparation - no presentation unplanned!
- Practice - present often!
- Evaluation - record yourself, get feedback!
Resources

• Michael Alley: “The Craft of Scientific Presentations”,
  https://www.craftofscientificpresentations.com/teaching-resources.html
• Mark Hill: “Oral Presentation Advice”,
  http://pages.cs.wisc.edu/~markhill/conference-talk.html
Resources

• Duarte, Nancy:
  • Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences
  • slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations
  • Illuminate: Ignite Change Through Speeches, Stories, Ceremonies, and Symbols
• Bento C. Leal III:
  • 4 Essential Keys to Effective Communication in Love, Life, Work--Anywhere!
• Oren Klaff:
  • Pitch Anything: An Innovative Method for Presenting, Persuading, and Winning the Deal
Thank you!

Questions?