

Chronology of Your Successful Conference Presentation

By Dave Paradi

Are you thinking of speaking at an upcoming conference or have you already been asked to speak at an upcoming session? If so, this special report will help you prepare to make a successful presentation. You have received this report from an individual or organization that wants you to succeed. The ideas that follow are those that successful speakers have used for years when preparing for conference presentations. Now you can use the secrets of the pros.

My name is Dave Paradi and I am known as *The Office Technology Lifeguard* because I rescue people from “Death by PowerPoint” and other electronic sins. I run a web site called www.communicateusingtechnology.com and I offer a variety of [learning tools](#) that can help you become a better presenter. Every two weeks I send out a newsletter with great ideas you can actually use to leverage the technology you already own – [click here so you don't miss any more issues](#).

This special report is designed in a chronology format, starting with what you should do in advance of the deadline to submit ideas for your conference session all the way to what you should do after the audience has left the room raving about your presentation. Just follow the steps in order, and you will be well on your way to a successful conference presentation.

One Month Prior to the Conference Session Submission Deadline

- **Decide on the topic for your presentation.** Your topic should be one that you have expertise in, because the best presentations are done by people who know what they are talking about. Select a topic that is consistent with the theme of the conference. Tie it in to the theme in some creative way because conference organizers always like sessions that are in line with the theme of the conference. You can increase the chances of your proposal being selected if you choose a topic that is “hot” in your industry or area. This draws more people to your session and more attendees is what the conference organizer wants.
- **Decide on who should present.** Once you have the topic, decide on whether you should be the only presenter, or whether you should have a co-presenter. Common co-presenters would be a client or supplier and work very well when you are presenting a case study type of topic where you show how something was done in conjunction with this partner. Co-presenters can provide different perspectives on the same area.
- **Outline your presentation.** The first step in creating the presentation outline is to determine the goal of your presentation. The goal is what you want the audience to know or do at the end of the presentation. Next, lay out the 4-6 major steps you will take to get your audience from where they are today to the goal of your presentation by the time your presentation ends. This is your presentation outline.

- **Prepare key benefits to the audience.** Conference organizers are always interested in promoting the benefits to potential attendees. You can help them by preparing a 4-6 bullet point list of how the attendees will benefit from attending your session.
- **Gather any supporting documentation.** In addition to the session outline, you may have to submit supporting documentation such as your resume or CV (take the time now to update it to include your most recent accomplishments), past conference presentations (date, conference, session title), references, etc.
- **Review the conference session submission forms.** Every conference is different in what information they want you to submit and how they want that information organized. Review all of the forms and if you have any questions about what is being requested, now is the time to ask the questions of the conference organizer.

Two Weeks Prior to the Conference Session Submission Deadline

- **Review your session.** It is always a good idea to put some time between the initial development of your session idea and when you get ready to submit your proposal. This allows the ideas to percolate in your mind and you will find that you usually come up with better ways of stating some of it. Make any revisions to what you had previously developed before you move on.
- **Fill out the forms.** Every conference has specific forms that need to be completed for all conference session submissions. Fill them out carefully and completely. This is all the conference organizer will see when making the decision to invite you to deliver your presentation, so the more powerful the submission, the better chance you have of being selected.
- **Attach required documentation.** If they have asked for any attachments, print clean copies of them. In general, only submit the attachments that they request, do not inundate the conference organizer with additional material they did not ask to receive.
- **Copy your submission.** Make a copy of your entire submission, including any attachments. If it gets lost, you will need to send the backup copy.
- **Submit your proposal.** Now you are ready to submit your conference session proposal. Most conferences offer a number of different ways that you can submit your proposal. If they have stated a preferred method, always use that one. Otherwise, use the one that best suits you and your proposal.

Three Days Prior to the Conference Session Submission Deadline

- **Check on your submission.** If you have not received confirmation that your submission was received, call the conference organizer to make sure that your submission was received. If your proposal has not been

received, ask what submission method they would prefer you to use and resubmit your proposal using this method. Follow up to ensure that the replacement submission has been received.

After You Have Been Selected to Present

- **Read everything they send you.** In most cases, shortly after the conference organizer selects the presentations for the conference, you will receive a package that outlines how the conference organizer plans to deal with all of the details of the presentations. Read every item they send and if you do not understand an item, ask for clarification – you may not be the only speaker that does not understand it.
- **Get answers to key questions.** Some of the questions you should get answers to are listed below. Some of the answers will be in the documentation they send but you will have to contact the conference organizer to get the answers to other questions.

Your Session:

- What time is your session?
- What date is your session?
- What room is your session being held in?
- What conference track has your session been placed in?
- Do they provide handouts for the session? If so, in what format do they need the master handout copy and by when? If not, are you expected to bring your own?
- Do you need to use a standard conference template for presentation slides?
- Are there any restrictions on content in a presentation (ie. overt selling of a product or service)?

Room:

- What is the room layout, including where you will stand, where the screen is, where the chairs and desks will be?
- How many people do they expect to attend?
- When can you get access to the room to test your equipment and microphone?

A/V Equipment:

- Will they provide a computer? If so, what type and what media do you need to bring your presentation on?
- Will they provide a data projector? If so, what is the native resolution of the projector?
- Will they provide a remote control to change the slides? If so, what is needed on the computer to make it work?
- Will they provide a screen?
- Are they setting up a microphone? If so, what type of microphone (podium, lapel, handheld, etc.)?
- Is there a sound system available if you are planning to use audio in the presentation?

- If you require video playback equipment, is it supplied?
- Conference:
 - Do you have to register and pay registration for the conference?
 - What sessions are in your room immediately before your session and right after your session?
 - What other sessions will be competing with your session?
 - Do they have a speaker's room with test equipment, dial-out phone line and a place to prepare before your session? If so, where will it be located?
 - Can you get an advance analysis of the attendees to confirm the makeup of the audience?
- **Send back any forms.** Many times there will be additional forms for you to fill out after they have accepted your proposal. These may be more details about yourself and your topic, any requirements you have for the room or equipment or agreements to abide by rules they set. These additional requests may require you to gather additional documentation to be sent.

6-8 Weeks Prior to Your Presentation

- **Review your outline.** Review your original presentation outline that you prepared for the session submission.
- **Finalize your outline.** Review and agree on the presentation outline, including the presentation goal and key points you will make.
- **Analyze audience.** Analyze who will be in attendance at the conference, with an eye on what their level of expertise is with your topic, their current attitude towards your intended message and your level of credibility with the attendees.
- **Prepared detailed outline.** Prepare a detailed outline that breaks down each key point into sub-points and backs them up with expert opinions, facts, statistics, stories, examples or analogies.
- **Test your outline.** Run through the detailed outline to make sure it fits the time you have been given and it is directed to reaching the presentation goal.

Special Note: A great resource for developing a solid presentation is the book "[Don't Let Your Next Presentation Be a Career Limiting Move – The Complete Guide to Using Presentation Technology](#)". Click on the book title to learn more.

4-6 Weeks Prior to Your Presentation

- **Prepare your presentation slides.** Make sure that the slides enhance your message, not detract from it. Use high contrast colors to enhance readability, bullet points to allow you to enhance each point with your

message and graphics that bring the points to life. Avoid the flashy graphics and sound that distract from your message.

To test the effectiveness of your presentation slides, use the "[Rate Your Presentation Slides Audit](#)". Get it free by clicking on the title.

If you need help with PowerPoint, check out "[The 20% You REALLY Need to Know About PowerPoint 2000 or 2002](#)" e-books. A clear 13 step process you can learn in under two hours with a one-page summary at the end. These e-books will get you up and running with this powerful presentation software.

- **Prepare your handout.** A handout is a good idea for conference presentations because it allows the attendees to take your message back to their job site where they will have more time to digest it. You can prepare a simple copy of your slides or something more complex.
- **Submit required files.** If you have been asked to submit your presentation slides and handout to the conference organizer, make sure it has been submitted by the deadline.
- **Test your presentation slides.** Test that the slides against the detailed outline to make sure it is consistent, check the spelling and accuracy of all facts and test that all animations, transitions and multimedia effects work as intended.

3 Weeks Prior to Your Presentation

- **Prepare your introduction.** The first few minutes of your session will be the most important and you do not want to get off to a bad start with an introduction that is poorly written or stumbled through. You should write your own introduction that is easy for someone else to read and runs no longer than 60 seconds. Include what the attendees will gain from the session, why your topic is important to them and then some of your qualifications to establish why they should listen to you on this topic. Print the introduction double spaced in at least 14-18 point font size. Take two copies with you, one to give to the person who is doing the introduction and one as a backup.
- **Practice.** At this point, your presentation has pretty much been finalized and you need to start practicing. If possible, practice with the presentation slides so you get used to how the points will come up and how you need to interact with the equipment to make it work properly. There is sometimes benefit to practicing in a larger room (if you have one available to you) so you get the feel for standing up in front of a large group.

Before Leaving for the Conference

- **Backup.** Before you pack, make sure you back up all of your key files onto CD-ROM or to a web-based backup site. You need to know that your files are safe in case disaster strikes your equipment.
- **Pack.** In addition to your clothes of course, you need to pack all of the technology you need to make the presentation. Make sure you pack all the cables you require, all discs or other media, all your equipment, notes and backups.

There is a useful checklist for when you are packing the technology for your presentation called the "[Presentation Technology Checklist](#)" available free by clicking on the title.

At the Conference

- **Check the room.** As soon as you can, check the room that you are speaking in. Review the room setup, the size and what other sessions will be taking place close to your room since noise interference is a real issue in many conferences. Do not be surprised if the room setup is different than what the conference organizer said it would be or what you had asked for. Many times circumstances dictate changes beyond their control. Just relax and determine how you will work with what you have.
- **Test the A/V.** If possible, test the audio and visual equipment: plug your laptop and presentation equipment in and see what it looks like. Does the room lighting wash out your display? If so, ask for lights to be turned down or some lights to be turned off. Check the microphone level and quality. Stop by the presenter's room if there is one and find out who to call if there is an A/V problem.
- **Attend other sessions.** It is important to attend some sessions before yours when you are at the conference. Especially if there is an opening keynote presentation. The purpose is so that you do not duplicate material that others have already presented and you can tie your material into some of what the attendees have already heard. This shows an advanced desire to make your session useful to the attendees.

10 Minutes Before Your Session

- **Give your introduction to the introducer.** Many times you will not meet the person who is introducing you until right before your session. They may have written an introduction for you or more likely they will be prepared to read whatever was printed in the conference brochure as your introduction. Thank them for being the introducer and hand them the introduction that you wrote. Ask them to read it over and help them with any words or names that they are unfamiliar with. Make sure they know how to properly pronounce your name. Ask them to read it word for word

instead of ad-libbing and tell them that you know that they are performing a very important role in the session and you know they want the session to be as good as it can.

- **Relax.** If you have followed the steps up to this point, you should be able to relax because you are well prepared for your presentation. Enjoy the session knowing that you have prepared well and the attendees will get great value from your presentation.

After the Presentation

- **Make note of questions asked.** Most conference sessions include a few minutes of questions at the end of the session where attendees can probe deeper into specific areas. Take note of what questions you were asked. This is great material for another conference session idea since it is clear that people want to know more about those areas.
- **Do follow-ups.** If you have promised to follow up with someone who attended your session with more information or an answer to a more complex question, get their contact information and do the follow up. So many presenters never follow up, so you will stand out when you do contact them with the information or answer they were looking for.
- **Make information available.** It can be a good idea to post additional information after the session on your web site for attendees to refer to. If there is a paper, report, diagram, reference list, web links or some other information that a number of people had asked for in the session, tell people where they can go to get the information and make sure you post it to your web site soon after the presentation.

Resources:

1. My web site contains many more articles on using technology make presentations. You can access the web site at: <http://www.communicateusingtechnology.com/>.
2. A great resource for developing a knockout presentation and set of presentation slides is the book "[Don't Let Your Next Presentation Be a Career Limiting Move – The Complete Guide to Using Presentation Technology](#)". Click on the book title to learn more.
3. If you need help using PowerPoint, get the great e-books "[The 20% You REALLY Need to Know About PowerPoint 2000 or 2002](#)". Click on the book title for more information.
4. To test the effectiveness of your presentation slides, use the "[Rate Your Presentation Slides Audit](#)". Get it free by clicking on the title.
5. There is a useful checklist for when you are packing the technology for your presentation called the "[Presentation Technology Checklist](#)" available free by clicking on the title.
6. For a list of additional presentation resources on the web, [click here to go to the list of links on my web site](#).
7. To learn some of the techniques I used to develop this Adobe PDF document, check out the special report titled "[Make Your E-Documents Stand Out From The Crowd](#)" by clicking on the title.

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