

P5 – Some thoughts about the presentation of slides in the field of Computer Science (to be continued)

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Before you read

Since almost 25 years, I have often been involved in slide presentations. Slide presentations at industrial occasions, slide presentations at scientific occasions, slide presentations on public events, and many more. There exist differences, of course, and it is less possible to compare these events unless we concern the original aspect of slide presentations: *information transfer*, accomplished with the will of the presenter(s) to do it as best as possible. So far the theory, the practice is often different.

There exist some aspects, which are generally important:

- *Motivation*: a presentation has more chances of success, if the presenter(s) are committed to it. As a consequence, it is advising to let a student take part in the selection of a topic. On the other side, a student should select a subject that is interesting to him. Otherwise, it is getting boring or (s)he fails.
- *Fairness*: sometimes, the group leader/responsible takes the initiative - and does not give it back to another team member (in a way of a self-expression). That's very unfair! So, be fair, clearly define who is responsible for which part, and then keep these premises!
- *Balance*: it should be clear that a presentation is not for the speakers but for the audience. As almost each person on the world, people of the audience own two ears, two eyes, and a limited concentration! Independent of whom is currently listening to what you are saying, the presentation must manifest a fair trade-off between information sending and receiving. Apparently, the level of understanding is quite different, some people are at the highest stage, some are underachieved. Nevertheless, it is challenging to find the right way through it.
- *Balance+*: a second point regarding the right balance concerns with the organisation of a talk: do you present with a practical demonstration and/or examples - or without? The audience will be grateful if the speech is not too dry. . .
- *Time*: a presentation has always a condition of time - which must be respected. Whereas the presentation itself can be scheduled, the questions and its answering are less to be planned.

So, inform the audience right from the beginning concerning the time condition.

- *Answering questions*: probably the most important part, since this part directly refers to what you have presented. It is often an indication of success or failure, which - as a consequence - must therefore be considered in a very sensitive way.

The following five *P*'s stand for a logical pathway with respect to a speech. They figuratively characterise the different phases in which a presentation is embedded. Please note that the actual speech is only one point among others.

- *Plan*: what do you want to say? - how do you want to say it? - which stylistic methods do you want use? - have you got the core idea of your subject? - from a perspective of the audience: what could be interesting to them? - do they have the same background as you have? what could be their interest? - et cetera.
- *Prepare*: organise the slides - printouts? - in case of a planned interaction with the audience: do you know which questions YOU may direct to the audience? - in principle, which questions could be asked/do you expect? - et cetera.
- *Program*: which layout do you choose for your presentation? - are there people you have to thank? - do not do a copy & paste of existing slides unless you have changed the meta-data like time, place, location, and so on! - Take care in time of pictures/figures, especially if these must be produced by you! - In case you use material from external sources, do not forget to make citations! - et cetera.
- *Present*: speak clearly and slowly! - Take a look at the individuals of the audience - Take a look to someone but do not stay that long with him (otherwise a persons feels him-/herself somehow "arrested") - address an issue of a question - et cetera.
- *Publish*: it would nice if the audience can access your slides - consign your contact information - thank the audience for listening and open the Q & A session (unless the chairman is doing this) - et cetera.

Selected Book References

- (a) A & C Black Publishers (Edts.): Give Great Presentations: How to Speak Confidently and Make Your Point (Steps to Success). A & C Black Publishers Ltd (2010).
- (b) C. Stuart: Speak for Yourself: How to Give Persuasive Presentations and Entertaining Talks - With Confidence. Piatkus Books (2005).
- (c) Nick Morgan: Give Your Speech, Change the World: How to Move Your Audience to Action. Mcgraw-Hill Professional (2005).
- (d) T. J. Walker: How to Give a Pretty Good Presentation: A Speaking Survival Guide for the Rest of Us. Wiley & Sons (2010).
- (e) Kathleen Christopher Null: How to Give a Presentation. Teacher Created Resources (1998).